

**TEACHING DEMOGRAPHY AND GENDER.  
AN EXPERIENCE IN A PH. D. PROGRAMME**

Maria do Carmo Fonseca, Montserrat Solsona

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**Resum.-** Aquesta comunicació presenta una experiència docent en el Programa de Doctorat de Demografia de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona realitzada a la primavera de 1997. En primer lloc es presenten els continguts del curs titulat "Demografia i Gènere", l'objectiu principal del qual és revisar les aportacions teòriques i metodològiques de la perspectiva del gènere en l'anàlisi demogràfica de les variables clàssiques: mortalitat, migració, nupcialitat i fecunditat. En segon lloc, s'explica la metodologia de treball utilitzada en les sessions. I finalment es fa una avaluació global del curs que inclou propostes concretes per a millorar-lo.

**Paraules clau.-** Demografia, docència, gènere.

**Resumen.-** Esta comunicación presenta una experiencia docente del Programa de Doctorado de Demografía de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona realizada durante la primavera de 1997. En primer lugar, se presenta el contenido del curso titulado "Demografía y Género", cuyo objetivo principal es revisar las aportaciones teóricas y metodológicas de la perspectiva del género en el análisis demográfico de las variables clásicas: mortalidad, migración, nupcialidad y fecundidad. En segundo lugar, se expone la metodología de trabajo utilizada en las sesiones. Y finalmente se ofrece una evaluación global del curso que incluye propuestas concretas para mejorarlo.

**Palabras clave.-** Demografía, docencia, género.

**Abstract.-** This paper presents a teaching experience of the Doctoral programme in Demography of the Autonomous University of Barcelona realized during Spring 1997. First, the content of the course "Demography and Gender", whose main objective consists in reviewing the theoretical and methodological contributions of the gender perspective for demographic analysis of classical variables (mortality, migration, nuptiality and fertility), is presented. Second, the teaching methodology used during the classes is presented. Finally, a global evaluation of the course, including concrete means to improve it, is offered.

**Key words.-** Demography, teaching, gender.

**Résumé.-** Cette communication présente un expérience d'enseignement du Programme de Doctorat en Démographie de l'Université Autonome de Barcelone réalisée au printemps de 1997. En premier lieu, on présente le contenu du cours intitulé "Démographie et Genre", dont l'objectif est de réviser les apports théoriques et méthodologiques de la perspective de genre à l'analyse démographique des variables classiques, mortalité, migration, nuptialité et fécondité. En deuxième lieu, on expose la méthodologie d'enseignement utilisée pendant les classes. Finalement, on offre une évaluation globale du cours, qui inclut des propositions concrètes pour l'améliorer.

**Mots clés.-** Démographie, enseignement, genre.

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**1.- Introduction**

This paper intends to describe our experience in teaching a graduate course for students majoring in Demography in the spring semester of this current year at the Autonomous University of Barcelona. The main purpose of the course entitled “Demography and Gender” was to build up a critical analysis of the demographic variables in mortality, migration, nuptiality and fertility, through a comprehensive reading of feminist constructs in the area of populations studies. Moreover, our objective was to incorporate the gender perspective into the demographic analysis.

During the fall semester we organized a study group with the main purpose of proceeding to a “new reading” of some of the demographic’s frameworks within the area of fertility. The idea was to compare and contrast, as well, some of the models broadly used in the demographic discipline, with new contributions made from feminist demographers and non demographers who have made contributions to the field of reproduction. We revised, for instance, Gary Becker’s model for fertility analysis with Nancy Folber and Karen O. Mason’s contributions. In our weekly meetings we did, in fact, a “brain storm” in terms of improving a “new and formalized” course for demography students (this course was taught for the first time by Montserrat Solsona in the former academic year in the same Ph. D. Program).

The restructured course was divided into three great blocks. The first one was an introduction of the feminist perspective in the social sciences in general and in demography in particular. Given that the course was addressed to students in a Ph. D. Program in demography we did not expect to spend too much time on this introductory part. We took for granted that they would not have difficulties in apprehending and assimilating the new concepts. Such assumption, however, proved to be incorrect because students were not very familiar with concepts ingrained in feminist writings on demographic issues.

Secondly, in order to integrate theory and methods we proceeded to an analysis of several empirical studies trying to show how using a similar data set one may arrive at different conclusions through the use of diverse theoretical frameworks. The discussions this time were rich because students were more familiarized with demographic hard data. The third block was planned to be a more theoretical discussion of the main contributions to the feminist demographer's in terms of their epistemological thoughts on the population field.

After this introduction we will discuss our methodological organization of the meetings with the students. Then, in item number three will follow how we achieved an evaluative method of the course by integrating students feedbacks from our weekly seminars. Item four will describe the necessary reformulations we think it would be necessary to do a future course in order to integrate topics and to be more comprehensible to students. Finally we will present the original course's program through which one can perceive the topics and its contents and the pertinent bibliography.

## **2.- Proposed method: format and structure**

The format was ten sessions of 3 hour weekly seminars. The students were enrolled in a Ph. D program at the Institut of Demographic Studies, at the Autonomous University of Barcelona. Besides being an usually bright and mature group their number was quite small (06) what somehow favored discussion/seminar. All of them had some experience with research on demographic issues either in the Demography Studies Center as junior researchers or in their jobs outside. The first encounter (T1) was used for served for introducing the course thematic and as well as for presenting its principal and specific aims. We thought that it was useful to describe, historically, how the feminist constructions were integrated into academia and specifically into the demographic discipline. At this point we thought it was indeed important to dedicate some time talking about seminars such as the "Second European Population Seminar" (The Hague/Bruxels, Dec. 13- 17, 1976) which had as its central subject the connections between demographic themes - marriage and marriage dissolution; marital fertility; extramarital fertility and geographic mobility - and the status of women. Likewise, the contributions made by Nora Federici, Karen O. Mason and Solvi Sogner were discussed at this introductory section showing how they were important as a turning point in demographic analysis. A brief introduction of the gender framework applied to demographic studies was, also, presented in the first two sessions. The change from women status to gender frameworks and to gender contract in terms of "new" demographic constructions were brought into discussions but we expected to treat their theoretical contributions more detail in a late stage of the course. It was specially emphasized that so far they were mainly used by a small group of the academics who constitute, in fact, a feminist

gaze into the populations studies. The feminist activist movement contribution, specially in theoretical formulations in concepts such as reproductive health and rights was mentioned in topic 1 but was not done in too much detail because we thought it could be worked in more depth within topic 5 of our proposed program.

The sessions were organized in the following way: the students had a reading assignment of 3 to 4 texts on the subject, some sections demanded more readings but the range would be between 50 to 100 pages per session. From their assignments students were asked to formulate questions, make critiques or add some of their thoughts on the specific theme and bring them to class for a group discussion. The 3 hours were divided into two parts: exposition of the articles and after a coffee break, discussion of the questions selected by students were focussed down by the teachers and the students together. The problem with such format is related to the dimension of time. The questions were very often complex and demanded more time than we thought it was needed what somehow stopped the development of a conclusion about the themes worked out in that specific section. Given the novelty of the subjects to the students we really thought that it was necessary for the whole comprehensiveness of each subject to try to respond extensively to their questions and considerations.

Teachers themselves had also meetings to discuss together the assigned readings but unfortunately given the scarcity of our time we could not elaborate as much on the conceptual formulation and methodological issues as we desired to was. The result was, of course, a certain level of frustration, but *post fact* we realized that it was a consequence of conflicts between reality and the ideal that we always have to confront in our social roles as teachers and researchers.

In a quick evaluation of the section's organization and format we used during the course we see two pitfalls. Firstly, we erroneously misjudged the student's capacity in terms of apprehending and applying new and complex conceptual formulations such as patriarchy, women status, autonomy versus independency/dependency and empowerment. Therefore, we had to be sure that those concepts were very well assimilated in order to grasp the differences between a gender focus and a mainstream analysis of a population phenomema. Part of this problem is correlated to the fact that, as we said before, the students were so bright and mature intellectually that we made the supposition that they would not have difficulties with new paradigmas such as gender relations. Secondly, we also underestimated the time students needed for the readings wich included a reasonable and large amount of work considering the fact that most articles assigned to each class were in languages other than Spanish or Catalan and therefore required much more time for class preparation by the students.

### **3.- Evaluation of the elected subject**

In terms of items T.2 (Mortality, Gender and Power); T.3 (Revision of Migration Laws from a Gender Perspective) and T.4 (Nuptiality, Fertility and Second Demographic Transition), in general we would say that the objectives were achieved to a relative extent to the apprehension of the similarities/differences in using or not a gender framework in analysing those demographic themes. Item T.3 offered more difficulties partially because of the lack of extensive literature linking women's migration to gender related social/cultural mechanisms. Students had for example, more difficulties in the reelaboration of a classical type of demographic analysis of women's mobility to introduce the effect of a patriarchal context. How to apply the concepts of autonomy's to women's migration when we treat, as students assimilated, female mobility only as associational or through push-pull related reasons for female migration? Probably, the new and very specific gender related analysis of migration should deserve more time for discussion with students. On the opposite, item four, related to nuptiality and fertility was the most satisfying in terms of student's grasping the interplay between gender social-cultural and political aspects involved and the effects on reproductive behavior. Again, for this topic material was more numerous and diversified than it was for migration.

In topic number 5 (Feminist Demographic Policies) we focussed mainly on Reproductive Health and Rights. Readings were chosen to cover academic work as well as contributions to those issues women's activists movements. Our intention was to show students how both aspects could be complementary in their findings. In discussing contraceptive methods to curtail fertility and unwanted pregnancy, we could not for instance leave aside fights carried out by activists in order to stop legislative discriminations against abortion. Note their constant monitoring of family planning and health quality in developing countries.

Finally, the main purpose of including section number six (Integrating different theoretical perspectives) was to integrate previous discussions with theoretical constructs. Such a purpose was not achieved, in our judgment, because the students needed deeper knowledge of patriarchal and gender paradigms in its relationships to demographic analysis. Probably, next time the course is thought such difficulty can be partially solved by expanding the time for discussions and by targeting the necessary set of concepts. Moreover, these items should be introduced at the beginning of the course, in contrast to what we did this time. Below we outline some of the changes we think is necessary to make in the course scheme.



#### **4.- Reformulations necessary to the course syllabus “Demography and Gender”**

After this first experience in teaching together the described course we perceive more clearly how we should modify its format in terms of methodologically as well as conceptually introducing the gender framework. We got to at this notion of the need to reformulate the initial program not only by ourselves but also with students collaboration. At the last session of the course we asked our students to write down the difficulties they were confronted with in the apprehension and assimilation of the contents and how they would reformulate it to which bridged the pitfalls to a more comprehensible construction.

After the initial and classic session on the program and course objectives (S.1) extensive work would follow on theoretical concepts (and measurement) such as: Sex/Gender, Gender Roles, Women status/Women's Position, Women's Autonomy, Gender Stratification, Gender Inequalities, Patriarchy, Gender Systems, Gender Contract, Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights, Women's Rights/Human Rights, Women's Empowerment and Gendered Population Policies.

This item would be introduced with reference to the demographic variables and with guided questions to be answered through future readings. In patriarchy, for instance, we can lead students to think about how in a cultural setting in which a patriarchal system predominates variables such as mortality, migration and fertility/nuptiality can be affected? Or, how through women's empowerment we may change the reproductive values in this type of societies?

A third section would follow with the aim of showing students demographic data analysed through a new gender paradigm. In other words, the objective would be to think more specifically on the applicability of the concepts already seen in the lectures as well as in the readings. The objective would be the same as before but the format of the classes could be innovated.

Before entering into the hard demographic core of the course a seminar with students would serve to “test” their assimilation of the concepts introduced. An assignment of a short paper could fulfill this objective. On the other side, this is also an occasion to handle our *grand themes* to be worked by them as research paper during the course.

On their evaluation of the course's contents students proposed to have more reading showing the experiences of developed as well developing countries. Given that the 30 hours can not be expanded such a demand can be achieved by two strategies:

1- to assign readings for each session on the specific item covering developed as well as underdeveloped areas but without increasing the volume of readings, or;

2- discussing the demographic variables- seen from a gender gaze - to be tackled within the discussion of item number five, in which the feminist contributions to demographic analysis is under discussion. This would make sense in terms that most of the actual politics and population's policies discussed in Cairo (and other international forums) have focussed mainly on the developing world. In this context the gender approach would stress some of the contradictions of the "political" view on variables such as fertility in its implication for the developed as well as developing world. For example, the "second demographic transition" occurring in European countries can be contrasted with the gender systems predominating in developing countries in which demographic transition is still in its early stages.

**5.- Ph. D. Program in Human Geography - Demography title *Social Demography: Demography and gender*. Period: spring semester - 1997**

**5.1.- Descriptions and objectives**

The course's main objective is to analyse the recent incorporation of the gender's perspective into demographic studies with its theoretical and methodological consequences as well. The first two meetings will focus on the incorporation of the feminist perspective into the social sciences in general and populations studies in particular. After this introductory part the direction will be changed to some empirical studies which will be "reanalysed" from different points of view in order to demonstrate how their findings can be interpreted from other conceptual and methodological approaches. At last, the discussion will turn to a more theoretical level searching for an integration of the empirical and the "new" theoretical frameworks.

## 5.2.- Subjects contents

- *Topic 1:*

**Introduction: The feminist movement and its intersection with the academic forum. The recent incorporation of the gender framework in the demographic studies.**

ARREGUI, Begoña (1995): "La situació de la dona i les intitucions. La conferència Internacional sobre Població i Desenvolupament (El Caire, 1994)", *Documents d'Anàlisi Geogràfica*, n° 26, pp. 305-311.

BOFILL, Mireia i altres (1995) "Vint anys de feminisme", *Veus Alternatives*, 2, pp. 20-33.

CASTAÑO, Lola (Coord.) (1992): *Estudios de las mujeres en las universidades española: década de los ochenta*, València; Nau llibres.

COTTS WATKINS, Susan (1993): "If All Kneew About Women Was What We Read" in *Demography*, Vol. 30, N° 4, pp. 551-557.

FEDERICI, Nora & FONG, Monica (1985): "The status of Women Population and development", *IUSSP Newsletter*, n° 23-24, pp. 77-98.

FEDERICI, Nora; OPPENHEIM MASON, Karen & SOGNER, Solvi (1993): *Women's Position and Demographic Change*, Oxford, Claredon Press: Introduction, pp. 1-15.

Instituto de la Mujer (1990): *Mujer y demografía*, Madrid, Instituto de la Mujer.

IUSSP COMMITTEE ON GENDER AND POPULATION (1994): *Seminar on Women, Poverty an Demographic Change, (Oaxaca, 25-28 octubre)*, Lieja, IUSSP.

NIPHUIS - NELL, Mary (1978): *Demographic aspects of the changing status of women in Europe*, Londres, Martinus Nijhoff Social Sciences Division. (N.I.D.I n°7): Cap. 1 Introduction: the seminar's central thesis, pp.1-7.

OPPEHEIM MASON, Karen & JENSEN, An- Magritt (1995): *Gender and Family Change in Industrialized Countries*, Oxford, Claredon Press: Introduction, pp. 1-14.

OPPONG, Christine & WERY, René (1994): "Women's Change in Sub-Saharan Africa", *Policy & research papers*, n° 5, IUSSP.

YOUNG, Gay; FORT, Lucia & DANNER, Mona (1994): "Moving from the status of women's to "gender inequality": conceptualisation, social indicators and an empirical application", *International Sociology*, Vol. 9, N° 1, pp. 55-85.

- *Topic 2:*

**Mortality: Gender and Power. Millions of women are missing, Why?**

COALE, Ansley (1991): "Excess Female Mortality and the Balance of the Sexes in the Population: An Estimate of the Number of "Missing Females", in *Population and development Review*, 17, pp. 517-523.

SEN, Amartya (1991): "Faltan más de 100 millones de mujeres ", *Isis International, Ediciones de Mujeres* n° 15, pp. 27--40.

VALLIN, Jacques (1993): "Social change and mortality decline: women's advantage achieved or regained"; FEDERICI, Nora et alri: *Women's Position and Demographic Change*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, Cap. 9, pp. 190-212.

- *Topic 3:*

**Migration: A revision of the "laws of migration" from the gender perspective.**

HOFFMAN- NOWOTNY, Hans- Joachim (1978): "Sociological and demographic aspects of the changing status of migrant women in Europe", a NIPHUIS- NELL, Mary (1978): *Demographic aspects of the changing status of women in Europe*, Londres, Martinus Nijhoff Social Sciences Division (N:I:D:I: n° 7) Cap. 9, pp. 117-135.

LIM , Lin Lean (1993): "Effects of women's position on their migration", FEDERICI, Nora et alri, *Women's Position and Demographic Change*, Oxford, Clarendon Press: Cap. 11, pp. 225-242.

- Topic 4

**Nupciality and Fertility**

This topic will cover a wide range of subjects related to reproduction. For the more developed countries we will focus on the Second Demographic Transition process that has to do with new patterns and nupciality and fertility in which ingrained the gender inequalities. For the developing countries we will discuss the new paradigms of Reproduction Health.

CICRED (forthcoming): Seminar on *Women and families: the evolution of the status of women as a factor and a consequence of changes in family dynamics*, París, CICRED-UNESCO, 24-25-26 Febrer 1997.

DELPHY, Christine (1982): "Matrimonio y divorcio: el doble atolladero", *Enviroment and Cuadernos Inacabados* 2-3, pp. 65-76, Barcelona, Ediciones La Sal.

FAGNANI, Jeanne (1995): "Treball i fecunditat a la França i a l'Alemanya de l'oest: fan proeses les franceses?", *Documents d'Anàlisi Geogràfica*, 26; pp. 97-107.

FOLBRE, Nancy (1983): "Of patriarchy born: the political economy of fertility decisions", *Feminist Studies*, vol.9, n° 2, pp. 261-284.

GITTINS, Diana (1994): *The family in question*, Cap. 4, "Why do people marry"; pp. 73-91.

LESTHAEGHE, Ron (1994): "Una interpretación sobre la segunda transición demográfica en los países occidentales", a EMAKUNDE, *Demografía y políticas sociales*, Vitoria.

MADJE, Eve & NEUSUSS, Claudia (1994): "Lone mothers in East and West Berlín: disadvantaged citizens or women avoiding patriarchy", *Environment and Planning A*, volum 26, pp. 1419-1433.

OPPENHEIMER, Valerie Kincade (1995): "American Marriage Formation in the 1980s: How important was women's economic independence". OPPENHEIMER MASON, Karen & JENSEN, An- Magritt (1995): *Gender and family change in industrialized countries*, Oxford, Claredon Press, pp. 105-138.

SOLSONA, Montserrat & TREVIÑO, Rocío (1995): "Activitat, maternitat i paternitat a l'Europa Comunitària", *Documents d'Anàlisi Geogràfica*, 26; pp. 191-207.

SOLSONA, Montserrat (1996): *Desigualdades de género en los viejos y los nuevos hogares*, Madrid, Instituto de la Mujer, "La Segunda Transición Demográfica desde la perspectiva de género", pp. 17- 46.

STOLKE, Verena (1991) "Derechos reproductivos" in AZEREDO, Sandra & STOLKE, Verena (coords.): *Direitos reproductivos*, Sao Paulo, Fundação Carlos Chagas.

#### *Topic 5*

#### **Demographic - feminist politics and policies?**

The discussion will focuss on the changes on populations policies and programs which have arrived from the feminist views and perceptions of the population phenomeno.

BERER, Marge (1990): "Balance en el movimiento. Hacia una política de población feminista", *Revista de la Red de Salud ISIS*, 3/90, pp. 60- 64.

IUSSP COMMITTEE ON GENDER AND POPULATION (fothcoming): Seminar on *Female Empowerment and Demographic Processes: Moving Beyond Cairo*, Lund, Suécia, 21-24 Abril 1997.

OJEDA, Norma (investigación en curso): *Conceptualización social de la salud reproductiva*, documento de trabajo, pp. 1- 19.

SEN, Gita (1995): "Mujer, pobreza y población. En contra de la corriente: relaciones de género y derechos reproductivos", *En Pie de Paz* nº 3, pp. 35- 38.

Comite de Enlace ONGD-CE (1992), "Mujeres, derechos humanos y reproducción", Bruxelles, pp. 1-24.

MULLER, Ruth Dixon. "Rights and reproductive health: a policy agenda". Population Policy and Women's Rights: Tranforming Reproductive Choice. PRAEGER; Westopost, Connectitut, London, 1993, chapter 8, pp. 127-219.

BATIWALA, Srilatha. "The meaning of women's empowerment: new concepts from action". In: Population Policies Reconsidered: Health, Empowerment and Rights (Gita Sen, Adrienne Germain, Lincoln C. Chen, editors), chapter 9., pp. 127-138.

## Topic 6

### **Theoretical perspectives: comparison and contrasts:**

-Patriarchy, gender systems and gender contracts

-Womens's studies, gender studies and masculinity studies: the politics of naming.

DUNCAN, Simon (1994): "Theorising differences in patriarchy", *Environment and Planning A*, volume 26, pp. 1177-1194.

HEITLINGER, Alena (1993): *Women's equality, demography and public policies*, Nova York, St. Martin's Press.

MAHON, Evelyn (1995): "Contratos de género y políticas de cohesión social", *Política y Sociedad*, N° 19, pp. 61-74.

SOLSONA, Montserrat (1994): "Actividad laboral y constitución familiar. Estudio comparativo por Comunidades", a EMAKKUNDE, *Demografía y Políticas Públicas*, Vitoria.

WALBY, Sylvia (1990): *Theorizing patriarchy*, Oxford & Cambridge, Backwell. (Capitol 1: "Introducción", pp. 1-24).

### **5.3.- Students evaluation of course (through questionnaire)**

Evaluation includes the following:

1. Subject contents, themes selecteds, sequential organization of the topics and themes not included.
2. Presentation and discussion of the subjects, chosen readings, class discussions format, the teacher's role, the students roles in readings reports, students proposal of discussion points for class.
3. General evaluation.
4. Suggestions for future coures reformulations.