Module Outline for Course Participants

Biopower and Sexuality

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‘Introduction to Advancing Sexuality Studies: A short course on sexuality theory and research methodologies’. The short course 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

Based on the work of Michel Foucault, the interrelated concepts of ‘biopower’, ‘governmentality’ and ‘technologies of the self’ have been used to shape sexualities research and to investigate health education practice. Indeed, many of the prevailing concerns in HIV and sexual and reproductive health can be conceptualised as ‘biopolitical’—thereby expanding the conceptual tools that can be used to generate research questions and encourage consideration of new forms of practice. Using examples from research and health education, this module introduces these concepts and enables participants to explore how they may be applied.
Module aims

- To introduce participants to the concepts of biopower, governmentality and technologies of the self
- To encourage participants to apply these concepts in analysis of interview text and sexual health promotion material
- To encourage participants to critically reflect upon how these concepts can generate new questions and forms of inquiry in HIV care and sexual and reproductive health

Participants will:

- Examine sexual and reproductive health and HIV care as forms of governmentality
- Discuss the implications of self-regulation in sexual and reproductive health and HIV care
- Apply Foucauldian approaches to the analysis of sexuality and educational interventions
- Explore the biopolitical dimensions of sexual and reproductive health and HIV care

Required pre-reading

Overview

Introduction

Participants will be given a brief description of the module approach, schedule, and aims.

Session 1. Biopower, governmentality and technologies of the self

This session introduces participants to the key concepts informing the module and encourages them to apply these concepts to aspects of their own experience with public and sexual health messages.

Session 2. Self-care and technologies of the self

In this session participants are asked to work in pairs to analyse extracts of interview transcripts from the book *HIV in South Africa: Talking about the Big Thing* using a discourse analysis approach informed by the concept of technologies of the self.

Session 3. Sexual health education materials and governmentality

Session 3 requires participants to analyse a sexual health poster from the United Kingdom from a governmentality perspective. Participants are then asked to discuss how governmentality functions in sexual health education, and how it might fail in its intentions.

Concluding activity

Participants are invited to identify a key learning point of the module, and to reflect upon how these ideas might inform their own research or professional practice.
Further reading (includes lecture bibliography)


