



Module Outline for Course Participants

Sexuality, Politics and Policy

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This module was created by Marina Carman and adapted by the Advancing Sexuality Studies short course team at the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia.

Abstract

This module looks at how sexuality is reflected and constrained in policy, in the application of policy, and in politics, at both a national and international level.

At a national level, understandings and views of sexuality are reflected in national policies which are then acted upon by government departments, the judicial system and the police. Sexuality can also be a factor in laws and policies which govern the interaction between nations—including in international law, international agreements and forums of cooperation, and also the national policies of developed nations in relation to how they fund and deliver overseas development aid.

Given the range of groups, interests and views involved, policy related to sexuality is often highly contested. The module will seek to explore debates around the range of policies which are related to sexuality. It will show how policy is changeable, but generally reflects the prevailing values and power relations in any given society or forum. It also looks at how sexuality as an issue can be used for other political ends.

Module aims

- To encourage participants to reflect on what policy is and how it works, in both national and international arena
- To critically examine examples of existing policy and politics related to sexuality
- To enhance participants' knowledge of common issues and themes which emerge in debates around the policy, and politics, of sexuality

Participants will:

- Develop an understanding of how policies related to sexuality are formed, enforced and implemented at a national and international level
- Increase their ability to recognise and engage in political debates around policies related to sexuality

Pre-reading

Waites, M. (2001) Regulation of Sexuality: Age of Consent, Section 28 and Sex Education. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 54(3), 495-508.

Yeatman, A. (1998) Activism and the policy process. In Yeatman, A. (Ed.) *Activism and the policy process*. St Leonards, Allen & Unwin.

Materials required

Participants should bring notes on *one* example from their own countries of government policy related to sexuality. Examples might include a policy on legal age of consent for sexual activity or one stating a legal definition of marriage. These notes do not need to be exhaustive but, at the minimum, the scope and aim of the policy should be noted as well as the year the policy was introduced. Those participants who have the time might also choose to make notes describing the social and political context in which that policy was introduced.

Overview of module

Introduction

The module aims, intended outcomes for participants and module schedule will be covered.

Session 1. Sexuality, Politics and Policy

The session will begin by examining ‘what *is* policy?’ through use of a group brainstorm and lecture. The session will draw on the Yeatman pre-reading, and examine the ways in which policy reflects the values of those involved in the policy process. Session 1 ends with an examination of examples of local policies related to sexuality, to be provided by participants (see Materials).

Session 2. Sexuality, policy and politics at an international level

The session will begin with a lecture that examines the role of the United Nations in international policy-making, before moving on to examine the intersections between national and international policy. The way in which the policy of one country can be imposed on another, by means of restrictions on aid funding, will also be considered through use of a case study and hypothetical UN debate.

Session 3. Policy and politics

Participants will begin this session by reviewing the two pre-readings, specifically in relation to the complex relationships between policy process and political process. A case study from South Africa will be used to look at ways in which policy may be created, but not effectively enacted due to political considerations. Finally, the session will look at the case of Anwar Ibrahim from Malaysia as an example of the way in which sexuality—and policy on sexuality—can be used as a political weapon.

Conclusion

Module aims will be reviewed against outputs from session activities.

Further reading

(includes lecture bibliography)

- Altman, D. (2001) *Global Sex*. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.
- Bongaarts, J. & Bruce, J. (1995) The causes of unmet need for contraception and the social content of services, *Studies in Family Planning*, 26, 57-75.
- Cáceres, C. F., Aggleton, P. & Galea, J. T. (2008) Sexual diversity, social inclusion and HIV/AIDS, *AIDS*, 22, S45-S55.
- Fellmeth, A. X. (2008) State regulation of sexuality in international human rights law and theory, *William & Mary Law Review*, 50, 797-936.
- Ghanotakis, E., Mayhew, S. & Watts, C. (2009) Tackling HIV and gender-based violence in South Africa: how has PEPFAR responded and what are the implications for implementing organizations?, *Health Policy and Planning*, 24, 357-366.
- Manderson, L. (2009) Sex Scandal and the Mundane Response to 'I did not have sex withPolitics, Media and Controversy'. *VII IASSCS Conference - Contested Innocence: Sexual Agency in Public Space*. Hanoi, Viet Nam.
- Singh, S., Bankole, A. & Woog, V. (2005) Evaluating the need for sex education in developing countries: sexual behaviour, knowledge of preventing sexually transmitted infections/HIV and unplanned pregnancy, *Sex Education*, 5, 307-331.
- Stacey, J. & Meadow, T. (2009) New slants on the slippery slope: the politics of polygamy and gay family rights in South Africa and the United States, *Politics and Society*, 37, 167-202.
- Steans, J. & Ahmadi, V. (2005) Negotiating the politics of gender and rights: some reflections on the status of women's human rights at 'Beijing Plus Ten', *Global Society*, 19, 227-245.
- Sternberg, P. (2000) Challenging machismo: promoting sexual and reproductive health with Nicaraguan men, *Gender & Development*, 8, 89-99.
- United Nations Human Rights Committee (2004) Polygamy, female genital mutilation unacceptable, says Chairman as Human Rights Committee concludes review of Uganda's report. <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2004/hrct651.doc.htm>