**Facilitator Notes**

**Sexuality, The Body and Personhood**

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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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This module was adapted (and two sessions created) by Dr. Angelique V. Nixon and the Caribbean IRN in partnership with the Institute of Gender and Development Studies at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago (2013). This module was created by Dr Sean Slavin, Dr Harriet Birungi and Dr Chi-Chi Undie 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.

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**Background**

Sex and sexuality have long been assumed to be inextricably linked to both the physical and social body. Notions of the body and personhood are therefore endowed with the ability either to constrain or to broaden notions of sexuality. This module is designed to introduce participants to the ways in which understandings of the body and personhood, as socially constructed, intersect with understandings and experiences of sexuality.

**The aims of this module are:**

• To theoretically examine the cultural construction of bodies and the relationship between bodies, personhood and sexuality

• To problematise singular notions of the body and personhood.

**Participants will:**

• Consider and critically evaluate the role of culture in shaping bodies

• Understand and engage with various debates about the relationship between the body and personhood

• Consider some ways in which cultural constructions of the body shape ideas about sexuality and desire

• Consider the implications of these debates in relation to disability, transgender concerns, religion, and artistic and media representations.

Module approach

While the module includes important lecture material, the overall aim is to involve participants in active learning. Group work is undertaken in each of the four sessions (see below), and time is given for review and discussion of issues raised. The short course team advises that any review or amendment of the module maintains a focus on active learning wherever possible.

Overview

**Session 1**. **The social construction of the body, personhood and sexuality** Participants will be introduced to key social constructionist approaches to the body, personhood and sexuality in Critical Sexuality Studies.

**Session 2. The relationship between the body, personhood and sexuality**

This module will use the pre-readings as tools from which to consider the relationship between the body, personhood and sexuality. Variations in understandings of the body, personhood and sexuality across cultures will also be considered.

**Session 3. Case Studies: 1) Disability; 2) Transgender Sex Work**

This session will introduce two different issues dealing with the body and sexuality that are rarely discussed. The first case study will engage the issue of embracing the body with disability through short films by South African director Shelley Barry. The second case study will feature the documentary *The Needle*, which centers on the lives of transgender sex workers in Puerto Rico, treatments in underground beauty clinics, and their desire for transitioning surgery. These issues will be explored by balancing a concern for health with a sex-positive approach, highlighting issues such as desire, love, wellness, and bodily integrity.

**Session 4. Representations and the Body**

This session will engage in the complex representations of sexuality and the body and investigate these representations in relationship to concepts of personhood. It will introduce participants to new artistic and media representations and the ways in which sexuality appears in them. The first part will offer participants the opportunity to delve into artistic productions such as photography, performance art, drawings and short film created by sexual minorities and representing same sex desire. We will discuss the effects of these representations and how they may offer new understandings of the body, personhood and sexuality in the Caribbean. The second part will consider the documentary *Of Men and Gods,* featuring the lives of men who desire other men in Haiti, who are open about their sexuality in the context of the Vodun religion. We will discuss the implications of this film, its representation of sexual minorities, and the role of the documentarians.

Pre-reading

* Gosine, A. (2009) “Sex Desires, Rights and Regulations,” Caribbean Review of Gender Studies. Online Journal. <http://sta.uwi.edu/crgs/november2009/journals/Editorial.pdf>
* Robinson, C. (2012) “Decolonising Sexual Citizenship: who will effect change in the south of the commonwealth.” Commonweatlth Advisory Bureau.
* Izugbara, C. & Undie, C. (2008) “Who owns the body?: Indigenous African discourses of the body and contemporary sexual rights rhetoric,” *Reproductive Health Matters,* 16**,** 159-167.
* Wekker, G. (2009) “Politics and Passion: A Conversation with Gloria Wekker.” Caribbean Review of Gender Studies. Online Journal.

<http://sta.uwi.edu/crgs/november2009/journals/CRGS%20Wekker.pdf>

Readings for Case Studies – Session 3

* “Disability in the Caribbean – A Case Study of Four Countries”

<http://www.eclac.org/publicaciones/xml/2/33522/L.134.pdf>

* “Youth with Disabilities” - United Nations. <http://social.un.org/youthyear/docs/Fact%20sheet%20youth%20with%20disabilities.pdf>
* Transgender Caribbean Activists Speak Out

 <http://www.iglhrc.org/cgi-bin/iowa/article/takeaction/resourcecenter/1016.html>

Media (to be viewed during sessions)

 Session 3

* *Whole: Trinity of Being* (2008). *Poetry* (2007). Directed By Shelley Barry. 14 Min.

Online. <http://www.youtube.com/user/twospinningwheels>

* Excerpt from *The Needle* (2012). Directed by Carmen Oquendo-Villar. 40 Min.

Online. 5 minute scene available at: <http://www.caribbeanhomophobias.org/theneedle>

Contact Filmmaker for copy of film (if in the budget) [http://www.oquendovillar.com/#](http://www.oquendovillar.com/)

 Session 4

* “Riding Boundaries” (2011). 5 Min. Online.

 <http://www.caribbeanhomophobias.org/ridingboundaries>

* Visual Art in the *Theorizing Homophobias in the Caribbean* Online Collection
 Rodell Warner – Photography & Ewan Atkinson – Drawings

 <http://www.caribbeanhomophobias.org/visualart>

* *Of Men and Gods* (2002). Directed Anne Lescot & Laurence Magloire.
 DVD. 52 Min. Documentary Educational Resources.
 <http://www.der.org/films/of-men-and-gods.html>

Materials

* Index cards.
* Flipchart paper or whiteboard and marker pens; or blackboard and chalk.
* Projector and Screen.
* Access to Internet and DVD player and projector

Module structure, materials and timing *(facilitator should adjust timing for breaks)*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Session & approach** | **PowerPoint** | **Other materials (provided or required)** | **Est. timing** |
|  |
| **Introduction, aims, schedule** | 1-5 |  | 10 mins |
|  |
| **Session 1: The social construction of the body, personhood and sexuality** | 6 |  | **50 mins** |
| Lecture | Facilitator delivery | 7-16 | Lecture included in Facilitator Notes | 20 mins |
| Review & Discussion | 17 |  | 30 mins |
|  |
| **Session 2. The relationship between bodies, personhood and sexuality** | 18 |  | **120 mins**  |
| Pre-reading review | Groups of 3 - reading summary | 19-20 | PDF documents: Colin Robinson; Andil Gosine; and Gloria Wekker | 60 mins |
| Groups discussion | 21 | 30 mins |
| Feedback & whole group discussion | 21 | 30 mins |
|  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Session 3. Case studies** | 22 |  | **120 mins** |
| Background | Facilitator delivery | 23 |  |  10 mins |
| Screening short films and interviews for discussion  | Screening & Questions; In Class Writing Responses after each film | 24 | “Whole: Trinity of Being” & “Poetry” Dir. Shelley Barry. and“The Needle” Dir. Carmen Oquendo-Villar.  |  60 mins |
| Exercise & discussion | 25-26 |  Handouts on Disability | 30 mins |
| Small group discussion | 27 |  “Transgender Caribbean Activists Speak Out” - Online | 20 mins |
|  |
| **Session 4. Representations and the Body** | 28 |  | **180 mins** |
| Lecture | Facilitator delivery | 29-32 |  “Introduction” to *Theorizing Homophobias* (Online) |  10 mins |
| Online Screening  | Screening & discussion |  |  “Riding Boundaries” (Online) |  30 mins |
| Discussion | Group work & discussion |  |  Visual Art on *Theorizing Homophobias* (Online) |  30 mins |
| Screening *full length documentary* | Screening | 33 | Need to access a copy of *Of Men and Gods.* (2002)  | 60 mins |
|  | Facilitator delivery | 34-35 |  | 5 mins |
| Group discussion | 36 |  | 40 mins |
|  |
| **Conclusion & acknowledgements** | 37-38 |  | 5 mins |
| **Total 480 mins**(about 8 hours) |

**Key to symbols and formatting**

Throughout these notes, the following symbols and formatting ‘clues’ have been used:

⇒ This symbol marks an instruction to the facilitator.

• Use of a bullet point indicates steps to be followed in completing an instruction.

║ This symbol, plus a different font which is larger and more widely spaced, indicates text to be read aloud. The end of the text to be read

aloud will be indicated with the following symbol.║

We have also indicated the points where a slide transition occurs on the PowerPoint presentation by inserting:

**SLIDE**

**Module instructions**

**SLIDE 1**

**SLIDE 2**

**Introduction** (5 mins)

⇒ Read the following (or amend):

║ Sex and sexuality have long been assumed to be inextricably linked with the physical and social body. Notions of the body and personhood

are therefore endowed with the ability either to constrain or to broaden notions of sexuality. This module is designed to introduce participants to the ways in which understandings of the body and personhood, as socially constructed, intersect with understandings and experiences of sexuality. The module is designed to produce a conversation between social theory and lived realities. It aims to enhance participants’ critical and theoretically informed understanding of the body, personhood, and sexuality, and to develop their ability to apply this knowledge meaningfully in their own social or professional contexts.

Because this is a seminar-type course, active class participation is essential. Some participants may find some of the course materials controversial. Participants should feel free to disagree with each other and with the convener as long as each person’s opinion and experience are respected.

A selected list of readings is provided that may assist participants who wish to further pursue the themes raised in the module.

**SLIDE 3**

Here’s a key question to keep in mind throughout the course:

‘Why are ‘bodies’ simultaneously so ubiquitous and yet so hard to get our hands (and minds) around?’ (Sarah Coakley, 2000)║

**SLIDE 4**

Module aims

⇒ Read:

║This module aims to:

• Theoretically examine the cultural construction of bodies and the relationship between bodies, personhood and sexuality

• Problematise singular notions of the body and personhood

**SLIDE 5**

Participants will:

• Consider and critically evaluate the role of culture in shaping bodies

• Understand and engage with various debates about the relationship between the body and personhood

• Consider some ways in which cultural constructions of the body shape ideas about sexuality and desire

• Consider the implications of these debates through Critical Sexuality Studies and artistic and media representations, in relation to disability, transgender concerns, and religion.

**SLIDE 6**

Schedule

⇒ Remember to include tea/coffee and lunch breaks, as required.

**SLIDE 7**

**Session 1. The social construction of the body, personhood**

**& sexuality (50 mins)**

Lecture (30 mins)

⇒ Read (bullet points on slide):

║ In this lecture, we will discuss the ways in which the body, personhood and sexuality can be understood as socially constructed. While many of

the conceptual approaches to the socially constructed body are based on

examples from the Global North, they enable Critical Sexuality Studies scholars from anywhere in the world to situate the body, sexuality and personhood in social and historical context. In the subsequent sessions, we will have an opportunity to reflect on the suitability of these approaches to participants’ own social contexts.

**SLIDE 8**

**The body**

In European philosophy, the body has usually been thought of as distinct from and in opposition to the mind. The early Enlightenment scholar Rene Descartes drew a distinction between the mind and body when he coined the neologism ‘I think, therefore I am’. Modern liberal philosophy progressed on the basis of this conception of autonomous and

independent selfhood, whereby rationality was demonstrated by the self- management of bodily processes, desires and emotions in accordance with the supposedly civilised norms of European society. However, certain subjects were understood to be more capable of exercising control and restraint over their bodies, desires and emotions than others. In studies of ‘sex’ and ‘race’, 18th-century science professed the notion that European men were more capable of rational, autonomous and independent selfhood, warranting greater social power and freedom than those who were perceived to be more closely associated with their bodies, desires or emotions. These included women, indigenous and other supposedly inferior races, homosexuals, the mad, the disabled, etc. Under the conditions of modernity, the *sexed* and *raced* body were thus the basis of a number of distinctions that ultimately favoured European men, and justified patriarchal social relations and the colonial enterprise more broadly.

**SLIDE 9**

In regard to gender, feminists have been attentive to the ways in which a change in the conception of male and female bodies at the end of the 17th century, from similar to oppositional, led to an elaboration of distinct social difference on the basis of anatomical sex. In Europe, prior to the 18th century, men and women were understood to be essentially the same, with women’s genitalia the inversion of men’s. However, in the 18th century, European men’s and women’s roles diverged in the context of industrialisation, increasing urbanisation and the breakdown of the extended family household. Increasingly, women were understood to be more *naturally* suited to roles as wives and mothers due to their capacity to give birth. Menstruation, pregnancy, and lactation were considered evidence of women’s closer relationship to nature, and were increasingly linked to a perceived feminine inability to control passions or strong emotions. Women were thus understood to be less capable of rational thought than men, and were understood to be better suited to domestic responsibilities in the private sphere.

In contrast, men were understood to be capable of transcending the messy specificity of their bodies and controlling their emotions and desires. Consistent with the mind-body dualism, European men’s privileged roles in public life, and in the nuclear family, were based on this ‘new’ reading of the fundamental difference between male and female bodies. This ideology justified the exclusion of women and ‘less civilized,’ non-European men from knowledge-making institutions and practices. Thus, feminists and post- colonial scholars have much to say about the body in explaining contemporary social relations.

**SLIDE 10**

In Critical Sexuality Studies, much of the contemporary interest in the body stems from the work of French social philosopher/historian Michel

Foucault. In *The Birth of the Clinic* (1973), and especially *The History of Sexuality* (1978), Foucault developed a social history methodology called genealogy that explored how systems of knowledge came to constitute widely observed regimes of truth and social practice in modern European societies. Foucault argued that modern life was less characterised by the imposition of state or sovereign power – that is, by force – than through more insidious and coercive means of compliance. Taking madness, illness and sexuality as examples, Foucault demonstrated how institutional power came to be exercised *through* the bodies and subjectivities of individuals via authoritative discourses that regulated social conduct.

According to Foucault, in the 18th century, growing state concern with the management of populations under the conditions of increasing urbanisation and industrialisation led to the development of regulations specifically related to the management of bodies: fertility and reproductive health, public health, hygiene, sanitation, family welfare, heredity, and sexuality all emerged as key areas of personal life that the state had an interest in regulating. A healthy and orderly populace was, after all, central to the maintenance of a productive workforce. Each of these concerns produced authoritative discourses related to personal conduct, against which individuals came to evaluate and categorise themselves and others in acts of self-surveillance and self-discipline

**SLIDE 11**

Perhaps Foucault’s best and most influential application of this understanding of power was in his analysis of sexuality. Whereas 19th century Europe is generally portrayed as a prudish and sexually repressed society, Foucault argued that there was ‘an incitement to discourse’ where sexuality was concerned. Rather than requiring the repression of sexual instincts, the proliferation of discourses around the management and regulation of sexuality led individuals to view themselves as having an innate sexuality, as an extension of their character or true nature. Foucault’s primary example is the invention of homosexuality as a category of identification for men and women who participate in same-sex sexual behaviour. Prior to the 1880s there was no such thing as a homosexual person, nor prior to the 1930s was there such a term as heterosexual. Other Victorian-era preoccupations with sexual behaviour included masturbation, childhood sexuality, paedophilia, sexual “hysteria” in women, and criminal sexuality. Each of these preoccupations produced clinical, medical and psychological discourses which came to constitute their particular subjects as degenerate, perverted, unstable, and/or mentally ill. Many of these categories were in opposition to sexual and gender norms that were said to be based on the ‘naturalness’ of heterosexual monogamy.

Thus, whereas many people think of sexuality as a distinct thing we have inside us, Foucault’s insights help us to see that this is in fact a condition of the time and place in which we live and reflects the dynamic relationship between sexual practice, institutional power and knowledge. Foucault’s work has thus been of enormous value in providing a methodological approach to thinking about how bodies and sexuality are socially constructed. Whether we are referring to Victorian England, or social life in *any* contemporary society, Foucault’s approach to discourse as social practice allows us to analyse the ways bodies and sexualities reflect the power relations of the societies in which they can be seen to exist.

Foucault’s approach has been extended by scholars such as Judith Butler (1993) and other queer theorists who encourage us to view sex as a ‘regulatory ideal’. According to these scholars, the significance of the sexed body lies not in male or female sexual difference per se, but in how sexual difference is understood to function as the foundation for male and female social roles and heterosexuality as an ideological, rather than

‘natural’ principle of social organisation. In other words, it is not male and female genitals or sexual characteristics that determine male and female roles and the norm of heterosex, but *discourses of nature* that take the body to be the pre-discursive basis to all social order.

**SLIDE 12**

The proliferation of discourse on sexuality is, of course, a key feature of contemporary societies where sex and sexuality tend to be central to public and private life, including:

− Debate between conservatives, liberals and radicals about the meaning and significance of sex, particularly in relation to marriage, monogamy, divorce and ‘the family’;

− Saturation of sexualised media imagery, advertising, sex scandals, pornography, and the influence of evolving technologies such as the internet on sexual practices and intimate life;

− The rise of social movements related to sexual identities, communities and subcultures, including sexual minority and gay and lesbian movements;

− Feminist scholarship and activism, particularly in relation to the

‘male sexual gaze’, the sexualisation of women’s bodies, the sexual double standard, and the sexual liberation of women; and

− Personal anxieties about sexual performance and intimate relationships, and a reliance on experts – including social researchers, medical doctors and pharmaceutical companies – to alleviate anxieties.

**SLIDE 13**

Many of these aspects of sexuality in contemporary life relate explicitly to the body and involve questions of how one should live. A number of sociologists have thus argued that contemporary life in societies of the Global North is characterised by increasing individualisation, with an emphasis on the body (Turner, 2008). In the context of neo-liberal consumer capitalism, the body is said to be a site for the expression of unique self-identity. Yet, due to the instability of traditional sources of identity, including work, family and community, identity in contemporary life is also unstable, and requires anxious and ongoing work upon the self. This takes place in an environment where certain kinds of bodies are celebrated and admired, such as those of celebrities, while other bodies are understood to be ill-disciplined and worthy of contempt (such as obese bodies). Cosmetic surgery, dieting and exercise are body techniques that enable women and men to achieve favoured body ideals and generate feelings of empowerment and satisfaction.

Increasingly, scientific developments in medicine, genetics, and technology promise the possibility of overcoming the material limits of the body, curing illness, improving cognitive or physical capacities, and even delaying death. In the process, social problems come to be interpreted as individual body problems that may be overcome with the use of a pill or an operation. Such an example is the emergence of the

impotence drug Viagra, which has usurped prior approaches to impotency based on psychological or relational understandings of erectile dysfunction. The effect of Viagra has tended to be the reinforcement of the erect penis and penetration as the normative mode of sexual intercourse.

A significant criticism of this approach to the body is that it is overly theoretical, and ignores the messy reality of bodies themselves. Thus, according to Ken Plummer, the sweaty, heaving sexual body is hardly

anywhere to be found in sexuality research!

**SLIDE 14**

There is a clear division in conceptual approaches to the body then, between those that emphasise discourse and power, and those that explore the *lived experience* of being/having a body. These latter approaches are no less social constructionist in their orientation to the body, but attempt to take the material, fleshy, desiring body more seriously than those using the radical discourse approach. These approaches have not been taken up so readily by sexual researchers, however.

Other conceptual approaches to the body that explore the ‘lived reality’ of embodiment include:

− Phenomenology (Marcel Merleau-Ponty) – Rejects the mind-body dualism by arguing that we perceive the world from our bodies – consciousness is always embodied

− Symbolic interactionism (Harold Blumer, W.E.B. DuBois, Erving Goffman, George H. Mead) – Argues that we make sense of ourselves in interaction with others. We perceive our bodies through others’ perspectives of us, and the conceptual orders that make our embodiment meaningful. For example, the experience of being ‘disabled’ only makes sense through the eyes of others and the social order defining disability as a lack.

− Logic of Practice (Pierre Bourdieu) – Bourdieu’s work analyses how bodily practices, such as the way we walk or talk, or our preferences for particular types of food, reflect our position in the social hierarchy. Bodies are involuntarily invested with social capital, and are thus cultivated to reflect cultural (particularly, class) values. We embody these values in our habitus.

These approaches emphasise that we experience the world from our bodies first and foremost, and the particularities of our bodies, including our sex, skin colour, and body shape. Even our deportment and food preferences, and the value or significance placed on these things, are entirely reflections of the societies in which we live.

For our purposes today it is simply necessary to know that there are a number of different approaches to the body but that they all have one important thing in common: the body is not in any simple sense a natural object.

⇒ Ask participants if they have any questions. **(5 mins)**

**SLIDE 15**

**Personhood**

In many dominant cultures in the Global North, personhood is usually understood to encompass the individual body, consciousness, free will, societal rights and responsibilities as a citizen of a nation state and, often, some notion of soul or spirit. For example, many Christians believe that each soul is unique and each body is inhabited by one soul.

**SLIDE 16**

In many cultures in the Global South, however, personhood is understood as communal and related to kinship rather than to individual bodies. For example, Confucians believe in a continuous relationship between ancestors and living persons, while Hindus believe in reincarnation, thus a person may be reborn in a new body after death. Many indigenous societies believe that a new person is created and an old one dies during adolescent initiation ceremonies.

**SLIDE 17**

In certain situations or contexts, personhood can be partial or potential. Legally, a prisoner is a partial person with partial rights. There are ongoing and contentious debates about when a foetus can be thought of as a person. Across cultures, understandings of the body and of personhood are interlinked. Certain kinds of bodies and certain kinds of persons are given different symbolic (and institutional) meanings; for example, racist ideas about black persons are linked to black bodies. In particular historical contexts, most notably slavery, black bodies have been denied the legal and ethical status of persons.

In some societies, transgender and intersex people reveal personhood to be based on fairly rigid ideas about sex and gender. If a person is not clearly male or female, they may face prejudice and exclusion from established understandings of citizenship and personhood. On many census forms in many countries, for example, it is impossible not to be either male or female. In other societies, there are clearly established identity positions for people who do not conform to male or female categories of person. For example, in Samoa, Fa’fafine are Samoan boys who are raised as girls. Yet, outside of Samoa, Fa’fafine may face misunderstanding and exclusion due to the fact they confound accepted understandings of gender. And in the Caribbean while there may not be a clear third gender, there are terms used to describe people who don’t fit into the dichotomy of gender and gender performance. For example, in Jamaica, *manroyal* refers to someone with a female body and a masculine gender presentation. Hence, cultural understandings of personhood and the body intersect to inform who is considered a viable or acceptable person.

What these examples demonstrate is that understandings of the body and personhood are culturally and historically contingent. Neither sexuality nor the body are universal, but always reflect the social and historical conditions of a particular society. ║

**SLIDE 18**

Review (20 mins)

⇒ Ask participants if there are any questions about the lecture.

⇒ Ask participants to brainstorm together the following questions (on slide):

• In Caribbean cultures, is personhood individualised, or communal and kinship related? How have histories of slavery, indentureship and colonialism affected these notions of personhood and the body?

• Is it possible for someone to “have a sexuality” in the Caribbean? Does sexuality refer to what people do, or who people are?

• Are there discourses that define appropriate sexual conduct in the Caribbean?

⇒ Make a list of these discourses or rules on the flipchart paper or whiteboard.

• Whose bodies do they refer to?

• Whose values do they reflect?

**SLIDE 19**

**Session 2. The relationship between bodies, personhood &**

**sexuality (120 mins)**

⇒ Tell participants that this session will begin with a review of the pre-readings.

**SLIDE 20**

⇒ Remind participants that the four pre-readings were:

Gosine, A. (2009) “Sex Desires, Rights and Regulations,” Caribbean Review of Gender Studies. Online Journal. <http://sta.uwi.edu/crgs/november2009/journals/Editorial.pdf>

Robinson, C. (2012) “Decolonising Sexual Citizenship: who will effect change in the south of the commonwealth.” Commonweatlth Advisory Bureau.

Wekker, G. (2009) “Politics and Passion: A Conversation with Gloria Wekker.” Caribbean Review of Gender Studies. Online Journal.

<http://sta.uwi.edu/crgs/november2009/journals/CRGS%20Wekker.pdf>

Izugbara, C. & Undie, C. (2008) Who owns the body?: Indigenous African discourses of the body and contemporary sexual rights rhetoric, *Reproductive Health Matters,* 16**,** 159-167.

⇒ Check: How many participants finished all the readings? Divide students into groups based on which ones they finished.

**SLIDE 21**

Pre-reading review (90 mins total)

⇒ Divide everyone into groups of four (randomly, if everyone read them all, or purposely, if some have not read all).

• In each group, one person will focus on Gosine, the second on Robinson, and the third on the Wekker interview, the fourth on Izugbara/Undie.

• Each person should take 10 mins to summarise their reading for their group.

**(30 mins)**

**SLIDE 22**

⇒ Tell participants to stay in their groups and try to answer the following focus questions (on slide): What does each reading say about the relationship between the body, personhood & sex or sexuality?

* How does this relationship affect the struggle for sexual rights and affirmation of desire?
* What might be meant by the phrase “the body is a cultural construction”?
* Does this contradict the commonsense idea that bodies are material things?
* If bodies are cultural constructions, how might they vary across cultures and what effects might this have for sex and sexuality? **(30 mins)**

⇒ After 30 minutes, bring everyone back together and ask for volunteers to provide feedback. Use feedback from two or three volunteers to initiate a whole group discussion.

• Wrap-up by asking if participants still have any questions regarding the readings, and clarify any misunderstandings.

• Review the ways in which understandings of bodies are culturally constructed.

**(30 mins)**

**SLIDE 23**

Session 3. Case Studies: 1) Disability; 2) Transgender Sex Work (120 mins)

⇒ Read (or amend):

This session will introduce two different issues dealing with the body and sexuality that are rarely discussed. The first case study will engage the issue of embracing the body after disability through short films by South African director Shelley Barry. The second case study will feature the documentary *The Needle*, which centers on the lives of transgender sex workers in Puerto Rico, their treatments in underground beauty clinics, and their desire for transitioning surgery. These will be explored by balancing a concern for health with a sex-positive approach, highlighting issues such as desire, love, wellness, and bodily integrity.

1) Disability: Work on or with people living with disabilities has tended to be narrowly defined, overlooking questions such as how desire or sexuality may be a source of happiness, personal fulfillment and well-being for people with a physical impairment. The reality remains that conventional negative constructions of sexuality attract the most attention (and, therefore, funding) for work related to people living with disabilities. In the first case study, we will:

− Question common assumptions about the sexualities of people living with disabilities;

− Reflect on how these issues are related to the concepts of ‘the body’ and ‘personhood’.

This work will draw on the recognition that individuals—disabled or not—have sexual desires and make conscious choices and efforts in seeking meaningful sexual relationships as a way of contributing to their wellness. As such, love and intimacy are part and parcel of wellness.

**SLIDE 24**

Background

⇒ Read (quote and bullet points on slide):

║ As long ago as 1948, Meyerson noted:

There is general agreement in the literature on physical disability that the problems of the handicapped [sic] are not physical, but social and psychological.

While the language has moved on (for instance, scholars now rarely use the term ‘the handicapped’), there remains a need for more widespread (and acted-upon) recognition of the ways in which societal norms and expectations can adversely affect people with disabilities. This is particularly true in relation to the sexuality of people with disabilities. Work on or with people living with disabilities has tended to de-sexualise their bodies. Questions such as how desire or sexuality may be a source of happiness, personal fulfillment and well-being for people with disabilities are often overlooked.

**SLIDE 25**

⇒ Read (quote and bullet points on slide) – this is an overview of some of the issues with disability in the Caribbean - review handouts together.

Disability in the Caribbean - Context: 2006 CRPD – Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Adoption 2008

* World Bank Fact Sheet Disability in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2004 (mostly Latin America).
* 2008 study of four countries – Antigua & Barbuda, Saint Lucia, St.Vincent, Trindad & Tobago by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, (Schmid, Vezina, Ebbeson, June 2008) – special attention to children, elderly, & women.
* Youth with Disabilities, United Nations 2010 – the only study that considers sex and relationships.

Issues Raised: Poverty, Education, Employment, Health, Support Programs, Youth Sex and Relationships, Family, Acceptance, Defining Disability, Gender and Age disparity in the Caribbean (work-related injuries & “risk taking behavior” for young males & elderly women – “lifestyle related chronic diseases and disabilities”)

**SLIDE 26**

Close reading & discussion

⇒ Read (quote and bullet points on slide):

 “The four-country census analysis revealed several common trends for all countries reviewed. The findings of the data confirm that disability levels for the countries to be in the range of other studies mentioned earlier. However, the data point at considerable age and gender differences in disability prevalence rates. The heaviest burden of disability is carried by the elderly over age 60 and among those by elderly women who suffer mainly from lifestyle-related chronic diseases and disabilities. In the younger age-groups men were found to be more prone to disabilities either of a congenital nature early in life or later as a consequence of adverse lifestyle-related behavior” (“Disability in the Caribbean” 28).

⇒ Instruct the group to discuss the following questions (on slide):

* What are the assumptions being made about bodies and personhood? About “lifestyles”?
* Where is sexuality?

**SLIDE 27**

Screening: *Short Films by Shelley Barry* (30 mins)

* *Whole: Trinity of Being* (2008). *Poetry* (2007). Directed By Shelley Barry. 14 Min. Online. <http://www.youtube.com/user/twospinningwheels>

⇒ Tell participants that the short films they are about to watch were written and directed by disabled artist Shelley Barry, the woman who is also featured in the film.

⇒ Ask everyone to keep notes on their own positive and negative emotional reactions to what they see and hear during the screening.

⇒ Screen the film.

**Ask students to write a short response to the films. How do these short films challenge your assumptions about people with disabilities and sexuality? How does Shelley embrace her body, her personhood, and sexuality? (on slide)**

**SLIDE 28**

Case study 2) Transgender Sex Work:

⇒ Read (or amend):

║ There is much work to be done in terms of research and writing on the lives of transgender people, sex workers, and in particular transgender sex workers – especially in the Caribbean and the Global South. Although there is an increased awareness about the lives of transgender people and people who are gender non-conforming, these issues are often taboo and difficult to discuss in many contexts. Nevertheless, people who do not abide by gender norms (or who perform/live outside their community’s definition of their “correct” gender) experience intense scrutiny, oppression, discrimination, and violence. The same can be said for people who have different kinds of relationships or partnerships that are outside the community norm or status quo – i.e. multiple partners, affairs, sex work, etc. ║

⇒ BACKGROUND (points on slide):

║ Increasingly researchers and studies in sexuality are engaging with the differences among and between LGBT or sexual minority experiences. There are important reasons to distinguish between homophobia and transphobia, between sexuality, sex, and gender identity, between how one feels in one’s body and the connection to biology, hormones, and sexual organs. We know that there is a fluidity in terms of gender performance and sexuality, but there are also very real material feelings of disconnect between the body and one’s identity that complicate our understanding of the relationship between sexuality, personhood, and the body. ║

**SLIDE 29**

⇒ Discuss this through the “gender-bread person” diagram. Explain the differences between sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, transgender, intersex, gender non-conforming, etc. And then discuss how these terms and use of language applies in the local context.

⇒ Ask students which terms are used in their community and local context. Re-draw the diagram for the particular local context and Caribbean context generally.

**SLIDE 30**

⇒ Continue reading:

║ In the second case study, we will:

* Question common assumptions about transgender people generally and those who engage in sex work;
* Discuss gender identity in relationship to sexuality and sex work;

− Reflect on how these issues are related to the concepts of ‘the body’ and ‘personhood’. ║

Screenings: (60 mins)

* *The Needle* (2012). Directed by Carmen Oquendo-Villar. 40 Min.

Online. 5 minute scene available at: <http://www.caribbeanhomophobias.org/theneedle>

Contact Filmmaker for copy of film (if in the budget) [http://www.oquendovillar.com/#](http://www.oquendovillar.com/)

* Transgender Activist Interviews:
<http://www.iglhrc.org/cgi-bin/iowa/article/takeaction/resourcecenter/1016.html>

⇒ Ask everyone to keep notes on their own positive and negative emotional reactions to what they see and hear during the screening.

⇒ Screen the film and then the interviews.

⇒ Ask students to write a short response to the film and interviews. (on slide)

* How does this documentary challenge your assumptions about transgender people and sex work?
* What issues come up in the film and the interviews in terms of how we define ‘personhood’ and understand ‘bodily integrity” and agency?
* What do you think are the particular challenges for people who are transgender or who don’t fit into the status quo of gender identity?

⇒ **N.B.** Make adjustments to time and questions if you can’t get a copy of the complete documentary and you only screen the five minute scene.

**SLIDE 31**

Exercise and discussion (30 mins)

⇒ At the end of the screening, give participants 5 minutes to review their notes on their emotional reactions to the films.

⇒ Ask everyone to collect four index cards each (instructions are repeated as bullet points on the slide).

• Each person should write a positive emotion on one index card, and a negative emotion on the other – for each case study. Tell them not to write their names on the cards; these reactions are anonymous.

• Collect the cards in groups per case study, shuffle the set in response to Barry’s films and separately shuffle the set in response to *The Needle* and the set responding to the interviews. Redistribute them randomly among the group – do one case study at a time.

• Ask each person in turn to read aloud what is written on the cards they have

 been given. **(10 mins)**

**SLIDE 32**

⇒ Ask all participants to brainstorm the following questions together (on slide):

* Were there any similarities between participants’ reactions to the depiction of sexuality in the films?
* Did you find particular aspects of the film more confronting than others?
* How do you think others in your social/cultural context would react to these films? **(20 mins)**

**SLIDE 33**

Small group discussion (20 mins + 10 mins feedback)

* Introduce these additional materials to extend discussion of the films:

Handout on Youth and Disability:
<http://social.un.org/youthyear/docs/Fact%20sheet%20youth%20with%20disabilities.pdf>

“Disability in the Caribbean – A Case Study of Four Countries”

<http://www.eclac.org/publicaciones/xml/2/33522/L.134.pdf>

⇒ Break participants into small groups and ask them to discuss the following focus questions (on slide) – for each case study:

* Disability: In the Caribbean, are the sexual lives of people living with disabilities denied, resisted, controlled? How and at what level?
* Transgender Sex Work and Activism: What do you think about the agency of sex workers who can be seen as very vulnerable to exploitation and violence? Why do you think transgender people turn to sex work? How different is this from a non-trans person who engages in sex work? (20 mins)

⇒ Bring the groups back together and brainstorm answers to the questions regarding if, how and at what level the sexual lives of people living with disabilities are denied, resisted or controlled.

• Ask for one volunteer who is willing to offer an answer to the questions regarding what this might say about readings of the body, or of personhood.

• Check to see if anyone else has a different take on the possible answers to these questions.

⇒ Brainstorm answers to the questions regarding transgender lives and sex work and transgender activism.

• Ask for one volunteer who is willing to offer an answer to the questions regarding required changes in readings of the body, or of personhood.

• Check to see if anyone else has a different take on the possible answers to

 these questions. **(10 mins)**

**Session 4. Representations and The Body (110 mins)**

Mini Lecture\_\_\_ (10 mins)

**SLIDES 34**

**SLIDE 35**

⇒ Read (or amend):

║ This session will offer participants the opportunity to delve into artistic productions such as photography, performance art, drawings, and short film created by sexual minorities and representing same sex desire. These artistic representations all center and highlight the body and sexuality. We will discuss the effects of these representations and how they may offer new understandings of the body, personhood and sexuality in the Caribbean.

**SLIDE 36**

In the first part of this session, we will look at the collection *Theorizing Homophobias in the Caribbean: Complexities of Place, Desire and Belonging.* This is a multi-media collection of activist reports, creative writing, critical essays, film, interviews, music, and visual and performance art that define and reflect on the complexities of homophobias in the Caribbean, while also expanding awareness about Caribbean sexual minority lives, experiences, and activism in the region and its diaspora. This session will also consider the documentary *Of Men and Gods,* which features the lives of men living in Haiti who desire other men and are open about their sexuality and somewhat protected through the Vodun religion. We will discuss the implications of this film and its representation of sexual minorities, their bodies and personhood, and the role of the documentarians. ║

**SLIDE 37**

The Importance of Representation

⇒ Introduce the materials in the *Theorizing Homophobias* online collection at [www.caribbeanhomophobias.org](http://www.caribbeanhomophobias.org) - scroll down to the table of contents. Then bring up the introduction for students to look at together. (Main points on Slide)

⇒ Read or amend as needed – This is taken directly from the Introduction, subheading “Sexual Minority Activism and Creation” to the *Theorizing Homophobias in the Caribbean: Complexities of Place, Desire and Belonging* written and edited by King R. and Nixon A. (2012)

║ “This collection brings together academic scholarship, art, and activism, and its contents reflect the breadth and scope of sexual minority organizing across the region and the sustained efforts by activists working towards sexual freedom and autonomy. In fact, the very idea for this collection came out of a dialogue driven by activists who asserted the need for a more complex understanding of homophobias across the region that considers national, linguistic, and sub-regional differences as well as similarities across the region. The activists and scholars at the 2009 Caribbean Sexualities Gathering insisted that the nuances around place, national identity, religion, history, and other factors be included in any discussion, study, or writing about homophobia in the Caribbean. Many supported the call for a “theorizing” of different kinds of “homophobias” across the region from a variety of perspectives. Hence, this collection is driven by a local and regional desire for more voices, greater understandings, and deeper reflections of Caribbean sexualities.”

*PLEASE NOTE: There are many organizations active in the region that are doing amazing work around sexual rights, sexual autonomy, acceptance, and decriminalization – you will learn more about these in the Sexual Rights and Sexual Justice, and Sexuality, Politics, and Policy modules. You can also find more information about community organizing in this collection – video and audio interviews, activist reports, and more.*

“The exciting activism in the region interconnects with and speaks to the artistic landscape of Caribbean sexual minorities. Hence, this collection also engages and reflects the dynamic artistic expressions by sexual minorities across the region and its diaspora. There is an extensive history and herstory of Caribbean sexual minorities represented in the literary landscape through gay, lesbian, trans, bisexual, and gender non-conforming characters. The pivotal anthology of gay and lesbian writings *Our Caribbean,* published in 2008 and edited by Thomas Glave, reminds us that the voices of sexual minorities have long been part of the Caribbean literary imaginary. More recently, in the visual arts (including film, photography, painting, etc.) a number of artists have grappled with homophobias and included representations of sexual minorities in loving and positive ways. In music and performance art, there is a growing and beautiful engagement with asserting sexual minority voices and concerns. This collection reflects a range of expression, which speaks to the creative engagement with diverse Caribbean genders and sexualities.

Caribbean artists remain on the cutting edge of creating, challenging, and building community even when we/they exist on the margins. We need more stories, more histories and herstories, more complex representations, and more engaging language to describe the lives of sexual minorities in the Caribbean. And we need to continue claiming space and demanding freedom and sexual autonomy – for same-sex-desiring, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender non-conforming, queer, and all the names we give ourselves – struggling for not simply tolerance and acceptance but also belonging.” ║

**SLIDE 38**

⇒ Screen “Riding Boundaries” – Poem and Short Film by Colin Robinson and Sekou Charles. Read the description first – and then watch together. Ask participants to watch and listen first, then play it a second time for students to take notes.

⇒ Ask particiapnts to reflect on how this film represents same-sex desire, and how it represents the same-sex loving male body.

**(15 mins)**

**SLIDE 39**

⇒ Open the link for visual art on the *Theorizing Homophobias* Collection – <http://www.caribbeanhomophobias.org/visualart>.

⇒ Ask participants to read the descriptions first – and then look through the pieces together:

* Ewan Atkinson, Visual Art – Drawings
* Rodell Warner, Visual Art - Photography

⇒ Tell participants that the Photography by Rodell Warner includes nudity.

⇒ Ask participants to write down their reflections on each artist and their work included in this collection. What strikes you in these representations? Do they affirm same sex desire and sexuality in positive ways? How do these works of art complicate dominant notions of the body and sexuality particular for sexual minorities? **(15 mins)**

**SLIDE 40**

Small group discussion (on slide) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (15 mins)

⇒ Put participants in three groups and assign each group with one of the artists discussed above – Robinson/Charles, Atkinson, and Warner.

⇒ Each group should share their reflections and then answer the following questions: How do these artists affirm or complicate ‘personhood’ in relation to sexuality and desire? How does the piece your group is discussing specifically challenge homophobia and/or participate in the struggle for sexual rights in the region?

**SLIDE 41**

Screening - *Of Men and Gods* (2002) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (60 mins)

*Of Men and Gods* (2002). Directed Anne Lescot & Laurence Magloire. DVD. 52 Min. Documentary Educational Resources. <http://www.der.org/films/of-men-and-gods.html>

⇒ Tell participants that the film is a documentary featuring the lives of men who desire men in Haiti, who are described as being able to live openly through Vodun.

⇒ Explain to students that Vodun is known for its embrace of gender difference and openness to sexuality in ways that many dominant religions are not.

• Ask everyone to keep notes about what strikes them as interesting in relation to the body, personhood and sexuality.

* Also ask them to make notes of anything that occurs in the film that they do not understand.
* Ask them to consider the role of the documentarians and the questions they ask, along with the choices they make as filmmakers.

⇒ Screen film.

Discussion (20 mins)

⇒ Ask the whole group to brainstorm their answers to the focus questions:

• What struck you about the stories represented in the film in relation to the body, personhood, and sexuality?

• Is there anything that you do not understand?

• What is the role of the documentarians? What do you think about the questions they ask and other choices they made as filmmakers?

**SLIDE 42**

Small group discussion (30 mins)

⇒ Break up students into four groups. Ask students to reflect on the earlier readings and discussions about sexuality, the body, and personhood in their discussions. Give each group one of the following question sets (on slide):

* Group One: Religion and Sexuality: How does religion impact sexuality? How is this represented by sexual minorities who are artists / cultural producers?
* Group Two: Homophobia: How is homophobia described and represented in the various pieces we have discussed in this session?
* Group Three: The Role of the Cultural Producers:How is the representation of sexual minorities in *Of Men and Gods* different from or similar to representations of sexuality by sexual minorities discussed earlier in this session? What is the role of the researcher or documentarian in representations such as these? *(i.e. non-Caribbean people vs. Caribbean people or sexual minorities vs. non-sexual minorities.):*
* Group Four: Sexuality and the Body: What are the difficulties in representing sexuality and the body? What is at stake in these representations? Does it have anything to do with personhood?

SLIDE 43

**Conclusion (5 Mins)**

⇒ Read (or amend):

║ The body is intimately related to questions of sex and sexuality. Bodies are both material *and* social; understandings of the body do not exist

outside of societies and cultures.

Furthermore, personhood is related to bodies in complex ways that are culturally and historically contingent. There is no such thing as a normal or a natural body, nor a normal or natural personhood—once we realise

this, many possibilities open up for thinking about sex and sexuality. ║

⇒ Check: Any remaining questions?

**SLIDE 44**

Short course acknowledgements.

**Further reading (including lecture bibliography)**

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