



## Policy Analysis

# Sameness and difference: Metaphor and politics in the constitution of addiction, social exclusion and gender in Australian and Swedish drug policy



David Moore<sup>a,\*</sup>, Suzanne Fraser<sup>a</sup>, Jukka Törrönen<sup>b</sup>, Mimmi Eriksson Tinghög<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> National Drug Research Institute, Faculty of Health Sciences, Curtin University, NDRI Melbourne Office, 6/19-35 Gertrude St., 3065 Fitzroy, VIC, Australia

<sup>b</sup> Centrum för Socialvetenskaplig Alkohol-och Drogforskning, SoRAD, Stockholms Universitet, SE-106 91 Stockholm, Sweden

## ARTICLE INFO

## Article history:

Received 28 July 2014  
Received in revised form  
17 December 2014  
Accepted 7 January 2015

## Keywords:

Drug policy  
Addiction  
Social exclusion  
Gender  
Australia  
Sweden

## ABSTRACT

Like any other discourse, drug policy is imagined and articulated through metaphors. In this article, we explore the metaphors and meanings at work in the current national drug policies of Australia and Sweden. Australia's approach to welfare is usually characterised as liberal-welfarist, emphasising individual difference and 'freedom'. Sweden's approach is usually characterised as social-democratic, universalistic and paternalistic, with an emphasis on social rights, equity and sameness. How do these models of citizenship – difference versus sameness – play out in national drug policies? What are the risks and benefits of these models and the claims they allow? In the textual analysis presented here, we focus on metaphors and meanings relating to the themes of addiction, social exclusion and gender. We choose metaphor as our major analytical tool because we think that the risks and benefits of adopting different models of citizenship in drug policy need to be understood to operate at many levels and with a high degree of subtlety and abstraction. In the cases of addiction and social exclusion, a complicated picture emerges. In Australia, drug users are offered two options: sameness (and reintegration into society) or difference (and re-connection). In Sweden, drug users are excluded from society but not because they are fundamentally different from non-users. Because drug users are understood to be suffering from a temporary and curable personal affliction, the goal is to return them to sameness through care and treatment. With respect to gender, although differently expressed in the two national contexts and differently shaped by national imaginaries, both national policies adopt similar approaches: the unequal treatment of women transcends differences in national setting. Accounts of drug policy usually focus on the degree to which drug policy is, or should be, 'evidence-based', or on the complex political negotiations involving diverse stakeholders and interests. We suggest here another, complementary, perspective: that national imaginaries (i.e. culturally specific metaphors, symbols and beliefs, and national ideologies) shape drug policy in subtle but crucial ways.

© 2015 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

## Introduction

Like any other discourse, drug policy is imagined and articulated through metaphors. These metaphors and the meanings they articulate often go unexamined even as they help shape particular policy responses, and work to lend authority, credibility and persuasiveness to what are often highly controversial documents. In this article, we identify and compare the metaphors and meanings at work in the current national drug policies of Australia and Sweden, highlight the functions they perform within the culturally

specific logics of each national policy, and distinguish the political effects of different policy regimes.

Comparative studies of drug policy in Australian and Sweden are rare, with those that are available focusing on areas very different from those explored here. They cover government expenditure, patterns of use and problems, trends, legislation and prevalence (e.g. Babor et al., 2010). Other comparative international studies focus on media narratives (e.g. Ekendahl, 2012; Hellman & Room, 2014) or on the effects of policy on drug use prevalence (e.g. Reinerman, Cohen, & Kaal, 2004). Our point of departure is valentine's (2011)<sup>1</sup> insightful discussion of Australian and Swedish social

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +61 3 9079 2203.  
E-mail address: [d.moore@curtin.edu.au](mailto:d.moore@curtin.edu.au) (D. Moore).

<sup>1</sup> We follow valentine's non-capitalisation of her name.

welfare and drug policy. She opens by outlining Esping-Andersen's (1990) 'influential formulation': that Australia's approach to welfare is liberal-welfarist, emphasising individual difference and 'freedom', and market provision of services, whereas Sweden's approach is social-democratic, egalitarian, universalistic and paternalistic, with an emphasis on social rights, equity and sameness. Valentine then troubles this 'familiar story' about Australian and Sweden being at 'two ends of the welfare state spectrum' by examining the respective handling of drug issues in the two countries. Whereas Australia is an international leader in harm reduction, Sweden aspires to a 'drug-free' society. She asks:

How can Sweden be, on the one hand, the dream of a social democratic state realised and, on the other, a regime in which drug users are far more likely to be sent to prison than offered a maintenance treatment program? By what logic is Australia, on the one hand, far more ruthless in its treatment of the vulnerable and, on the other, flexible and pragmatic in its treatment of that most maligned and vulnerable group, illicit drug users? (Valentine, 2011, p. 138)

Rather than seeking to resolve this apparent paradox, Valentine's feminist welfare regime analysis, with its critical insights into gender, agency, embodiment, citizenship and the private sphere, brings into view a different set of questions (2011, p. 143): how do different policy spheres or settings work to construct drug use and drug users as policy concerns? On what basis and from which standpoints can drug users make claims on the state for services and policies? How do the needs of drug users for services articulate with their entitlements as citizens within different citizenship modalities? And what is the role of the state in ensuring that drug users receive quality treatment and other services? Asking such questions of drug policy is important because, according to Valentine, they have been neglected to date and can enrich understandings of drug users' options within particular national frameworks. As Valentine points out, existing drug policies rely *either* on models of citizenship that demand sameness *or* on models of citizenship that plead for special rights based on difference. Different claims on the state can be made from these different citizenship positions, and these in turn help to constitute policy frameworks.

Valentine also notes that feminist welfare regime analysis shows that these competing models can be managed together either in single settings or across different settings to allow for successful claims-making. The competing models do not need to be resolved or reconciled into one approach because drug users, like other citizens, are diverse and different approaches are useful at different times and in relation to different issues. But the risks inherent in these models and the claims they allow need to be acknowledged and understood.

In the analysis presented here, we draw on Valentine's insights to consider the ways in which drug use and drug users are constituted in the national drug policies of Australia and Sweden. Our analysis focuses on metaphors and meanings in the policy documents, in particular those relating to themes of addiction, social exclusion and gender. We explore these themes and their alignment with or divergence from the 'sameness/difference' dichotomy identified by Valentine, and consider the political effects of these citizenship models. These themes have been chosen because:

- Addiction is one of the central 'problems' constituted in drug policy.
- The issue of social exclusion is a key theme in drug policy discourse.
- The existing literature suggests an urgent need for more work on gender.

- All three themes are linked (addiction, social exclusion and gender constitute one another).
- Policy and practice are in part shaped by the way relationships between drug users and societies are constituted, and the key relationship modalities of difference and sameness described by Valentine are clearly articulated in the three themes.

## Theoretical framework

We choose metaphor as our major theoretical tool because the risks and benefits of adopting different models of citizenship in drug policy need to be understood to operate at many levels and with a high degree of subtlety and abstraction. The analysis of drug policy often focuses either on the degree to which evidence shapes policy (e.g. Babor et al., 2010) or on the strategic negotiations of interested stakeholders (e.g. Fitzgerald, 2005). In this article, we point to a less obvious, but by no means less important, phenomenon at work in drug policy-making: how national imaginaries (broadly defined here as culturally specific metaphors, symbols and beliefs, and national ideologies) shape drug policy. For example, Australia has been characterised as a 'liberal paradise' (Treloar & Valentine, 2013), and individual freedom and liberty are key values in national public discourse. Swedish national ideology, on the other hand, has historically been shaped by the metaphor of the *folkhemmet* or 'people's home' (Andersson, 2009). Analyses of such national imaginaries and their constituting metaphors are key to understanding fully how and why drug policies take the shape they do, and in turn how they might be reshaped.

Following Derrida (1974), Seitz (1991) and Fraser (2006), we see metaphor not as something that 'creeps into' language, but as fundamental to seeing and articulating the world. There is, to take up the recent ontological politics of theorists such as Law (2004), Latour (2005) and Mol (1999), no unadorned reality beyond our figurations of it in speech practices. This is why metaphor is so important – the material world makes metaphor, but its materiality is also formed in and through metaphor. The material world and the symbolic realm of metaphor (insofar as they can be spoken of as separate) *both* work to constitute imaginaries through which problems and their solutions are conceived and mobilised. Furthermore, metaphorisation acts to position the thing being articulated through metaphor as unexplained or unknown, and the thing being used as the metaphor as familiar or known (Smith, 1992). This highly political process of problematisation sets up certain ideas and objects as in need of investigation or explanation and others as self-evident or commonsense. For us, the most important points here are (1) the recognition that metaphor is not merely an adjunct to real speech or the material world, and (2) that it entails a politics of margin and centre while offering particular pitfalls and possibilities for the questions of addiction, social exclusion and gender that we are interested in exploring. In conducting our analysis, we aim to attend to relatively new metaphors that are easy to identify, and 'worn-out' ones (Derrida, 1974) more difficult to identify because they have been used so much that they tend to register as plain speech and must therefore be carefully teased out.

## Method

Our analysis focuses on two current national policy documents: Australia's *National Drug Strategy 2010–2015: A framework for action on alcohol, tobacco and other drugs* (Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy, 2011) and Sweden's *A cohesive strategy for alcohol, narcotic drugs, doping and tobacco (ANDT) policy: A summarized version of Government Bill 2010/11:47* (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 2010a). The Swedish document used in the comparison is an English-language summary of a longer Swedish-language

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1075153>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1075153>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)