Centre for Sociology, Anthropology and Politics

Final Report

Teaching Gender & Sexuality Issues in Politics and International Relations Departments

Project Leaders: Peter Kerr & Emma Foster

Research Assistance: Anthony Hopkins, Christopher Byrne & Linda Ahall

Department of Political Science and International Studies,
School of Government and Society,
University of Birmingham
Abstract/Summary of Research

In the last 20 years there have been various literatures which have highlighted the importance of gender identity and sexuality as key political and international relations (IR) issues which serve to shape and discipline power relations (for example, in relation to politics see Childs and Kook, 2006; Weldon, 2006; Lovenduski, 2001; and in relation to IR, see Tickner, 2001; Carpenter, 2005; Steans, 2006; Jones, 2009; Youngs, 2004). These literatures span across the whole gamut of political science and increasingly, IR, and encompass such areas as political theory (for example see, Squires, 1999), human rights (for example see, Yuval-Davis, 2006), environmental politics (for example see Bretherton, 2003), international security (for example see Tickner, 2004) and so on.

The purpose of this project was to explore whether this increasing acknowledgment of gender power relations as an inherently ‘political’ concern is reflected in the delivery of Politics and International Relations at the level of undergraduate teaching. However, our research found, that despite the importance of such issues for Politics and IR, at the level of research, these are rarely dealt with adequately within the content of teaching material covered in ‘top ranked’ UK Politics and International Relations departments. As a result, much of the teaching of issues of gender and, particularly sexuality, remain either concentrated within Sociology and Cultural Studies departments or dispersed throughout a number of Arts and Humanities programmes. Few Political Science and IR departments offer extensive or in-depth coverage of gender or sexuality issues, with the result that many political science undergraduates merely experience a brief introduction to ‘Feminism’ as their only encounter with key debates over gender inequalities and sexual identity. As such, our research sought to encompass three broad aims:

i) to provide a comparative ‘mapping’ of the distribution of gender and sexuality teaching at undergraduate level across 16 ‘top ranked’ departments;

ii) to locate and highlight the types of problems that inhibit the teaching of gender and sexuality within Political Science and IR departments;

iii) and, explore the consequences of this for students of these disciplines.

Our research is premised on the grounds that gender and sexuality issues are an important component of teaching and learning in the disciplines of Politics and IR. As such, the central aim of this project has been to advance the teaching of issues of gender and sexuality throughout the disciplines of Political Science and International Relations.

This research report is divided into six main sections. The first part section provides a brief background to the research by outlining the importance and pedagogical advantages of having gender and sexuality issues placed firmly within politics and IR curriculums in higher education. Section Two provides a thorough review of the pedagogical literature on teaching gender across the social sciences. Section Three provides a detailed summary of the methodology behind the project. In Section Four we discuss the key findings of our research. Section Five provides an interpretation of the broader consequences of the absenting or
sidelining of gender and sexuality within these disciplines. Finally, in Section Six, we discuss briefly some reflections on the problems encountered when teaching gender and sexuality issues in Politics and IR departments with some brief thoughts on potential strategies for promoting the teaching of these issues to students.

Section One: Background

Undergraduate students of Political Science, in the early stages of their foundational year, are routinely confronted with the difficult question of ‘what is politics?’ The overarching and appropriately vague answer to this question is that ‘politics is about power’ (Freeden, 2005, 116). Furthermore, as an extension to this first order question, tutors on foundational modules as well as authors of foundational politics text books (such as Heywood, 2000) will often detail two main ways of thinking about politics - through either an ‘arena’ definition, or a process definition. The former refers broadly to an institutionally focussed analysis of ‘formal’ political processes whilst the latter implies a broader focus on the ways in which power and politics are experienced by individuals within everyday settings. However, although students are often briefed about the process definition, throughout their undergraduate programmes there is a considerable bias towards institutionalised forms of power located within and through institutions, government and governance. Considerably less time is spent on looking at the organisation of power relations outside the overarching settings of the state or economy and the various ways in which subjects and identities are constructed through everyday social interactions. Arguably, these latter issues should fall under the study of both Politics and IR, rather than being, as they mainly are at present, the sole preserve of Sociology, Cultural Studies and the Humanities and are at least of equal value to the largely positivist studies of governmental institutions (see Hay and Marsh, 1999).

This bias within Politics and IR disciplines towards ‘legitimate’ systems of government and economy offers, in our view, a very limited definition of ‘power’ and the ways that this impacts upon the daily lives and experiences of individuals. Moreover, such a restricted definition of ‘politics’ also serves to offer very few theoretical tools to help develop the critical potential of undergraduate students. If further time and credence was lent to issues of identity politics, including gender, sexuality, race, class and ethnicity, then there would be a greater scope for critical analysis (see Hartley, 1999, 398-399). Indeed, looking through gender lenses in relation to politics (Squires, 1999, 1) and IR (Steans, 2006, 1) highlights the univocality of a privileged malestream and western-centric view of these disciplines. Focusing on gender relations and women’s peripheral position in these areas opens up debates regarding new sets of experiences and voices that have previously been rendered invisible in the tradition of Politics and IR scholarship. As one of the most central feminist scholars, Luce Irigaray noted, the focus on women, rather than being some kind of intellectual triviality, works to:

try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it… to resubmit herself… to ideas about herself, that are
elaborated in/by a masculine logic, **but so as to make visible... what was supposed to remain invisible**’ (The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine in Whitford, 1991, p124. Emphasis added).

Methodologically, this position opens up potential to critique mainstream political practices and academic trends by making visible the invisible (Pettman, 1992; 1994; Enloe, 2000) and holds implications for a variety of intersecting identity and subjective positions that have been traditionally marginalised and silenced. In other words, women specific and gender analyses provide certain methodological tools that are useful in constructing a richer and more critical study of Politics and International Relations. As Joel Oestreich (2007: 327) notes in his work on teaching gender in IR; ‘I do use [gender] to interrogate realism and liberal institutionalism’ and ‘[f]or my international political economy class...[m]y standard question is ‘Where are the women?’

Similarly, issues of sexuality, particularly through the lens of Queer Theory, also enrich theoretical understanding of Politics and IR. The destabilisation of categories, including gender and sexuality, which seek to organise power relations highlights the contestability (and undermines the value) of certain repressive systems such as the family, economy and the nation. As Britzman notes in *Is there a Queer Pedagogy? Or, Stop Reading Straight*:

> The other political experience I bring to bear on education is gay and lesbian demands for civil rights, for the redefinition of family, for public economies of affection and representations, and for the right to an everyday not organized by violence, exclusion, medicalisation, criminalisation and erasure. More specifically, gay and lesbian demands for civil rights call into question the stability and fundamentalist grounds of categories like masculinity, femininity, sexuality, citizenship, nation, culture, literacy, consent, legality, and so forth; categories that are quite central to the ways in which education organises knowledge of bodies and bodies of knowledge (in S. Ball, 1998: 104).

To sum up, the development of pedagogies that focus on, and are informed by, gender and sexuality within Politics and IR can, as such, be considered an essential tool for the following key reasons:

- Enriching the discipline and encouraging critical analysis of mainstream discourses (see Oestreich, 2007: 327).
- Promoting the visibility of experiences and voices that traditionally have been silenced and marginalised and thus emphasising the effects of power regimes (for example see Enloe, 1990).
- Destabilising normalised and naturalised identity and subject categories that harbour implications for political organisation and problematic power relations.

Returning to the question ‘what is politics?’ and the answer, ‘politics is about power’ the development of teaching on gender and sexuality within the discipline appears invaluable. This is because the main focus of such teaching centres on how subjects are constructed for representation, addresses issues of how power is experienced by marginalised groups of
people and also goes some way to hypothesise how power relations are organised based on contestable identity categories.

Section Two: Literature Review

For the purposes of this report, it is important to highlight that the literature on pedagogy in higher education in relation to teaching sexuality and gender studies is largely housed within the discipline of Sociology (for example see Berheide and Segal, 1985; Blee, 1986; Bohmer and Briggs, 1991; Lee, 1993; Moore, 1997; Davis, 2005; Guiffre et. al., 2008). This is obvious when one scans the contents of journals such as Teaching Sociology, which regularly feature articles on teaching gender and sexuality, in comparison to journals which are more focussed on teaching political studies and IR, which rarely mention gender or sexuality issues at all (although there are a limited number of IR focused pieces such as Steinstra, 2000; Oestreich, 2007; and Goldstein, 2007).

As well as the absence of literature on teaching gender and sexuality, particularly within Political Science, there is also a scarcity of literature on teaching sexuality studies generally. Often the literature on teaching sexuality focuses on sex education and personal and general education in secondary schools (for example see Moran, 2002). However, there are a couple of pieces which focus on the teaching of sexuality at university level in the Social Sciences and Humanities. These include Nancy Davis’ 2005 work Taking Sex Seriously: Challenges in teaching about sexuality and Kristine Baber and Colleen Murray’s 2001 article A Postmodern Feminist Approach to Teaching Human Sexuality. In brief, Davis’ article (2005) offers some insights into the problems faced by teachers when teaching sexuality and the Baber and Murray (2001) article highlights the benefits of applying a postmodern feminist framework to teaching sexuality studies.

Apart from the scarcity or absence of literature on teaching gender and sexuality on Political Science and IR programmes, there is another problem which this project has sought to address. This problem is to do with author perspective. Often the literature is based on personal anecdotal evidence from the author(s) of the article. As such, it is largely based on one university and, often, this is a university located in the US. This project, on the other hand, looked quantitatively and comparatively at a number of institutions (16 in total) and qualitatively at a variety of educator experiences in higher education in the UK. As such, this project has aimed to make a contribution to, as well as build upon, the previous but relatively limited, work available on the topic.

Another important issue to raise is that there is a wider debate amongst gender scholars about how gender should be taught generally. This debate, which has been apparent in the literature since the 1980s, largely centres on whether the focus should be on women’s studies, with women as the target learners (Lee, 1993, 27) and the subjects and objects of research and education on the topic or whether the focus should be on gender studies and therefore should look at the dynamic, although problematic, power relations between men and women (Berheide and Segal, 1985, 274). Indeed, in the contemporary climate there is a strong
preference towards gender studies, as opposed to women’s studies, and as such, this has informed the focus of this project.

What the literature says about the Classroom

The contemporary literature on teaching gender and sexuality studies, limited as it may be, points out a series of problems with the teaching of these topics in the Social Sciences generally. Many of these concerns have been supported in the empirical work we conducted and in the Centre for Sociology, Anthropology and Politics (C-SAP) gender and sexuality reference groups we have attended. Within the literature, the primary problem which is highlighted by a number of scholars is student resistance to gender studies (Oestreich, 2007, Stake et. al., 2008) and feminism (Jones, 1997; Titus, 2000; Webber, 2005). In terms of student resistance to gender studies, Oestreich notes that getting students to think about gender often causes ‘puzzlement’ for the students due to the abstract character of many of the themes within the area of gender studies (2007, 327). He argues that the complexity of the material is a problem here. Also, as Davis argues, problems arise when teaching gender and sexuality studies, due to the students’ belief in ‘natural/biological’ gender categories and sexuality which is ‘interiorised as a realm of experience that is private’ (2005, 17). This makes it difficult for educators to teach about constructed genders and sexualities as students arrive with certain assumptions and barriers towards the topic.

With regard to feminism more specifically, Joshua Goldstein (2007) also highlights the complexity of teaching feminism on IR modules due to the differences between feminist perspectives and the theoretical and conceptual pluralism inherent within debates around feminism. He argues that:

Students expect to learn about ‘the’ feminist theory of IR, and would arguably get more out of a discussion that limited itself to one theoretical perspective – either liberal or difference feminism’ (320)

Furthermore, beyond the complexity of gender studies and feminist theory, resistance from students is located in the potentially threatening position of discussing power and privilege (Bohmer and Briggs, 1991; Titus, 2000, 22-3) or in the general resistance to feminism from people, particularly women, related to the zeitgeist of post-feminism. In western societies post-feminism is argued to be the trend which works to ‘deny, down-play and ignore the existence of gender inequality, making these issues even more difficult to address’ (Morrison et al, 2005: 151). If there is the common-held belief amongst students that feminist goals such as equality have been achieved then teaching gender, especially when the country of study is a ‘Western’ country, appears redundant.

The second main theme which is highlighted in the literature is the lack of teaching resources, such as textbook materials, at the gender teachers’ disposal. Extending their concern over the complexity of the subject, both Goldstein (2007) and Oestreich (2007) argue that the available teaching resources for gender need to be rethought. In particular, Oestreich argues that it is difficult to find textbooks which look at gender in an integrated way and, as such, tend not to cohere with the topic more widely in order to demonstrate to students ‘how
‘paradigms’ relate to each other and the overall course goals’ (ibid., 328). In addition, Goldstein points out challenges when integrating gender into an IR textbook and, subsequently, into IR modules. He highlights, in line with Oestreich, the difficulties in positioning gender as either a topic which runs throughout the textbook or module as a whole or as a topic which we should dedicate one particular week or chapter towards (2007, 320). Conversely, Davis (2005, 17) argues, with regard to sexuality studies, that the main challenge she faces is selecting appropriate readings from a dynamic and ever-increasing literature base.

The final key problem which is highlighted in the literature, with relation to gender teaching, is ‘tokenism’. This relates to the above question of where gender should be positioned in relation to modules or within textbooks. If there is just one week within a module or one chapter within a book dedicated to the topic, gender begins to look like a ‘sidelined’ rather than ‘mainstreamed’ subject. As Oestreich notes:

Doing it this way reinforces the impression the students have that gender analysis is a marginal activity, one without much to say about the more practical issues like security, trade and development (2007, 328)

The argument here is that gender, when limited to only one week of coverage, or to one chapter in a textbook, appears to be more of a trivial issue than other topics and also, that gender appears un-relational to other topics such as economics, security, political theory and so on.

These three points are the key ones raised in the literature about the teaching of gender and, although to a lesser extent (due to the dearth of literature), sexuality. Other points were also highlighted in the literatures which focus on the institutional constraints faced by feminist scholars (Barata, 2005) and the reinforcement and perpetuation of gender norms and, even, sexism within the academy (Thompson and McGivern, 1995; Ferfolja, 2007). These are, indeed, serious institutional problems which must be acknowledged. However, for the purposes of this project, we are concerned to look at the more immediate issue of teaching gender and sexuality within the Politics or IR classroom whilst acknowledging (rather than focusing on) these wider institutional problems.

Section Three: Method

In order to gain a thorough insight into the teaching of gender and sexuality studies in Politics and IR departments we took a 3 tiered approach to our research. This included both a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods in the form of: a comparative mapping exercise of top 16 ‘top-ranked’ universities in the UK; semi structured interviews with academics who, to varying degrees, teach gender and/or sexuality; and, questionnaires for students of sustained gender and sexuality modules. We used mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative) to complement the different types of research questions we sought to extrapolate and, more importantly, to grasp a broad data set. Indeed, it is arguable that mixed methods work to
‘produce [a] more complete knowledge necessary to inform theory and practice’ (Burke Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In this instance, the use of mixed methods, we believe, offered a broader picture of the state of teaching gender and sexuality in UK universities. By mapping the teaching across politics and IR departments we could respond to the question ‘when and where is gender and sexuality being taught in politics and IR departments?’ Complementary to this we could then draw on more qualitative data from staff (through semi structured interviews) and students (through questionnaires) of university programmes to investigate how gender and sexuality is taught and what the potential barriers are to teaching and learning in this area.

**Mapping Exercise**

Our first key task was to map the comparative distribution of the teaching of gender and sexuality across ‘top ranked’ UK departments in the area of Politics and International Relations. Our focus here was restricted to examining undergraduate degree programmes in order to quantify where gender and sexuality teaching occurred in these respective departments. Clearly, the selection of ‘top ranked’ departments is a highly contentious endeavour. As such, we opted to use existing data to rank the ‘top ten’ departments in terms of both teaching satisfaction and research excellence. Thus, our data is drawn from the National Student Survey 2009 (hereafter NSS) and the Research Assessment Exercise 2008 (RAE).

The National Student Survey data was obtained from [http://www.hefce.ac.uk/Learning/nss/data/2009/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/Learning/nss/data/2009/) and imported to an Excel spreadsheet. This was then analysed as follows:

The Level 3_2 results tab on NSS_09 excel data spreadsheet was filtered to show the results for Politics as a subject area. The data was then summarised (using subtotals) by Institution and the column 'Percentage agree' averaged across all questions. This was considered to be the most suitable measurement of overall satisfaction, as the questions used (per NSS_09 questions tab) are all positively loaded, therefore a higher percentage means a greater degree of satisfaction with the course. The league table for Politics overall satisfaction was taken from *The Times*’ website ([http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/](http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/)) and our results reviewed to ensure they appeared reasonable in line with these. Full time courses matched almost exactly, with the addition of Liverpool Hope University, which appears to have been removed in previous years due to their wish not to be published in tabled data (Ibid). Table 1 (below) informed our final list of universities to focus upon.

---

1 The questionnaires included a qualitative and quantitative element.

2 Both full and part time courses were analysed which highlighted some additional institutions. However, the decision was taken not to extend the research to part time courses - therefore the sample only includes an analysis of full time undergraduate programmes.

3 Liverpool Hope has been excluded from the analysis, and so the produced NSS rankings for politics match those published in The Times. Furthermore, there was also very limited data publicly available from the Liverpool Hope University website. The sample was then extended by 1 which meant the University of Essex was included in the NSS top ten, but it also features in the top ten for the RAE (see sample below).
Table 1: Top Ten NSS Institutions by Overall Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>(Average) Percentage agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Leicester Average</td>
<td>86.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loughborough University Average</td>
<td>85.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Cambridge Average</td>
<td>84.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Exeter Average</td>
<td>84.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Birmingham Average</td>
<td>83.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Dundee Average</td>
<td>82.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Sheffield Average</td>
<td>82.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De Montfort University Average</td>
<td>82.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aberystwyth University Average</td>
<td>82.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Essex Average</td>
<td>81.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, we merged the NSS table with the RAE table. The relevant section of the 2008 RAE ([http://www.rae.ac.uk/pubs/2008/01/](http://www.rae.ac.uk/pubs/2008/01/)) is Unit of Assessment 39 as this classifies the performance of UK universities according to their research at levels 4/3/2/1. In order to rank the universities the following methodology was used. A grade point average was obtained by multiplying the percentage of research classified at level 4 (world leading) by 4, the percentage of level 3 (internationally excellent) by 3, the percentage of level 2 (recognized internationally) by 2 and the percentage of level 1 (recognized nationally) by 1. The results of each of these calculations are then added together and divided by 100 to produce an average score of between 0 and 4 which represents the average level of research for that subject. The results are highlighted in Table 2, with the ‘Average column’ being particularly relevant. As such the final table based on the RAE we used to inform our project is as follows:

---

4 In order to check the results produced in Table 1, these were compared with published tables that appeared in the Times and the results match precisely: [http://extras.timesonline.co.uk/pdfs/stug09/politics.pdf](http://extras.timesonline.co.uk/pdfs/stug09/politics.pdf)

5 Unit 39 of the RAE contains submission from 59 universities.

6 The same methodology as used by the Times Higher Education see [www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storycode=404786](http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storycode=404786)
As some universities featured in the top ten for both the RAE and the NSS, 16 Departments qualified for further analysis in this project, and they are listed in Table 3.

Table 3: The 16 universities selected for analysis

| University of Essex | 3.15 |
| University of Sheffield | 3.15 |
| Aberystwyth University | 2.95 |
| University of Oxford | 2.85 |
| London School of Economics and Political Science | 2.80 |
| University College London | 2.75 |
| School of Oriental and African Studies | 2.65 |
| University of Sussex (2/2): B - International Relations | 2.65 |
| University of Warwick | 2.65 |
| University of Exeter | 2.60 |
Having selected the departments to be examined, we then recruited PhD researchers to assist in detailed web-based research exploring the comparative distribution of teaching of gender and sexuality within the 16 university Politics and/or IR departments. We firstly explored each department’s websites (in some cases Politics/Politics and IR/IR or Government) for information on the number of staff who expressed a research or teaching interest in gender. This was to explore to the extent to which the delivery of modules on gender or sexuality matched the available expertise on these topics within each department. Secondly, we then investigated the number of modules available within each department which have a focus on gender/feminism/women/sexuality and related themes.

This was achieved by searching the public content of departmental websites at each of the 16 universities over the academic period 2009-10 and looking firstly for evidence of Degree Programmes on Gender, Feminism, Women, Sexuality or similar subjects. Following on from this, undergraduate modules were investigated and any module on Gender/Feminism/Women/Sexuality was noted. Finally, where possible, the content of the available modules was investigated for evidence of gender/feminism/women/sexuality as part of the module content.

There are a number of limitations to this approach and a number of assumptions were made in order to conduct this investigation. For example, it is worth noting that there are different types of ‘politics departments’. Some are departments of Politics and International Relations/Studies others are departments of Politics or Government, Contemporary European Studies (as in the case of Sussex) or, in the case of Aberystwyth, a Department of International Politics. This may have some influence over the focus of teaching within the departments in question. For example, in the case of Essex, the focus is largely on Government, as opposed to ‘politics’ more broadly. The London School of Economics also presented a problem as the disciplinary boundaries between departments seem less rigid than in other universities. Moreover, LSE has both a Department of Politics and a Department of International Relations. Consequently, the modules offered by both were investigated.

A further consideration is the varying way in which degree programmes are organised. Cambridge (Tripos) courses offer a wider range of interdisciplinary modules from Psychology and Sociology as well as Politics. It is also worth noting that the ‘outside’ option modules available varied significantly. This may just be because of the way they are listed on respective websites, but for some universities, notably Oxford (Sociology) Cambridge (Psychology) and the LSE (Gender Institute) there were a number of modules with gender content available as options. For the purposes of simplification we restricted our focus towards the specific modules listed on each website as options available for ‘Politics’, ‘International Relations/Studies/Politics’ and ‘Politics and International Relations’ undergraduate degree programmes. In many cases this would mean excluding consideration of available ‘outside’ modules not specifically listed on a department’s website. In this respect, we approached the research from the perspective of a ‘prospective undergraduate student’. If a department highlighted a specific module relating to gender, feminism, women or sexuality, we included this in our data set.
As such, a key concern regarding the data set was that the amount of publically available content varied significantly between institutions. For some, it was possible to access full module outlines and reading lists; for others only module outlines were available and for some it was only possible to obtain fairly brief module descriptions. In those cases where full module outlines could not be accessed, the assumption was made that if a brief description of the module content did not mention gender/feminism/women/sexuality or a related word, then it would be regarded as not containing a gender element for the purposes of this research. It is obviously the case that the more information available, the more certain one can be about the extent and nature of any gender content in a module. Whilst this approach may mean some courses with elements of gender/feminism have been omitted, it was assumed that where module contents were outlined, even briefly, if nothing relating to gender was listed, then it was unlikely to be an important constituent of the module. The results of this research are delivered in Section Four: Summary of Research Findings section of this project report, particularly Table Four.

**Interviews with University Educators**

The second tier of our research included a series of 5 in-depth semi-structured interviews with university lecturers who teach gender as part of or all of an undergraduate module. These university lecturers were associated with the universities of Birmingham, Lincoln and Leeds. The academics at Lincoln and Leeds were selected due our networks through C-SAP and both of these interviewees were based in Political Science and IR departments. Both participants, however, were Politics, rather than IR, lecturers. With regard to the University of Birmingham, 2 interviewees were based in the department of Political Science and International Studies but were more IR orientated; the other interviewee was based in the Department of Sociology. We initially decided, in order to keep the project focussed, that we would select interviewees only from Political Science and IR departments in order to highlight issues related directly with these disciplines. However, as there were no participants who taught sexuality studies in the Politics and IR departments we had access to, we included a lecturer from Sociology who taught sexuality studies in order to balance our research.

Indeed, we understand that it would have been beneficial to have had a larger and broader participant sample. For example, we would have liked to have included academics from Politics and IR departments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, but time and financial restraints inhibited this to a certain degree. Also, we would have liked to have interviewed more lecturers in Sociology and Cultural Studies departments to have gleaned ideas of best practice. Again, though, this was not possible due to the constraints of both time and resources; however, it is perhaps suffice to point towards these as potential areas for future research.

As is aforementioned, we used semi structured interviews, conducted between January 2009 and February 2010, which were based around institutional and classroom concerns regarding the teaching of gender and sexuality in lecturers’ respective departments. The semi structured interview was a good qualitative research tool as it allowed the participants to discuss at length their experiences of teaching and creating new modules (or sections of modules) in
this area. Moreover, due to the more fluid character of semi structured interviewing, we also gleaned additional insights from the respondents which were not integrated into the interview structure. Due to the depth of semi-structured interviews, each interview took between 1-2 hours. Moreover, the interviews were based more around ‘themes’ than direct questions in order for the research to be more relational. In other words, we sought to break down the barrier between interviewer and interviewee (researcher and researched) by employing more of a discussion format to the session. This arguably gave us a richer data set than a structured interview or questionnaire would have.

Based on the survey of the literature in the area of teaching gender and sexuality and our own, particularly in relation to Politics and IR departments, we prompted participants to discuss the following issues:

1) the representation of gender and sexuality topics in the curricula of their department;

2) the reasons they felt gender and/or sexuality should be included in the teaching of Politics and/or International Relations;

3) the constraints in getting gender and sexuality recognised in their departments;

4) the challenges in the classroom when teaching gender and sexuality;

5) tips and advice regarding best practice when teaching gender and/or sexuality.

There were some drawbacks to this part of our research. Firstly, as is indicated above, we would have liked a larger sample of participants in order to include experiences of lecturers from across the UK. Secondly, we would also have liked to include more male participants as only 2 of the 5 participants identified as male from our sample. This imbalance, however, is representative of the gender bias towards women in the teaching of gender (and, to a lesser extent, sexuality) issues. Finally, we would also have liked more representation from those who teach sexuality (although 1 of the 5 interviewees did teach sexuality studies in a sustained way). Again, this arguably relates to the absence of teaching on sexuality issues implicitly recognised through our literature review and overtly recognised in our findings which will be discussed shortly.

**Questionnaires**

Having mapped the teaching provision for gender and sexuality within Politics and IR departments and having interviewed ‘expert practitioners’ in these areas we then moved on to investigate the demand side of the research. In other words, we decided to investigate students’ views through the use of questionnaires. Aware that students are often considered the ‘missing voice’ (Cook Sather, 2002: 5) in research related to education we felt that this questionnaire input was necessary, especially in highlighting the benefits and limitations of current gender and sexuality teaching. Indeed, this was only a very small sample but, the evidence collected, does complement with the other data and, also, offers some insight into the missing ‘student voice’ (ibid).
In order to get an overview of what students felt about the teaching of gender and sexuality we distributed the questionnaire amongst students of the undergraduate 2nd year Gender and Sexuality module which, at that time, was housed in the Department of Sociology. This was because there are no modules which comprehensively deal with gender and sexuality in the Department of Political Science and International Studies at the University of Birmingham. Moreover, at this time, this module was open to students from the Department of Political Science and International Studies as an ‘outside’ module option. As such, 2 of our 41 questionnaire respondents were actually Politics/IR students.

The questionnaires were distributed in seminar classes at the beginning of 2010 (February). These were seminar classes conducted by one of the lead members of the research team on this project (namely Emma Foster). The questionnaires were filled out anonymously, with the class teacher leaving the room as they were completed. We felt that this worked to enhance the quality and authenticity of the responses.

From the distribution of questionnaires, we received 41 completed questionnaires; a response rate of approximately 38% of the students registered, considering there were 110 students registered on the module. As has been noted, 2 of the respondents were Politics and IR students. In addition, 1 student was a social policy student, 18 were media culture and society students and the other 20 were Sociology students. Unfortunately, and we raise this as a further area of concern, all students who responded to the questionnaire were female. This problem is related to the fact that the Gender and Sexuality module was predominantly attended by female students. In fact, 95.45% of the students registered to undertake the module were female; an issue which we return to later in this report.

The questionnaire was made up of seven questions and sought to:

i) identify some demographic and general data about the respondents, namely what degree they are undertaking and their gender identities;

ii) rate how worthwhile students felt the study of gender was;

iii) enquire whether students felt gender and sexuality studies was relevant to political science and IR disciplines;

iv) get qualitative data on what they enjoy and dislike about the teaching and learning of gender and sexuality studies (see appendix).

Questions 1-4 were closed questions with a quantitative element. These questions focused on demographic and general information as well as how worthwhile they considered the teaching of gender and sexuality to be and whether they believed gender and sexuality were important aspects of Politics and IR teaching. The project team felt that the closed and quantitative questions were necessary in order to maximise response rates and, consequently, gauge at least some student response from respondents who were reluctant to fill out the more time-consuming qualitative sections of the questionnaire. This worked out well considering all returned questionnaires were completed as far as question 4. Questions 5-7, which were open ended qualitative questions, sought to:
i) enquire why students did or didn’t feel that gender and sexuality were relevant to political science and IR;

ii) find out what students enjoyed about learning gender and sexuality;

iii) ascertain what students felt could be improved upon regarding the teaching of gender and sexuality.

With regard to the open ended, qualitative questions, only 21% (9 respondents) answered any of these. The findings of the questionnaires are presented in Section Four of this report.
Section Four: Summary of Research Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Number of Staff who Express an Interest in Gender</th>
<th>Number of Modules on Gender</th>
<th>% of Modules Offered by Dept</th>
<th>Number of Modules with 1 or more weeks on Gender/Feminism</th>
<th>% of Modules Offered by Dept</th>
<th>Number of Modules with Gender as Component</th>
<th>% of Modules Offered by Dept</th>
<th>Overall Number of Modules Examined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aberystwyth</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambridge</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De Montfort</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dundee</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essex</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exeter</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSE</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loughborough</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheffield</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOAS</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sussex</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCL</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warwick</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Distribution of Gender Teaching by Department

Our ‘mapping’ of the distribution of undergraduate gender modules across the 16 selected departments included a review of 629 modules in total (see Table 4). Of these, we found no undergraduate degree programmes dedicated to the study of gender or sexuality. Indeed, we only found in total 12 modules dedicated specifically to the study of gender or feminism. This represents an average of 1.9% of the total number of modules on offer. Of these 12, only 1 module explicitly focuses on the issue of sexuality, an area of study which was absent, in any form, even as a component, of any other module we looked at.

An important qualification here is that our figure of 12 full modules relating to issues of gender and sexuality is, indeed, a generous one on our part. In fact, three of these modules, listed on Aberystwyth’s website, are ‘intended for future use’ and, therefore, currently unavailable. If we took our focus to include only currently available modules then the overall number would be reduced to 9 in total. Moreover, the two modules listed on Cambridge’s website are both interdisciplinary modules housed within Sociology, and therefore, not strictly core components of the Politics and International Relations provision. Therefore, if
we had restricted our focus to modules currently available and housed within Politics and International Relations departments, then the overall number of modules available across the 16 departments would be 7.

Of the 16 departments, 7 offer no full modules on gender or sexuality at all. Thus, the overall distribution of gender and sexuality teaching very much reflects the overall balance of pedagogical literature on the topic, which, as noted above, is mainly housed within the disciplines of Sociology or the Humanities. Very clearly, the findings from our mapping exercise suggest that gender and sexuality are not classified, generally, as core components or a ‘Politics’ or ‘International Relations’ degree. This is further evidenced by the fact that all 12 of the full modules we found are available at levels 2 and 3 of degree programmes, rather than level 1, and none of them are compulsory modules.

Interestingly, and in contrast to the overall balance of the pedagogical literature, which points mainly towards gender issues in IR, our study found 6 modules which are largely directed towards a ‘politics’ focus, 4 which are mainly directed towards IR students and two which are interdisciplinary, although admittedly, these classifications are open to interpretation. The 12 modules are listed as follows:

- Women in the Third World (Aberystwyth)
- Women in Military Service (Aberystwyth)
- Gender Politics: Perspectives and Debates (Aberystwyth)
- Gender in World Politics (Birmingham)
- Gender & Society (Cambridge)
- The Family (Cambridge)
- Gender, Power and Sexuality (Dundee)
- Feminism (Leicester)
- Gender in Europe (Loughborough)
- The Politics of Gender (Sheffield)
- Gender and Politics (UCL)
- Gender & Development (Warwick)

From our comparative sample, the number of modules which offer at least one week on Gender or Feminism as part of a broader module (often political theory), increases slightly, though not considerably, to an average of 8.9%. Clearly, this low figure, combined with the above finding that none of the 12 full modules investigated constitute compulsory elements of a Politics or International Relations undergraduate degree programme, has important implications for the argument that gender has become ‘mainstreamed’ into the disciplines of
both Politics and International Relations. This doesn’t appear to be bourn out by our findings, which suggest that it may be more accurate to describe gender as being ‘sidelined’ as opposed to ‘mainstreamed’. It would certainly give some weight to arguments within the literature, and discussed previously, about gender ‘tokenism’.

In order to give a slightly richer insight into the argument that gender has become ‘mainstreamed’ into the disciplines of Politics and International Relations, we examined the extent to which gender is considered as a ‘component’ of other topics. By this, we mean that part of a lecture or weekly ‘topic’ may contain references to gender politics or issues. Unfortunately, obtaining clear and accurate information about this proved difficult in many instances. As Table Four suggests, we were unable, through web-based research, to obtain information from 6 of our 16 selected departments. Of the remaining 10 departments we concede that the availability of clear information on weekly topics was, at best, highly variable and dependant on the quality of information given by individual departments. As such, there is a considerable margin for error here in our findings. Nevertheless, the tentative findings we did glean from this suggests that the extent to which gender is mainstreamed as a component of other topics is highly variable across departments, with some departments such as Cambridge and Birmingham clearly scoring considerably higher in percentage terms (33% and 29% as an average of the total number of modules on offer respectively) than others such as Aberystwyth, LSE and Warwick (4%, 7.4% and 6.2% respectively).

Another relevant finding from our research is the ratio between staff who express an interest in gender issues (either in terms of teaching or research) and the number of gender modules on offer. The most notable cases from our study are Oxford, where seven members of staff express on their profiles an interest in the politics of gender, yet the department offers no dedicated modules on gender and, Warwick, where there is only one dedicated gender module and, again, seven staff who express an interest in this area. This could, perhaps, as suggested previously, point to a persistence of institutional constraints on members of staff who want to create gender modules. To some extent, the existence of institutional constraints is supported by our qualitative interview data and discussed below.

At the outset of the project we were interested to discover whether any discernible difference existed in the availability of gender modules across departments rated ‘top ten’ in terms of student satisfaction as compared to those in the ‘top ten’ in research terms. Here, we would conclude that this was not bourn out by our findings, with all 16 of our selected sample scoring consistently low in terms of the overall percentage of gender and sexuality teaching offered. Interestingly, if we take both Aberystwyth (ranked top in terms of ‘student satisfaction’) and Essex (ranked joint top in terms of research), neither department offered gender or sexuality modules during the 2009-10 academic period.

Key Findings from Student Questionnaires

1) 41 responses
2) All respondents identified as female
3) Most of the students felt that a focus on gender was either extremely or very worthwhile (92% - 38 students out on 41). Only 1 student (2%) felt that it was not worthwhile at all.

4) On the question, ‘do you think gender and sexuality is relevant to the study of politics and IR?’

   Yes – 29/41 (71%)
   No – 4/41 (10%)
   Don’t know – 8/41 (19%)

   Interestingly the Social Policy student and the Politics and IR students said ‘yes’ gender and sexuality is relevant to the study of politics and IR.

5) In response to question 4, ‘do you think that gender and/or sexuality issues are relevant to the study of politics and IR?’ Why/why not? – 8 respondents answered this question. Below are a selection of their comments:

   a. 4 of the 8 responses answered in varying ways YES because if equality between the genders has not been achieved then it is still a political issue. One student commented: ‘because of pay gaps and unequal representation of women in politics’
   b. 1 of the 8 responses answered YES ‘Gay and women’s rights are a political issue’
   c. 1 of the 8 answered ‘because society, economy and politics can’t be separated’
   d. 2 of the 8 answered YES because of gender problems in the developing world.
   e. No-one who answered NO offered a response to question 5 (i.e. why they said no)

6) This question received the lowest response - What aspects of learning about gender and sexuality do you enjoy? – with only 3 respondents, 2 of which responded that its interesting (or more interesting than other modules) the other respondent said ‘It makes you think about society differently – I get annoyed at all sorts of gender things now’

7) There were 5 responses to the final question - How do you think the teaching of gender and sexuality can be improved upon? – 3 of these responses, in varying ways, suggested that the reading material could be more accessible, especially with regard to the sexuality part of the module. One student answered ‘Some of the lectures are too much for a Wednesday morning’ and the other respondent suggested that ‘smaller classes would be nice as some issues are… a bit sensitive’
Section Six: Implications of the Project’s Findings

How Relevant are Current Understandings of the ‘Political’ to Students?

Our findings above show, in our view quite strikingly, that few Political Science and International Relations departments offer extensive or in-depth coverage of gender and sexuality issues, with the result that many Political Science and International Relations undergraduates merely experience a brief introduction to ‘Feminism’ as their only encounter with key debates over gender inequalities and sexual identity.

We believe that these findings are highly significant and raise important issues and questions about the overall content of a Politics and/or International Relations curriculum. A secondary concern from our findings is the relative ‘relevance’ of contemporary Political Science and International Relations topics to undergraduate students. Our overall findings suggest that, whilst we often introduce students, in year one, to both an ‘arena’ and ‘process’ definition of politics, and indeed, often also towards a concern for inequalities based around gender, race, class etc, these latter ‘political’ concerns are often sidelined or neglected altogether in favour of a focus on formal, institutionalised, ‘arena’ based topics, such as a focus on governmental, intergovernmental or broader governance relations.

Clearly, from a pedagogical point of view, a topic is likely to invoke more engagement from students if it can be linked to their everyday experiences (see Gill et. al., 2010). Whilst we would not want to suggest that a focus on elite political behaviour, either at a national or international level, has no relevance to students’ experiences, it is at least pertinent to point out that there is some considerable evidence that its relevance to citizens has diminished somewhat in recent years (Stoker, 2006; Hay, 2007; Marsh, O’Toole & Jones, 2007). Political Scientists are very much aware that citizenship engagement with formal political processes such as elections, representative bodies, political parties and interest groups – the very ‘arenas’ which Political Science is largely directed towards studying – has undergone a significant decline in recent years (Dalton & Weldon, 2005). Accompanying this decline in formal levels of political engagement has been an overall decline in levels of trust in political elites.

Thus, whilst political scientists have shown an increase in their focus on such formal arenas of representation, citizens in advanced industrial democracies appear to have shown a decrease in their overall engagement with these. It would be naïve to suggest that Political Science students are an exception to this rule. Thus, Political Scientists, and perhaps to a lesser extent International Relations scholars appear to have fixed their gazes on processes which many citizens have largely disengaged from. This is not to imply that we must no longer be concerned with formal political processes; far from it. But what we do argue here is that there is a need for a greater balance between a focus on elite behaviour and everyday political behaviour. Indeed, this is not a minor point. Any social science subject which begins to lose its overall relevance to the everyday experiences of citizens is likely to suffer both in terms of long-term recruitment (of students) and its ability to connect with wider social, political and economic processes (and thus policy-makers and practitioners). By failing to
recognise ‘gender’, ‘sexuality’ and issues relating to the body, as factors that impact on everyday lives, political scientists can only diminish their capacity to ‘connect’ with large swathes of public policy directed towards parenting, marital relationships, family relationships, employment relations, social care, income and wealth and so on. In other words, whilst Political Scientists and International Relations scholars may regard issues of gender and sexuality as having little relevance to issues of national and international politics and power, the empirical evidence suggests strongly that these are still highly important factors in shaping the activities of policy-makers themselves (O’Connor, et. al., 1999). Indeed, gender ‘matters’ to both everyday citizens and elite policy-makers alike. The less we recognise this and convey this to our students, the less able we are to connect to both students (in terms of our teaching) and political practitioners (in terms of our research).

What Constitutes ‘The Political’?

Through highlighting the reluctance towards teaching issues of gender and sexuality within Politics and IR departments, we found ourselves asking what constitutes the political. At the heart of this discussion is the question of what does and should constitute the boundaries of the study of both politics and power. It is precisely towards this question that the second wave feminist slogan ‘the personal is political’ is directed. For second wave feminists any analysis which focuses exclusively on elite political behaviour and formal political and economic institutions – what we term here as an ‘arena’ definition of the political - is inherently constrained in its ability to uncover the multiplicity of ways in which gender as a processual and relational construct ‘matters’ (see Hirschmann and Di Stefano, 1996). At its most simplistic level, the second wave feminist critique of ‘malestream’ social science directs us to the fact that, as elite political processes tend to be dominated by men (in terms of sheer numbers), an exclusive focus on these is likely to eliminate an appreciation of the role of women in the (re)production of social and political systems. At a deeper level, it also directs us towards the fact that gender is a process which we, as individuals, encounter in every social context; thus gender impacts upon our daily lives in a multiplicity of contexts and relationships which exist outside the boundaries of ‘formal’ political activity (ibid.). By this logic, any attempt to uncover ‘political’ behaviour and relationships of power which takes as its key unit of analysis a strictly arena definition of politics is inherently limited in its ability to touch the surface of the ways in which power impacts on our everyday experiences. As our research findings show, it would appear that, although feminism is recognised by political scientists as a legitimate set of approaches to studying politics and power, its central message – and overarching guiding principle - appears to have had limited impact on the boundaries of what Political Scientists and IR scholars believe to be the appropriate subject of their analyses.

Has Gender Become ‘Mainstreamed’ or ‘Malestreamed’?

Indeed, concerns about the position of gender and sexuality in the teaching of Politics and IR are often met with the response that gender and sexuality issues remain present but are now integrated into core modules (see Fiol-Matta & Chamberlain, 1994, ix-xi). In other words, that gender and, to a lesser extent, sexuality issues have been mainstreamed into the general
teaching agendas of Politics and IR departments. Although the evidence we have collated has, to a certain extent, evidenced some mainstreaming, it appears to have been at the expense of modules and courses which look at gender and sexuality in a sustained way. Indeed, scholars such as Jacobs (1996) suggest that gender mainstreaming should run in parallel to modules/courses where gender is the central concern; otherwise, one runs the risk of sidelining gender (and sexuality) within a largely ‘malestreamed’ academy. Similar to concerns over gender mainstreaming in domestic and international policy, gender mainstreaming within higher education curriculums, may run the risk that the sustained and systematic concentration on gender will be diffused (Lewis, 2006). Moreover, educators have noted that they do not have the time to create a sustained module on gender and, instead, ‘have to limit’ themselves ‘to integrating gender into’ other modules which they teach (Oestreich, 2007, 326). This may mean that what appears to be a gender mainstreaming - the integration of gender into other modules - may well be a pragmatic response to time and institutional constraints. In addition, for proponents of gender mainstreaming in higher education, and given that it could be argued this process is already taking place, what becomes important is that educators are given the tools to effectively teach issues related to gender and sexuality in the classroom. As Oestreich notes, ‘it is difficult to simply insert gender into an otherwise non-gender class’ (2007, 329). Hence the importance of this research project in putting forward suggestions for best practice for an increasingly ‘gender mainstreamed’ curricula.

Perhaps, though, this point might be to exaggerate the role that Political Scientists and IR scholars have in being able to delineate the boundaries of their analyses. Clearly, in the contemporary academic environment, external processes such as the framework of the RAE (or REF) have worked to constrain the autonomy of both in determining the content of both their research and teaching (see Curran, 2000, 394). One enormous constraint has been the demand on individual researchers to justify their output in terms of ‘international recognition’. This has, arguably, had a detrimental effect on allowing UK Political Scientists, in particular, to place the unit of their analysis close to ‘home’, whether that is defined as the domestic, the local or even the national arena. This is hardly a surprise given that it is easier to demonstrate international impact through a focus on international topics aimed at international journals. In sum, our suggestion here is that the RAE/REF, with its over-emphasis upon the international dimensions of politics and power has encouraged a movement in focus far removed from the everyday relationships, localised political processes and personal subjectivities that are key to analysing the full impact of gender relations.

Section Six: Reflections on the Problems of Teaching Gender and Sexuality

In this section, we conclude our Project Report with a number of broader reflections on some of the problems encountered when teaching gender and sexuality that arise from both our review of the available literature and, in particular, our qualitative interview data.
Of the five colleagues we interviewed, four provided strong support to our claim that issues of gender and sexuality are considerably under-represented across UK Political Science and International Studies departments. One interviewee observed: ‘This is an issue I’ve strongly championed from year to year but we never seem to get anywhere with it’. Another stated: ‘its part of a bigger problem. I mean, students never really get to talk about class or race or…even things like inequalities in general. I mean, how can we justify teaching politics when…when we never even touch on issues that are fundamental to most people’s daily experiences?’ The only interviewee who didn’t provide strong support to the claim that gender is underrepresented in Political Science and International Relations was our Sociology colleague, who instead, expressed surprise at our findings: ‘seriously? I could imagine that sexuality would be marginalised but, gender…I assume that would be taught in most departments. Even though political science isn’t my area, I can name you a number of colleagues who I know work on gender in politics departments’.

As we noted earlier, one of the potential reasons for the overall lack of a widespread provision of gender and sexuality teaching could be the persistence of institutional constraints. Although this has not been the key focus of our study, it is a theme which we interrogated in our interviews. Again, our respondents strongly supported this view, with three of the five pointing towards an under-representation of women in senior university positions. One respondent stated: ‘look, you’ve got to face facts. It’s simple. We work in a male dominated environment. That’s all you need to know. Look at the number of senior management that are men. Come to think of it, can you think of any women in really senior positions?’. Moreover, two respondents pointed towards gender as being an ‘unfashionable’ subject area: ‘we go through these trends. Look at the job market for one thing. These days it’s all security this and security that. Ten years ago, security studies was a marginalised discipline in IR. Now it’s all over the place…it’s hard to push through gender modules when people refuse to see it as an important issue anymore’. Another stated: ‘A couple of years ago I tried to get a module up and running on women and representation. It’s an issue I feel really strongly about. I got knocked back and was told, can you believe this…that it wouldn’t get through because it was very eighties. That’s what you’re up against. Most people think gender is no longer an issue.’

For all of our interviewees, the overall lack of attention paid towards issues of gender in particular was a serious concern that points directly towards a restricted Politics and International Relations curriculum. As one respondent stated: ‘There’s a danger in giving students the impression that gender is no longer a primary concern anymore. Is gender important to these students? Of course it is. It constructs how they think about themselves and shapes their future expectations…it even helps to determine how far they will go in their careers. What could be more important to them as an issue than that?’ In addition, three respondents agreed that one of the problems faced in pushing gender issues onto the curriculum is a restricted notion of what the term ‘gender’ implies. For one interviewee: ‘the problem you have is that, if you mention gender or feminism to people, they think immediately of the type of second wave feminism you had in the seventies. They think gender refers to women and to feminists in particular. Radical feminists at that (laughs).
That’s a problem you encounter, not only with other colleagues but with students too’. In a similar vein, another respondent observed: ‘how do I get across to colleagues and students that gender isn’t all about feminism? It’s about everybody. It’s as much about men as it is about women. Or at least it should be if it’s taught properly. But people don’t always get that. That said, it doesn’t help that it’s often presented as being only about women. That creates a problem in recruiting boys onto these types of modules’.

The findings from our qualitative research then, suggest that, if the politics of gender is to reclaim a central position within UK Politics and IR departments, then a more expansive notion of both the ‘political’ and of ‘gender’ needs to be promoted within departments. At the level of the political, we would identify a need to return to the central and guiding principle of feminist politics; that is that the personal is political. Such a focus on gender as a relational, contingent and personalised issue does not negate a focus on the formal political arena; for eg, the under-representation of women in the public sphere remains a deeply problematic issue. However, it does demand that such a focus on elite political behaviour needs to be balanced with a focus on gender as an issue which intersects at the level of individual identity and experience. As discussed below, all five of our interviewees agreed that there is a strong need to, as one colleague stated: ‘relate gender to student’s lives, in a way they can easily grasp’. This means a movement away from discussing gender as a political issue solely in terms of the underrepresentation of women. At the level of representation, gender remains a problem mainly for women; however, at the level of identity, it becomes a problem for everyone. Our own experiences of teaching gender combined with our survey and interview data support this view and reveals a high level of engagement and interest from students on issues relating to the everyday constructions of femininity, masculinity, motherhood, fatherhood and everyday gender and family norms; all issues directly relevant, not only to student experiences, but also to the concerns of policy-makers and practitioners.

**Strategies for Teaching and Promoting Gender Teaching in Politics and IR Departments**

In this final part of our report, we forward some tentative strategies for dealing with gender and sexuality issues in Politics and IR both at the level of recruitment and in the classroom. These conclusions come both from our review of the pedagogical literature and our interview and survey data.

One of the problems highlighted in the literature was that gender analysis is too abstract making it difficult to communicate to the students (Oestreich, 2007, 327). This problem was re-inforced by the student questionnaire data whereby, three students suggested that the reading material for some of the Gender and Sexuality module topics was too difficult to grasp. Perhaps one strategy which would work to get round this problem would be to use ‘everyday experience’ to engage the students in issues of gender and sexuality. Indeed, these types of issue can be made salient to the everyday experiences of students in ways which students find highly engaging (Gill *et al.*, 2010). In fact all of our interview participants, in one form or another, suggested that the way to illustrate issues of gender and sexuality to
students, particularly if you are highlighting them as political issues, would be to use a range of contemporary and accessible examples. One participant even stated: ‘If you give students something which they understand… Lady GaGa say, it helps to explain complicated concepts like Queer Theory… In fact, David Beckham and Friends demonstrate this well too’. Another interview participant said that they found it helpful to ‘show comedy snippets from YouTube’ as ‘this keeps the students interested even if they’re not sympathetic to feminism’. As such, it could be argued that media artefacts such as celebrity magazines, newspaper clippings, YouTube videos etc can be utilised to demonstrate and provoke discussion on populist constructions of femininity and masculinity, sexuality and parenthood as well as more theoretical concepts like Feminism and Queer Theory. Indeed, the treatment of popular celebrities within the media (the Beckhams, Jordan, Peter Andre, Amy Winehouse and so on) can be used to demonstrate the ways in which femininity, masculinity and family values are disciplined and shaped within populist discourses.

In a similar vein, one interview participant suggested that gender and sexuality classes in political science and international studies should also employ contemporary news stories so as to ‘highlight the importance, relevance and err… up-to-dateness of the topic’. To summarise, this particular academic noted that regular, contemporary news items such as the activities of ‘Fathers for Justice’, the focus on female ‘binge drinking’, teenage pregnancy and teenage violence can effectively be used to demonstrate the various ways in which everyday constructions of femininity and masculinity feed into public policy on parenting, crime and social care. To present gender politics in such a way is to create a strong ‘connect’ between the everyday experiences and interests of male and female students (Gill et. al., 2010) and the activities of policy-makers, journalists, political practitioners as well as the concerns of contemporary third wave gender and sexuality theorists.

In our view, this type of expansive notion of gender can be utilised to promote a greater diversity in the classroom (Britzman, 1998), thereby boosting the recruitment potential of the subject area and overcoming traditional stereotypes of gender as synonymous with women and implying an antagonistic relationship or zero-sum game between genders. However, one problem is that module leaders would need to take responsibility for transmitting the message to students that: 1) gender ‘matters’ to every individual, and; 2) that gender is a lived experience that is bound up in the everyday activities of individuals. As such, our research findings, particularly from mapping the teaching provision across the ‘top-ranked’ departments in the UK, suggest that module leaders need to do more to transmit these messages through their module descriptors and marketing devices. Indeed, this is not an uncontroversial claim; it proposes an approach to teaching the politics of gender which transcends previous practices. The idea that the study of ‘gender’ should take women as its principle focus has been at the heart of feminist pedagogy and feminist politics for many years (see for example, Lee, 1993). However, it is a notion that is inherently bound up with second wave feminism as a political and normative project. Indeed, related to the concern that gender and sexuality studies were difficult to understand due to the abstract character of the topics, the literature, suggested that gender and sexuality studies can be seen as threatening subjects for students (Titus, 2000, 22-23) as it suggested power and privilege of one gender
and sexuality over another. However, when we discussed this with one of our interviewees they thought that this was a ‘hangover related to the stereotyping of 2nd wave feminists’. As such, what we are seeking to propose is that the contemporary teaching of gender issues be brought more in line with contemporary third wave feminist literature, methodology, theory and research. Such literature points towards viewing gender as a highly complex, non-essentialist, shifting and contingent identity which transcends the category of ‘sex’ and intersects with other social divisions such as class, race, age and so on (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

By encouraging more diversity and representation of gender in the classroom (Britzman, 1998), we propose a model of pedagogy which democratises the learning experience without threatening the students. From an exploration of the contemporary literature as well as our interview and qualitative questionnaire data from staff and students respectively, we gleaned a number of potential teaching strategies to support the teaching of gender and sexuality in the disciplines of political science and IR specifically and the social sciences more generally. These techniques, beyond the use of contemporary media material, included: role playing exercises; working with single sex groups as well as mixed groups; and, producing a ‘hierarchy’ in terms of class seating.

Role playing can be used to highlight and disrupt gender patterns, norms, identities and stereotypes. Indeed, one of our interviewees suggested that students could be asked to take on particular gender performances and went on to say that ‘it might even be useful to use [mixed groups] of students and even ask students to take on personas that are unfamiliar to their own subject positions’. Indeed, role playing exercises can be used to highlight and disrupt gender patterns, norms, identities, stereotypes etc. Normatively, there is evidence to suggest this a worthwhile teaching strategy. In a study on the effectiveness of role play in anti-racist teaching, McGregor (1993) found that role -playing worked to reduce racist behaviours in student. Similarly, by encouraging students to think ‘outside’ their own subject position this may could indeed encourage a more empathetic view of gender categories as disciplinary and therefore, diminish, to some extent the antagonistic assumptions students believe are foundational to the study of gender. Similar to the role play exercise and related to demonstrating the complexity and importance of gender issues, tutors could, early on in the module or session, ask students to produce a ‘hierarchy’ in terms of class seating – then disrupt that hierarchy by taking into account other identity features such as class and race. This, according to one interviewee, would ‘demonstrate the complexity of gender matters when we look at other forms of stratification’.

Finally, working with single sex groups as well as mixed groups was another pedagogical strategy suggested by one of our interviewees. Arguably, by determining student group work tutor’s can, to some extent, provide a good reflective basis for student learning. For instance, this particular academic suggested that if you put together a diverse group of students (both in terms of gender and ethnicity for instance) and get them to discuss topics of gender and / or sexuality the complexity of gender and sexuality will more likely be exposed than it would in a more homogenous grouping of students. For example, this kind of group work can show how gender is ‘experienced differently dependant on other identity intersections such as race, class and sexuality’.
- Research Assessment Exercise Table (2008) found at: http://www.rae.ac.uk/pubs/2008/01/
- The Times (2009) NSS Results, found at: http://extras.timesonline.co.uk/pdfs/stug09/politics.pdf