

**Module Outline for Course Participants**

**Sex, Sexuality and Gender: Basic Concepts**

Adapted for the Anglophone Caribbean by

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This module was developed as part of **‘Introduction to Advancing Sexuality Studies: A short course on sexuality theory and research methodologies’**. The short course was developed by the Caribbean Region of the International Resource Network and presented through a partnership with the Institute of Gender & Development Studies at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine (Trinidad & Tobago). The original module was developed by the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia, *and* the International Association for the Study of Sexuality, Culture and Society.

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**Abstract**

What does it mean to be a ‘woman’ or a ‘man’ and how can we tell the difference? What does it mean to speak of ‘sex’, ‘sexuality’ and ‘gender’, and how do these concepts interrelate? This module explores the social relationship between sex, sexuality and gender. Drawing on a range of theoretical approaches from sociology, feminism and queer theory, the module argues that it is impossible to understand any one of these three terms without reference to the other two.

The module describes in a critical fashion the ways in which hierarchies of sex, sexuality and gender are implicated in all areas of social life. In many societies around the world, what a woman and a man *should* be has relied on a narrow understanding of sex, gender and sexuality and *the relationship between* these three. This understanding is reproduced, reinforced and enforced by a range of social institutions, from the state to religious organisations and the media, and has been used to marginalise alternative gender and sexual identities.

The material in this module provides a foundation for other modules that look at how hierarchies of sex, sexuality and gender intersect with other social differences including race, socio-economic status, ethnicity and location.

**Module aims**

* + To introduce and critique biologically determinist understandings of sex, gender and sexuality
  + To introduce Critical Sexuality Studies definitions of sex, sexuality and gender and examine the history of the construction of sexuality
  + To examine the interrelationship between sex, sexuality and gender through consideration of heteronormativity and sexual/gendered inequity
  + To apply these concepts to the context of the Caribbean

**Participants will:**

* Critique biologically determinist constructions of sex and sexuality
* Identify key theorists and concepts in the study of sexual inequality
* Think critically about the interrelationship between sex, sexuality and gender
* Reflect on the effects of normative constructions of sex, sexuality and gender as these are relevant to their own socio-cultural and research settings

Required pre-reading (to be discussed in module group work)

Kempadoo, Kamala(2009) Caribbean Sexuality: Mapping the Field, Caribbean Review of Gender Studies, Issue 3, <http://sta.uwi.edu/crgs/november2009/journals/Kempadoo.pdf>

Mohammed, Patricia. “Towards Indigenous Feminist Theorizing in the Caribbean,” *Feminist Review* 59 (1998), 6-33.

Optional pre-reading

Connell, R.W. (2002) Differences and bodies. In *Gender* (Cambridge, Polity Press), p28 47.

Rubin Gayle (1975). “The Traffic in Women, Notes on the Political Economy of Sex" in Rayna Reiter (ed.) *Toward an Anthropology of Women,* Monthly Review Press, New York and London, pp. 157-210.

Sexuality Policy Watch (2008). Position paper on the Language of “Sexual Minorities” and the Politics of Identity,” July, http://www.sxpolitics.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/03/sexual-minorities1.pdf

**Overview of module**

Introduction

The module aims, anticipated outcomes for participants and module schedule will be introduced.

Session 1. Questioning biologically determinist perspectives and defining sex, sexuality and gender

This session provides a critique of biologically determinist understandings of sex and sexuality, and introduces working definitions of sex, sexuality and gender as these concepts are understood in the Critical Sexuality Studies field. It also begins to clarify a number of related concepts.

Session 2. Heteronormativity and sexual stratification

This session defines heteronormativity, a concept central to exploring the interrelationship between sexuality and gender, and the marginalisation of non-normative sexualities and genders. Several theories of sexual stratification are then discussed through the work of Adrienne Rich and Gayle Rubin. How hierarchies of sex, sexuality and gender intersect with other social differences including race, socio-economic status, ethnicity and location and will also be discussed.

Session 3, Option 1. Understanding sexuality as historically and socially constructed

In this session, participants will be guided through readings by Gloria Wekker or Jacqui Alexander focusing on the complexity and social construction of sexual identities in the Caribbean. Participants will be encouraged to discuss key concepts in each article, as well as how those concepts reveal the social and historical construction of Caribbean sexualities, and to reflect upon how heteronormativity differs across cultures.

 Session 3, Option 2. Transgender issues in a Caribbean context

In this session, participants will be guided through a reading of “Collateral Damage: The Social Impact of Laws Affecting LGBT Persons in Guyana” by Christopher Caricco. Our reading will focus on transgender experiences in the Caribbean. Participants will be asked to focus on what Caribbean trans people say about their own experiences, and will be encouraged to reflect upon the implications of this research on the expression of non-normative gender and sexual identities in the region.

Conclusion

The module will conclude with a brief summary of the main themes and concepts by the facilitator. Participants will be given time to reflect on the relative merits of the module’s themes and concepts in the context of their local cultures and research interests.

**Further reading (including lecture bibliography)**

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Hamer, D.H., Hu, S., Magnuson, V., Hu, N. & Pattatucci, A.M. (1993) A linkage between DNA markers on the X chromosome and male sexual orientation, *Science*, 261(5119), 321-327.

Hawkes, G. & Scott, J. (2005) Sex and Society. In G. Hawkes & J. Scott (Eds) *Perspectives in Human Sexuality* (Melbourne, Oxford University Press), p3-19.

Hemmings, C. (2002) Representing the middle ground. In *Bisexual Spaces: A Geography of Sexuality and Gender* (London, Routledge).

Jagose, A. (1996) *Queer Theory*. Melbourne, Melbourne University Press.

Johnson, K. (2007) Transsexualism: diagnostic dilemmas, transgender politics and the future of transgender care. In V. Clarke & E. Peel (Eds) *Out in Psychology: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Queer Perspectives* (Boulder, John Wiley and Sons, Ltd.).

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Nanda, Serena (2000). *Gender Diversity: Crosscultural Variations*, Waveland Press, Illinois, pp. 101-108.

Njambi and O’Brien (2005). “Revisiting Woman-Woman Marriage: Notes on Gikuyu Women,” in Oyèrónké Oyewứmi (ed.) *African Gender Studies: A Reader*, New York, Palgrave, pp. 145-165.

Puar, Jasbir (2001)."Global Circuits: Transnational Sexualities in Trinidad," in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* vol. 26 no. 4 Summer.

Richardson, Diane (1996). “Heterosexuality and Social Theory” in Diane Richardson (ed.) *Theorising Heterosexuality,* Open University Press, Buckingham, pp. 1-20.

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Wekker, Gloria ( 1999). “What’s Identity Got to Do with it: Rethinking Identity in light of the *Mati* Work in Suriname” in Evelyn Blackwood and Saskia Wieringa (eds.) *Female Desires: Same-Sex Relations and Transgender Practices across Cultures.* Colombia University Press, New York, pp.119-139*.*

Young, Kate, (1988). “Notes on the Social Relations of Gender” in Patricia Mohammed and Catherine Shepherd (eds.) *Gender in Caribbean Development*, The University of the West Indies, Women and Development Studies Project, Cave Hill, Mona & St. Augustine, pp. 97-109.