

**Title:** **Overcoming Hegemonic Norms and Binaries in Demography:**  
Gender, 'Race' and Sexuality within Academic Demographic Discourse

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**Theme:** Theory/anthropological demography/gender

### **Introduction**

The paper presents a critical exploration of scientific language use within demographic discourse. The objective is to identify discursive and performative practices regarding identity related categories such as gender, 'race' and sexuality. On the one hand the change of socio-cultural values from traditional concepts towards modern or postmodern concepts is extensively discussed in demography. On the other hand those changes are not incorporated in academic demographic terminology.

### **Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework incorporates Robinson's (1999) concept on discourse and Butler's (1990, 1993, 2002) notion on the performative and discursive subject constitution. Robinson uses the concept of dominant discourses in order to highlight a social constructionist perspective on racism, sexism/heterosexism and other forms of discrimination/marginalization. She developed a binary ordered model that shows how discourses on identity related categories are maintained. Butler (1990, 1993) considers the installation of discourses and their control as an effective instrument of power and countervailing power. She developed a theoretical approach which focuses on the concepts of subject and resistance. According to her, power represents as structural and linguistically conceived figure of performative practices. Language has essential meaning in Butler's theory. According to her, the performativity of the language is the origin of being and thinking. (Butler 1990, 1993) The paper examines how and to what extent the academic demographic discourse repeats/reproduces hegemonic norms through the use of terminology, which refers to symbolic (e.g. terms) as well as descriptive representations (e.g. definitions).

### **Data and methods**

Content analysis as a method is used to identify the usage of different terminologies in demographic literature. Articles from the prominent journal *Demography* (1994 to 2004) and articles from the European journal of population (1994-2004) are used for the analysis. The discourse will be studied based on what terminological categories are included and which are excluded from the scientific demographic discourse.

## **Results**

Preliminary results indicate that the contemporary demographic discourse shows the presence of sexist, heterosexist, (hetero) normative as well as racist assumptions/stereotypes which reinforces traditional binaries and hegemonic norms. The authors suggest for a critical reflection on the usage of terminology regarding gender, 'race' and sexuality.

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