

ABSTRACT

The Domestic Impact of International Norms: A Case Study of Tobacco Control in Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica

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In 2003, the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control was adopted by unanimous decision by the 56th World Health Organization Assembly. Just over a decade later, state responses to the WHO FCTC was found to vary within and between regions. Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica tobacco control legislation reflected this variation in state response within regions, to the WHO FCTC. Although both countries signed the WHO FCTC in 2003, their national responses were markedly different at the close of 2013. The study seeks to explain this differentiation in tobacco control policy by applying an eclectic conceptual framework which combines conceptual change theory with the social constructivist approach. This eclectic approach addresses several limitations in the literature; it locates the agency of decision-makers and the interaction of ideas and material conditions in the process of conceptual change learning. It also places both decision-makers and the meanings they assign to the material conditions they face as intervening variables in the account of the domestic impact of the international norm.

Where domestic political structures provide domestic norm entrepreneurs with a high level of access to deliberations on a policy issue, and there is a high level of topic interest, decision-makers are more likely to restructure their knowledge and modify the meanings they assign to the material conditions they face, constructing new understandings. These new understandings are reflected in Parliament's actions to bring Trinidad and Tobago's tobacco control legislation in line with the WHO FCTC by the close of 2013. However, in the case of Jamaica, where domestic political structures provide limited access to norm entrepreneurs and topic interest is low, decision-makers are more likely to accommodate some of the new information presented. This accommodation is reflected in the partial implementation of the WHO FCTC in Jamaica's legislation by the close of 2013. Based on this study's findings, policy advocates are encouraged to focus on the features of platforms for engagement and the underlying misconceptions of decision-makers. Future research can test the suitability of the conceptual framework by applying it to other countries and other international norms.

Keywords: Dinah Hippolyte; social constructivism; conceptual change; tobacco control; WHO FCTC; global health governance; non-communicable disease; NCDs; international norms; Trinidad and Tobago; Jamaica.