

Sex & Population

It takes two!

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Introduction

Do sexuality and population issues have any common ground besides their shared connection to reproduction?

Sexuality entered the population discourse at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in 1994¹. Since the ICPD, the international population field has focused primarily on Sexual and Reproductive Rights and Health (SRRH)². However, population and sexuality approaches to SRRH differ. Combining them has proven difficult in practice for a Dutch SRRH NGO³. More than sixteen years after the ICPD; the question remains whether and how sexuality and population issues can be integrated.

This study explored the links between Sex & Population by analyzing academic research that combined both topics.

Research Aims

- Provide a descriptive overview of recently published research to:
• Contribute to reflexivity SRRH-Population actors on own work .
• Identify possible future research directions.

Research Question

How can the research in the field of “SRRH & Population” be described?

- a. How many research has been published?
b. How is this research structured?

Methods

- A systematic database search to assess how many studies were published.
• A qualitative text analysis to explore the content.

Data

- Demographic academic publications were analysed.
• Publications were retrieved from the databases Popline and JSTOR.
• Abstracts were used as unit of analysis, as they concisely summarize research articles.

Research Approach

The “SRRH & Population” field was seen as an ‘issue culture’, which is an “ongoing discourse that evolves and changes over time, providing interpretations and meanings for relevant events”⁴.

Defining Concepts

Whether sexuality and population issues have anything in common depends on how they are defined.

SRRH issues

A clear conceptualization of what sexual and reproductive rights entail is lacking. The concepts might be “more like a code, meaning different things to different people”¹.

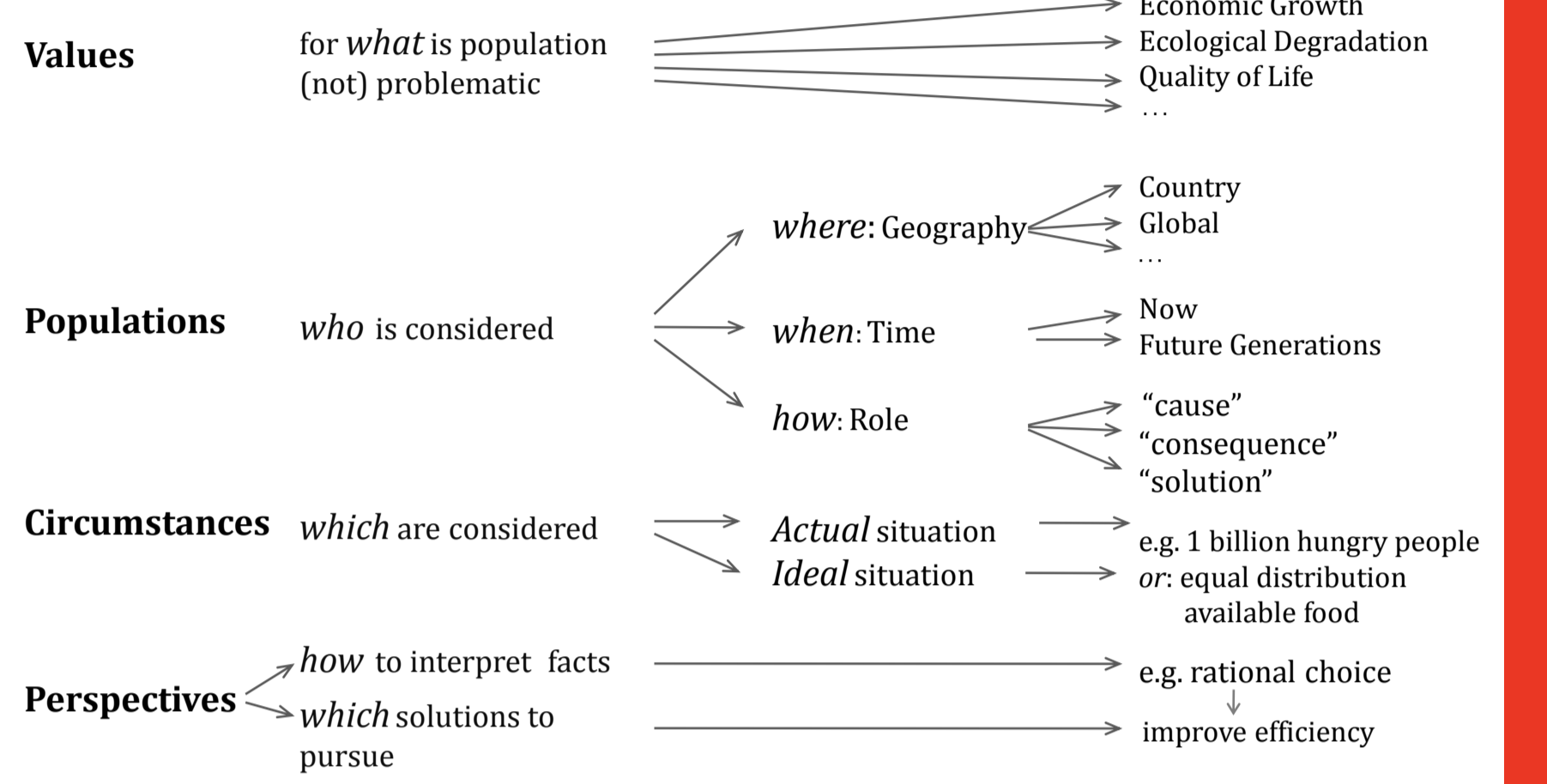
A definition of SRRH has to include a broad range of topics related to

sexuality itself, to positive (enabling) rights and to negative (harm redressing) rights, gender issues, reproduction, contraceptives, information, education, health and abortion^{5,6,7,8,9}.

Population issues

Overpopulation is a normative concept¹⁰. How overpopulation is defined depends mainly on the actors’ perspective¹¹. Perspectives guide the interpretation of demographic facts and also determine which policies are chosen for influencing those facts.

Actors often use different definitions¹⁰. They implicitly disagree on some of the following points:



Results

Table 1: Research combining ‘SRRH’ and ‘Population’ issues

Table with columns: Facts, Interpretations, Influence and rows for SRRH issues (Reprod., Sexuality, Rights, Gender, Violence, Educ., Health).

Map 1: Countries mentioned in “SRRH & Population” research



Not much research combined sex & population

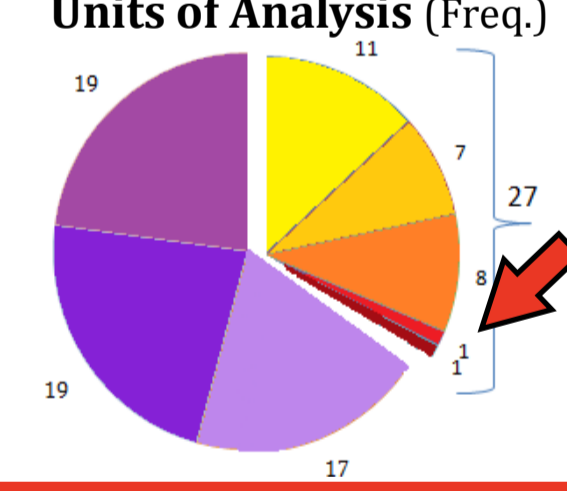
Mainly Developing countries

Bold cells = Sample N=96

Mainly Surveys

Data used table with columns: Data used, Freq.

Note: Displayed are the number of hits resulting from the database searches. PK, PA and JA denote the three different database searches... Inclusion criteria: published in English, ‘Population Studies’, peer-reviewed, since 1994. Sources: Popline and JSTOR, 18-23/4/2011.



Couples Hardly mentioned

Conclusions

- Only a few demographic publications combine Sex & Population.
• Within this literature, a lot of ‘debate’ is going on in comparison with empirical research.
• Many different countries are considered, but interest for cultural differences is limited.
• Remarkably absent are:
- Positive notion sexuality
- Analysis Population problems
- Sex and family planning education
- Men and Couples
- Action Research

Reflection

- Has the SRRH field, and especially Family Planning, managed to establish itself as independent from population issues?
• Are “SRRH & Population” issues international concerns that relate to developing countries?

Discussion

- Limited database search
Due to the search criteria used, related research using different terminology might have been overlooked.
• Descriptive vs. informative abstracts
Most abstracts lacked complete information, so the validity of the conclusions may be limited.

Recommendations

A little less ... Conversation A little more ... Action

Recommendations list: Solutions are not one size fits all!, Focus on Women, Focus on Health, Action research, Critical mind, Contextual sensitivity, Interventions, Other strategies?, Population or Energy consumption or ... ?



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