Sexology and Public Health: Introduction

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Sexology

Sexological Period (1890-1980)

- Sexology: sex studied under rubric of science
- Euro-American based
- Individualistic, knowledge is good
- Positive scientific knowledge privileged

(Parker and Gagnon, 1995, *Conceiving Sexuality*)
Social Constructionism

- Sex is culturally and historically specific
- Individual conduct and sexual identities are socially scripted (Simon & Gagnon, 1973; Vance, 1991)
- Relationship between gender and sexuality not fixed
Human Sexuality Research

Combines Sexology and Social Constructionist approaches, not always together

- **Sexology**: need to know about individual and scientific frame important but incomplete
- **Social Constructionism**: major contribution: Gender-power and inequality create sexual desires and problems
Public Heath

Question: WHAT ARE SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUES FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE?

Question: WHAT ARE THE SIGNIFICANT SEXUAL PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUES?
Public Health

Sexual public health areas:

- Teen pregnancy
- HIV/AIDS, STIs
- Sexual Violence

- Sexual Dysfunction?
- Fertility?
Example
### Teenage Pregnancy/Capita

Number births to women < 20 years (1998 data, United Nations Population Division Database)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Births per Million</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>1702.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>1113.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>993.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>940.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>913.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>799.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>787.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>732.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>618.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teenage Pregnancy/Capita

Number births to women < 20 years (1998 data, United Nations Population Division Database)

17. **Belgium** 289.14 births per 1 million people
18. **Finland** 286.08 births per 1 million people
19. **Spain** 280.07 births per 1 million people
20. **Luxembourg** 244.40 births per 1 million people
21. **Denmark** 215.62 births per 1 million people
22. **Italy** 192.29 births per 1 million people
23. **Sweden** 180.78 births per 1 million people
24. **Netherlands** 174.79 births per 1 million people
25. **Switzerland** 149.20 births per 1 million people
## Legal Abortions

*United Nations Population Division, 2002*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Abortions per 1000 people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>19.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>12.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>7.66</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>7.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>4.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td><strong>4.17</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>3.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>2.87</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>2.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>U.K. Kingdom</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An Illustration: U.S. and NL

United Nations Population Division, 2002

United Nations Population Division, 2002

The bar chart compares data on teen pregnancy, abortion, and rape between the US and the Netherlands (NL). The y-axis represents the number of cases, and the x-axis lists the categories 'teen preg', 'abortion', and 'rape'. The chart shows significantly higher teen pregnancy rates in the US compared to the Netherlands, while the other categories have lower but comparable figures for both countries.
Why Sex Research Today?

- Public Health issues require an understanding of sexual behavior.
- Sex is a component of health intimacy and longevity in relationships.
- Significant social issues and problems connected to sexuality: sex and politics, sex and war, sex and violence.
Linking Sex Research and Public Policy: Example 1

- HIV/AIDS
- STIs
Linking Sex Research and Public Policy: Example 2

- Sexual Violence
Linking Sex Research and Public Policy: Example 3

- Teen Pregnancy
Linking Sex Research and Public Policy: Example 4

- Sexual Dysfunction
WHO (1987)

“Sexual Health is not a scientific concept. Concepts of sexual health are related to culture and time and express values and norms of the society of which they come” (p. 2).
PAHO/WHO (2000)

“Sexual health is the experience of the ongoing process of physical, psychological, and socio-cultural well-being related to sexuality.” (p. 6)

Associated with Sexual Rights and with science-based health care, knowing the cultures where applied application are value driven.