

Gender, sexuality, and development

The dominant approaches to gender and development between the 1970's and 1990's ignored the issue of sexuality almost completely. Whether theorists drew on a WID, WAD, or GAD (see the Gender and Development materials) approach, 'women' were seen primarily through economic lenses which positioned them either as 'outside' production (and needing to be recognized as 'inside'), central to production (in the household and beyond), and/or part of heterosexual dyads and family networks.

Reproductive health has long been a development concern, but even here the focus has been on women as mothers, rather than on women as people whose sexuality included fertility and the issue of control and choice over reproduction. Access to contraception in some contexts have radically changed women's relationship to the meanings of reproduction, but there are also countries (such as apartheid South Africa) in which forced sterilization and government sponsored programmes to inject contraceptives into poor women have formed part of state strategies around population control. In addition, of course, there are many cultural and religious contexts in which contraception is frowned upon. The politics of reproductive health and rights deserve a separate review (see Gender and Health).

In the late 90's, and the 21st century, issues of sexuality have moved more centrally onto the 'development' stage. This has been propelled by three main forces. Firstly, the need to combat the transmission of HIV has radically altered the face of 'development' discourses, forcing conversations about offering women access to micro-credit schemes or improving girls' access to education to recognize the dynamics of sexuality at play in every level of society. The politics of development have been forced to engage proactively with the meaning of constraints and controls over women's sexualities, the meaning of transactional sex in the management of poverty, and the impact of multiple and concurrent sexual partnerships. At the same time, national and international discourses on sexual health and rights, spurred by the 1994 Population Council Conference in Cairo (see below) have encouraged debate about the salience of sexuality in thinking through issues of access to reproductive health, challenges around sexual violence, and the meaning of non-heterosexual desire and relationships.

The [IDS](#) have produced valuable material which seeks to summarize some of the ways in which traditional development concerns (such as access to clean water, or electricity) can be integrated into work on gender and sexuality. There has been a slow take-up of such ideas, overall, with the

exception of the outpouring of material on HIV and AIDS, which is universally understood as a huge development challenge and one critically engaged with the politics of gender and sexuality. The material on this is too vast to cite, and the bibliography by Pereira begins to hint at the range and complexity of issues which can be explored.

Alongside literature on the politics of gender and sexuality around HIV transmission has also emerged literature on new sexual cultures and options, which arise as a result of globalization, and the ways in which trans-national mobilities can create new zone of sexual norms, for men and for women. Sandra Manual's book on youth sexual cultures within Maputo (see the [CODESRIA website](#)) is an excellent example of research which began with an interest in HIV transmission among youth and grew into a fascinating study of emerging norms around gendered and sexual heterosexual interactions in an urban environment which encourages pleasure, multiple partnership, and a rejection of traditional values. This is an exciting arena in which to conduct research, and one in which - where students are open to discussion - teaching could allow for the exploration of the emergence of 'new' interactions between gender and sexuality in rapidly changing worlds.

A final theme here might want to explore the concept of transactional sex in depth. Often linked with issues of economic migration and the negotiation of poverty, forced or consensual transactional sex is part and parcel of a world in which sex as a commodity offers both opportunities and dangers. Trafficking remains a reality throughout the world, and is especially prevalent in Southern Africa, across the borders of Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi, into South Africa. Africans are also trafficked beyond the continent according to MAPODE, of Zambia, and sex-tourism is part of tourist activity in places as far apart as Senegal and Zanzibar or Mombasa.