P03 / Feminist Governance in the 21st Century

Topic : GENDER, DIVERSITY AND PUBLIC POLICY

Chair : Stephanie Paterson (Concordia University)

Second Chair : Francesca Scala (Concordia University)

Third Chair : Lisa Smith (Douglas College)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

With many post-industrial democracies undergoing dramatic shifts to the right, a few states, such as Canada, New Zealand, and Iceland, for example, stand out on the world stage for their explicit commitment to progressive, specifically feminist, politics. Indeed, the Prime Ministers in these countries have expressly committed to improving the lives of women and marginalized groups through their established feminist policy agendas. While these developments appear promising, the literatures on state feminism, state engagement, and feminist public administration remind us of the potential contradictory effects that result when states take up and deploy feminist knowledge. Towards this end, the objectives of this panel (which is one of two proposed panels on feminist governance and policy) are as follows:

- to explore the factors that have contributed to the re-emergence of feminism as a political force;
- to investigate and unpack what feminism means in these contexts and how it is practiced;
- to explore how feminist knowledges are taken up and deployed by governments and its effects;
- to understand how feminist mobilization is resisting populist forces

CALL FOR PAPERS

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· Feminism in policy practice: policy analysis, consultation/deliberation, implementation and evaluation
· Feminist policy in practice: feminist expertise, policy outcomes, etc.
· Feminist political discourse: what does it mean, who is included, etc.
· Backlash against feminism
· Protest politics and social movements
· Governance feminism/feminist governance
· Intersectionality in feminist policy and institutions

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Session 1Feminist Governance in the 21st Century

Thursday, June 27th 16:30 to 18:30 (MB 2.255)

Discussants

Stephanie Paterson (Concordia University)

Francesca Scala (Concordia University)

Promise and Peril: A Preliminary Review of Sexual Violence and Misconduct Policies in British Columbia

Carla Hotel (Douglas College)

Meghan Wingrove (Douglas College)

Lisa Smith (Douglas College)

On May 19, 2016 the Government of British Columbia approved the Sexual Violence and Misconduct Policy Act requiring post-secondary institutions to develop procedures and guidelines to address sexual misconduct and harassment on campus. For many, the Act was seen as long overdue, and the culmination of years of activism and social pressure to deal with toxic organizational culture and entrenched hierarchies within post-secondary institutions. To some extent, post-secondary institutions were behind the times; feminist scholars and activists have long argued that sexual violence cannot be understand as a ‘personal trouble’ and must be recognized as a ‘public issue’ embedded within deeper structures of power and inequality. Addressing sexual violence in any setting requires reshaping the nature and culture of said institution, but equally engaging in broader work around shifting the structural conditions that support and legitimate continued violence and domination. Developing policy can be seen as taking an important step in the right direction. Drawing on the insight of policy scholars, it is worthwhile to recognize that policies themselves can be understood as important sites for the cultural production of discourses about sexual violence, even without considering their intent or implementation.

This paper presents preliminary results from an analysis of sexual violence and misconduct policies, from a sample of post-secondary institutions in the Metro Vancouver region. This nascent analysis will be placed within the wider context of changes and shifts taking place within British Columbia, but also Canada, in relation to sexual violence and gender-based violence. Drawing on Bacchi’s work on post-structural policy analysis, we may consider the following questions: In what way do these policies construct the problem of sexual violence? In what way do these policies conceive of power and inequality in relation to sexual violence? How are the needs of survivors conceptualized and addressed? Who is left out of these policies and what are the consequences? We will speak to the homogenizing effects of policy seeking to address social problems. Initial reviews suggest that there is an ongoing absence of those most vulnerable and marginalized groups within policy documents, most notably Indigenous women and girls, racialized women, differently abled, trans, queer and gender fluid folks. While there is a movement toward addressing sexual violence as a form of structural violence, we argue that the scope of the social problem as defined within policy, is still too limited. Through this analysis, we hope to highlight the need for continued and ongoing discussion, dialogue and action. We encourage institutions to continue working with and alongside those who have been engaging in grassroots activism, within the community and not-for-profit sector with a view to moving towards a meaningful commitment to social change in policy, but also to extend far beyond.

Discourse practices by the first women-majority legislature in the United States

Magdalena Martinez (Rowan University)

Jason Henkle (University of Nevada, Las Vegas - School of Public Policy and Leadership)

Deanna Cooper (UNLV)

In 2019, the Nevada State Legislature became the first congress to assemble a government where female lawmakers comprised the majority. From the bordellos of the Comstock to the Las Vegas Strip, Nevada's history has been characterized by a unique culture of vice and virtue. This legacy endures, exhibited predominately today by an international tourist economy which capitalizes on colorful histories and competing motifs disseminated within a culture of nonstop action and entertainment. Whether its live shows, gentlemen's clubs, or state-sanctioned prostitution, Nevada's feminine mystique is often portrayed by popular culture through a dialogue of female stereotypes. Yet, despite this Nevadans' have elected a majority of women to state government, and female politicos have now come to be the majority within the Nevada State Legislature. Considering the competing narratives, it begs the question of how did this happen and what are the public policy implications of a female-majority legislature? Certainly, many post-industrial democracies have seen the rise of female-majority governments, as a new political discourse inclusive to feminist policies has arrived and shifted the legislative debate towards increased social intervention for our most marginalized populations. Nevada's new female majority state legislature represents a new chapter in this movement, and as a result, presents a social context ripe for empirical study. Through an assemblage of qualitative data – personal interviews, legislative artifacts, and reports of legislative activity – we seek to understand how a female majority legislature impacts public policy. Specifically, how has a female majority in the Nevada State Legislature shaped policy priorities and altered the dynamics of discourse within the policymaking process? Has a new dialogue emerged, and if so how has this impacted policymaking in Nevada?

For this paper, we utilize a critical discourse analysis framework because language utilized by policymakers can serve as a mechanism to delimit the legislative arena, and unavoidably impact legislative actions (Fischer, 2003; Fischer & Gottweis, 2012). Language use is always strategic and all expressions have an epistemological agenda or a way of seeing the world (Hajer, 2006; Johnstone, 2002). Agendas are present within policymaking discourse, as actors utilize dialogue to make representations concerning actions and events, and depictions of knowledge status are revealed through the nomenclature or word choice of actors through the incorporation of stakeholders and other voices into the legislative process (Fischer & Gottweis, 2012; Hajer, 2006). In this way, beliefs, whether conscious or unconscious, are mediated through discourse, and the utility of language corresponds with the perception of reality. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) focuses on unveiling the hidden agenda of discourse in the social world and is drawn from critical theory (Fairclough, 2001; Cameron, 2001). Critical theory and CDA discern the connections between language and other elements in social life that are often opaque. By utilizing this methodology, we will uncover how discourse connects to social expressions of power and domination, including how language and ideology intersect with a policymaker's personal and social identities.

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The Map is not the Territory: Delivering on Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy

Alisha Clancy (Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada)

Amar Nijhawan (Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada)

In 2017, the Government of Canada announced a Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP), where 95 percent of Canada's total aid budget will be used to "help advance gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls" by 2022. This ambitious policy was viewed as setting a new standard internationally; while countries like Australia, Sweden and Norway have explicit feminist foreign policies that put women at the center of humanitarian work and crisis negotiations - Canada is the first donor country to explicitly "gender" its international assistance budget in this way. However, since its announcement – the efficacy of the FIAP's implementation has been called into question. Some suggest that the FIAP's approach to gender equality needs to look beyond technocratic solutions to address the deeply held systemic norms that exist at the heart of gender-related issues in countries that receive development assistance. Additionally, while focusing on "women and girls" refines Canada's development mandate, it also runs the risk of homogenizing the experiences of women in developing countries by approaching all gender related constraints the same way or from a Canadian point of view. This presentation will examine the efficacy and implementation of feminism in international assistance projects through an analysis of data and experiential evidence from implementing a Global Affairs Canada funded project (APEC-Canada Growing Business Partnership). It will look at the practical challenges faced by programming to support women entrepreneurs in Southeast Asia, with a focus on implementing FIAP in the context of Indonesia. It will outline the larger programmatic challenges associated with implementing a feminist policy, and the opportunities that exist for improving Canada's feminist development mandate.

Advances or stagnation? Relationship between the feminist agenda and the Peruvian congress 2011-2016

Katherine Zegarra (Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú)

The relationship between feminist organizations and the Peruvian government has been modifying itself since the arrival of democracy and the institutionalization of such organizations. The 2011-2016 parliamentary term was especially relevant for the feminist agenda as certain topics, such as violence against women and their political and sexual rights, were discussed. In this investigation, we will analyze the relationship between the gender agenda, the feminist organizations and the members of the parliament. For said purpose, we propose both a prior and a subsequent analysis of the draft laws which supported women rights.

A qualitative analysis of four feminist draft laws has been made, under the following criteria: the legislator's gender: two men and two women; their political parties: conservative or progressive; the different stages that each of the drafts reached: their success or failure; and their relationship with the national feminist agenda. In this exploratory investigation, we used three indicators to analyze how a draft law is born: the legislator's own experience, the context and the organized society's influence.

The experience is understood as the commitment with the topic, through work, academic or personal experiences. Second, the environment is understood as experiences which create awareness, either by people close or unrelated to the congressman. And lastly, the organized society's influence is understood as the issues which are identified by feminist organizations. We find that at least one out of the three indicators must be present for a congressman to present a draft law in favor of women rights.

Then, we do an analysis subsequent to the draft law's presentation, where we identify three other factors: the commitment understood as both the formal and informal practices of the congressman for the draft to manage to pass the political filters. The second indicator is the congressman's power, regarding to having key positions, such as the presidency of commissions or of the Board of Officers, we also consider the spokesmanship of the party and its cohesion. And third, we consider the juncture and political and social environment, which is related to how the political agenda is working.

We find that the institutional dynamic becomes fundamental, especially having key charges; most draft laws stay in the referral in commission stage. And so, the part can either mean an advantage or a disadvantage for the congressman or congresswoman, since the formation of the commissions presidency is proportional to the number of congressmen, as is the political leverage at the moment of negotiation the Congress'agenda.

Questioning GBA+ in Canada’s LGBTQ2 Secretariat: Two-Spirit Communities and LGBTQ2-Related Initiatives

Leanne Letourneau (Concordia University)

The Canadian government has committed to implementing gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) in its federal departments. GBA+ assesses how women, men and gender diverse individuals experience policy and programs differently and the ways that intersecting identities influence these experiences. In this paper, I will assess whether the implementation of GBA+ by the LGBTQ2 Secretariat is evident, particularly in their efforts directed towards Two-Spirit communities. The LGBTQ2 Secretariat was created in 2017 to support the Canadian Prime Minister’s special advisor on LGBTQ2 issues and to inform the government about important issues regarding LGBTQ2 communities. Considering LGBTQ2 communities are not homogeneous, questioning the level of intersectionality employed by the LGBTQ2 Secretariat in its efforts is necessary. For example, Two-Spirit communities are not only considered gender and/or sexually diverse, but they are also members of Indigenous communities; consequently, they are at risk of experiencing multiple forms of oppression related to sexism, homophobia/transphobia, settler colonialism, racism and classism.

Therefore, in this paper, I will question whether the LGBTQ2 Secretariat uses GBA+ to assess how proposed LGBTQ2-related policies and programs may impact Two-Spirit communities differently than other LGBTQ communities. For instance, does the LGBTQ2 Secretariat simply ‘add on’ Two-Spirit communities to the LGBTQ acronym in its initiatives, or does it consider that Two-Spirit communities not only experience homophobia/transphobia within their Indigenous communities, but also racism within LGBTQ communities? Does the LGBTQ2 Secretariat's policies/programs acknowledge that Two-Communities are not universal, but that each Indigenous tribe may have different beliefs and values regarding gender and sexual diversity? Finally, are there policies/programs proposed to address the loss of Two-Spirit culture through colonization, through the imposition of gender and sexual binaries, as well as address ongoing settler colonialism?

In order to answer these questions, I will assess the various efforts by the LGBTQ2 Secretariat. For example, I will analyse their ‘Free to be me’ website, particularly under their ‘news and update’ section; I will search through the Hansard for references to the LGBTQ community and/or Two-Spirit communities; and I will question if there are any intergovernmental efforts between the LGBTQ Secretariat and Indigenous Services Canada. If the LGBTQ2 Secretariat is implementing GBA+, then an intersectional consideration for Two-Spirit communities should be evident.

This paper fits with the theme of the “Feminist Governance in the 21st Century” panel because GBA+ developed from gender-based analysis; a policy tool used to assess how policy may impact men and women differently. GBA was originally adopted by the Canadian federal government to advance gender equality and is based on feminist knowledges; consequently, GBA+ is a feminist policy tool that has been implemented by the federal government to improve the lives of not only women, but all marginalized communities. Therefore, questioning whether the LGBTQ2 Secretariat uses GBA+ will not only exemplify how a feminist policy tool can contribute to understanding how policies and programs are experienced differently, but will also hold the Canadian government accountable to its commitment in implementing GBA+.