

# 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 Health

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 )

1.	<u>United States</u>	1702.66 births/1 million people
2.	<u>Slovakia</u>	1113.06 births/1 million people
3.	<u>New Zealand</u>	993.08 births/1 million people
4.	<u>Iceland</u>	940.17 births/1 million people
5.	<u>Hungary</u>	913.35 births/1 million people
6.	<u>Ireland</u>	799.66 births/1 million people
7.	<u>Poland</u>	787.43 births/1 million people
8.	<u>Portugal</u>	732.82 births/1 million people
9.	<u>Canada</u>	618.49 births/1 million people



# Teenage Pregnancy/Capita

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

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

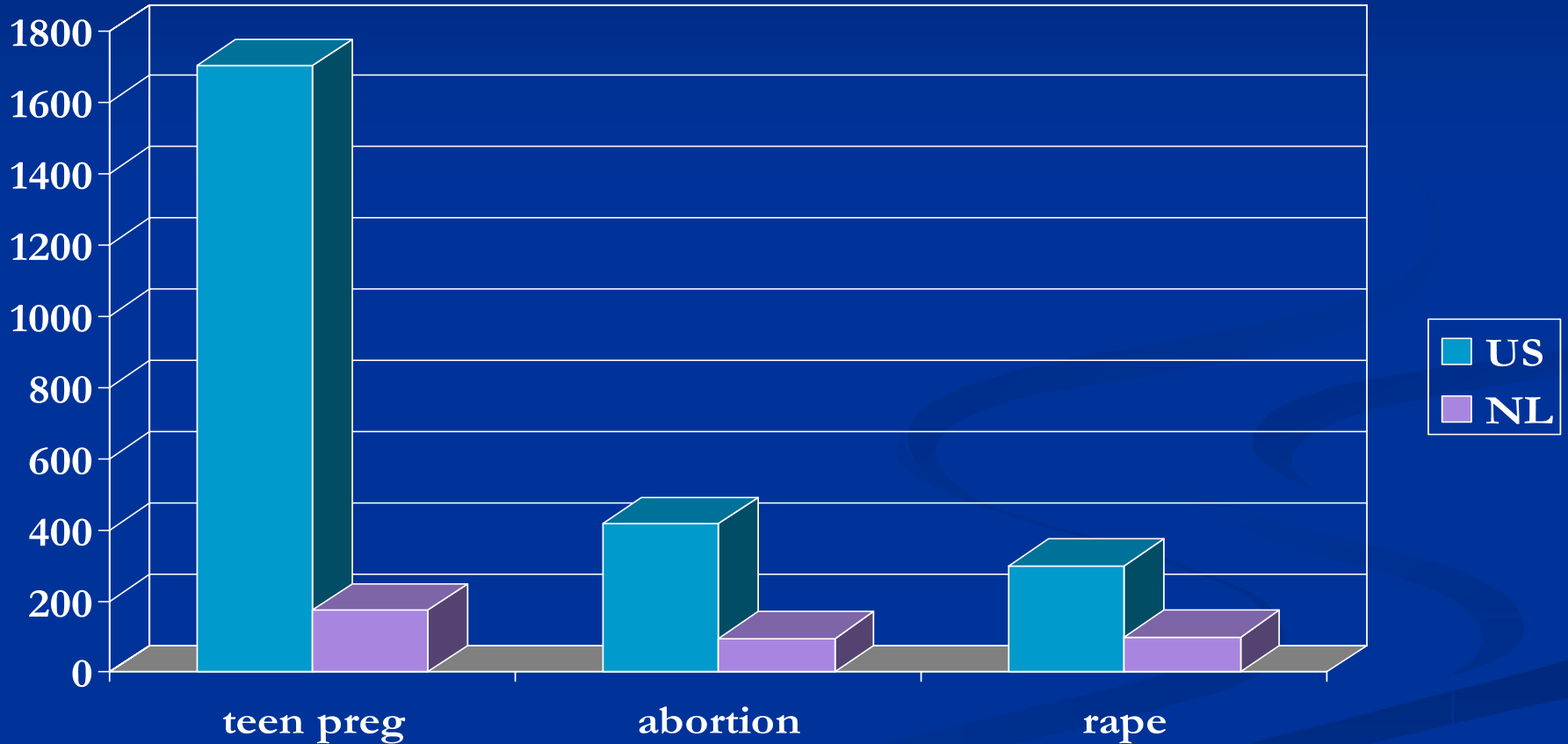
# Legal Abortions

United Nations Population Division, 2002

1. <u>Russia</u>	19.14 per 1000 people
2. <u>Bulgaria</u>	12.87 per 1000 people
3. <u>Hungary</u>	7.66 per 1000 people
4. <u>Cuba</u>	7.45 per 1000 people
5. <u>Sweden</u>	4.22 per 1000 people
6. <b><u>United States</u></b>	<b>4.17 per 1000 people</b>
7. <u>Norway</u>	3.00 per 1000 people
8. <u>Iceland</u>	2.87 per 1000 people
9. <u>New Zealand</u>	2.82 per 1000 people
10. <u>U Kingdom</u>	2.78 per 1000 people

# An Illustration: U.S. and NL

United Nations Population Division, 2002



# 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.