

Demography of gender

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Outline

- Defining gender
- Gender in demography
- Empirical findings
- New issues and methodologies

Introduction

- Interest in gender has grown in demography and in other disciplines
- It reflects a recognition of the importance of gender as an organizing principle of society
- If properly measured, understanding gender might contribute to demographers' better understanding of demographic processes

Defining gender

- Gender can be defined as a pervasive system of patterned inequality
- The terms sex (denoting biological) and gender (denoting social) are often used to emphasize the different influences of gender
- Such a simple dichotomy is more complicated than can be captured by such terminology

Biological and social aspects

- Biological differences between women and men have been important to the ways that the social world is organized
- Even our definitions and understandings of sex and biology are socially constructed
 - It is often difficult to separate biological and social aspects of human behavior

Broader definition of gender

- Social scientists increasingly emphasize a broader definition of gender
 - It focuses on the ways societies are organized rather than on the attributes of individuals
- Differences between women and men are of less central concern than the role that gender plays as a social institution

Gender and social institutions

- Gender is a set of social and cultural practices that influences the lives of all women and men
 - It shapes society and interacts with social institutions
 - Social class
 - Family
 - Economy
 - Education
 - Politics
 - Art
 - Law
- Gender helps to define/shape other social institutions, but it is also defined/shaped by them

Multiple levels of differences

- Gender refers not just to differences between women and men
- It refers to the multiple levels and ways those differences create and are created by
 - Societal and cultural norms
 - Expectations
 - Patterns of behavior and ideology
- Family and marriage practices are central pieces of the gender system that relate to demographic events



Gender and social systems

- Women seem to fare less well in social systems where they marry early, marriage is patrilocal, and lineage is traced through the patriline
- Women seem to fare better in communities where their traditional spheres of work are valued, even if those differ from men's spheres
- Women's access and control over societal resources influence their status and gender equality
 - Land, money, steady work, political power, time



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Gender in demography

- Near-absence of work on gender in demography before the 1980s
- Interest in connections between gender and demography grew through the 1980s and 1990s
- Since the 1980s, the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP)
 - Provided a space for study and discussion of ways that gender is involved in demographic processes



Population Association of America (PAA)

- Starting in the 1980s, there were sessions explicitly focused on gender that dealt with a number of gender issues
 - Measurement of gender equality
 - Gender's influence on demographic outcomes
 - Domestic violence
 - Teenage fertility in the United States
 - Impact of AIDS in Africa



World population conferences

- Attention to gender has also come from reproductive rights activists
 - 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo
 - 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995
- Increased attention to feminist projects
 - Feminist research is necessarily political
 - These conferences made clear connections among research, policy, and women's lives
- These discussions were influential in linking researchers and family planning practitioners



Less interest recently

- The explicit interest in gender seems to have tailed off in recent years
 - Fewer panels at PAA and IUSSP
- Reason not completely clear
 - Pessimist explanation: Maybe scholars think that demography has solved gender questions and issues that fascinated earlier scholars

Substantive concerns

- Gender is now something that most demographers consider as they think about demographic behavior
- Measurement of gender is difficult
 - Expand existing models to gender's role
 - Some suggest developing new models
 - What aspects do we want to measure? why?
 - Are there better models to be found to examine gender and its role in demographic processes?
 - Most research in demography focuses on gender as an independent variable



Measures and methods

- The earliest demographic work on gender, documents differences between women and men
 - Differences in mortality and morbidity rates, educational attainment, labor force participation
- They often do not go beyond the mapping of sex differences
 - Do not capture the full impact of gender

Comprehensive measures

- Women's labor force participation and education have been used as “proxies” for gender
 - These measures do not represent the depth or scope of gender inequality in any society
- Development of new measures, such as
 - How freely women move in public space (mobility)
 - Perception about what family permits (leniency)
 - Participation in household decisions (authority)
 - Opinions about women's rights (attitude)



Data collection

- Issues of gender have become part of data collection projects
- Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) collects information on gender in a variety of ways
 - Modules on women's status and domestic violence, and modules for male respondents
- We face continuing challenges of how to measure gender
 - One of the difficulties is trying to measure gender's effect at multiple levels



Measuring women's position

- If gender is about power and inequality, how may empowerment, autonomy, and women's status be measured?
- Major problems in the empirical literature on “women's position” are
 - Varying terms and meanings of those terms to describe women's position. For instance:
 - “Women's control over resources compared to that of men”
 - “The degree of women's autonomy from men's control”
 - Ways that some authors do not make clear definitions or methods of measurement



Social context

- Human behavior is not only influenced at the individual level
 - It is embedded in economic and institutional systems, social norms and influence, personal interconnection
- To understand the social context of sexual and reproductive decision-making
 - Need information about where the individual fits in larger configurations of individuals, couples, households, kin and peer groups, and communities
 - Need to measure social structures marked by hierarchies of prestige, power, and wealth



Western ≠ Non-Western societies

- Contemporary Western societies may equate autonomy with power, independence, and privacy, all of which are highly valued
- Non-Western societies often place higher value on social interdependence and the support and status achieved from belonging to a group
 - Women's economic power may be the opposite of the kind of power or spiritual potency that brings the greatest prestige

Quantitative & qualitative data

- One measurement challenge is the use of quantitative survey data
 - These methodologies often have a difficult time capturing the nuances and complexities of gender and its role in demographic outcomes
- Qualitative approaches might provide useful alternative or complementary information
 - There is relatively little attention to discussions of the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative methodologies in demography



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Empirical findings

- The distinction between gender and sex becomes important when the role of power and the socially constructed nature of gender goes beyond the individual level
- On studies about gender and demographic outcomes
 - We speak more confidently about the influence of certain variables, such as women's education
 - We know less about the more encompassing measures of gender

Gender, mortality, fertility

- We know more about relationships between gender, morbidity, and mortality
- Than about the role of gender in fertility

Gender, morbidity, and mortality

- Maternal health
 - Women and men have different mortality and morbidity rates
 - We are now trying to understand the causes of those differentials and the role that gender inequalities play
- Infant and child morbidity and mortality
 - Mothers have a greater impact on children's health and survival than other family members
 - Mothers' position in the society may influence that impact

Gender and fertility

- Connections between gender and fertility at the societal level are strong but complicated
 - When the goal was reducing fertility, those connections were sometimes the focus
 - When many countries have lower fertility rates than the government desires, discussion of gender's role, inequities, and women's position require new studies
- Questions about whether to have children, how many, and when
 - In low-fertility countries, these issues remain important, but are still not completely understood



Role of education and work

- Researchers have pointed to the ways that education might affect fertility
 - Delayed marriage
 - Changed fertility preferences
 - Increasing contraceptive use, especially modern methods

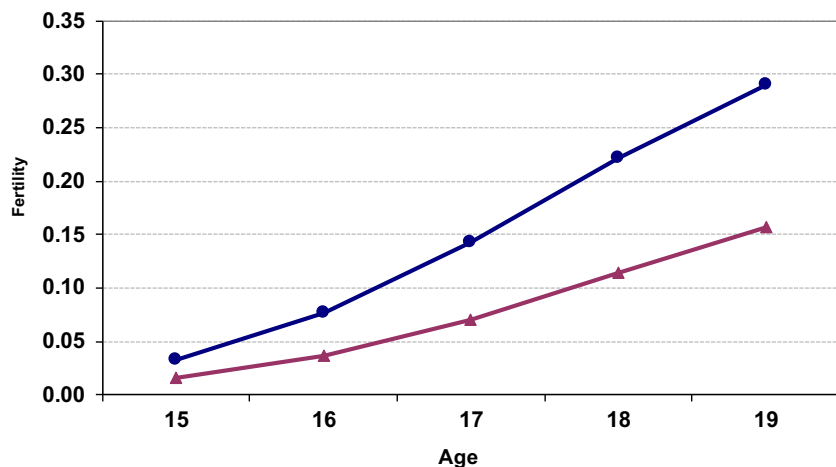
Fertility differentials

- Study about fertility differentials by educational attainment in Mexico and Brazil (Amaral, Potter 2009)
 - Mexico: Government programs for both insured and uninsured with promotion of IUD and female sterilization
 - Brazil: Less emphasis on the supply of methods, restrictions on female sterilization, especially postpartum, frustrated demand for contraception, and exchange of sterilization for votes
- Data and methods
 - Logistic regressions estimate whether woman had a child born alive in previous year
 - Controls: Age, age-squared, educational attainment, parity, catholic, indigenous origin, states, municipal infrastructure index
 - 2000 Demographic Censuses

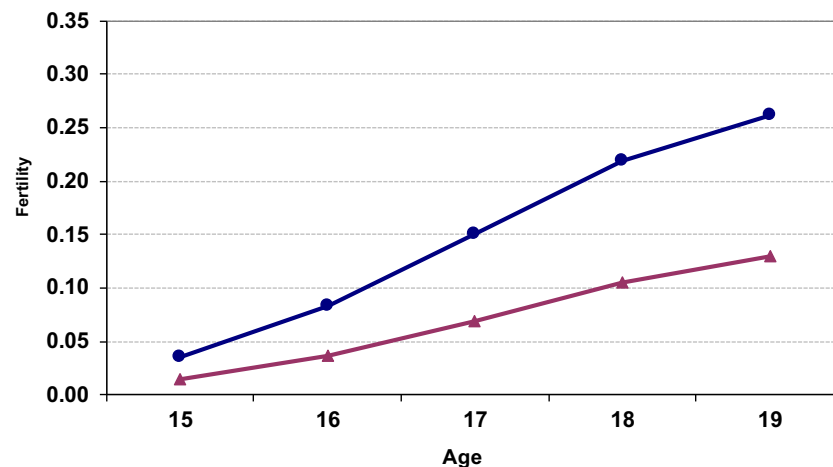


15-19 Age group

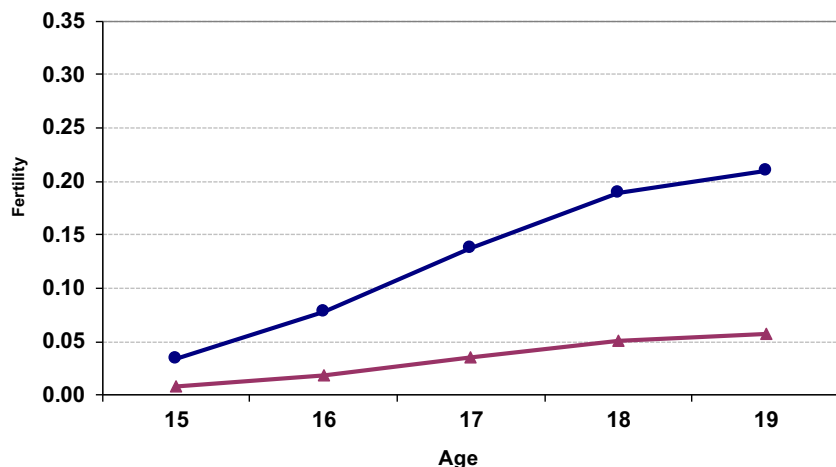
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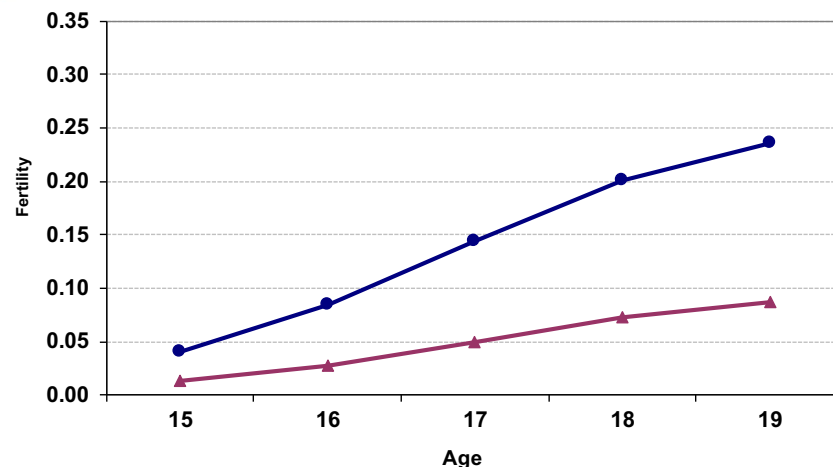
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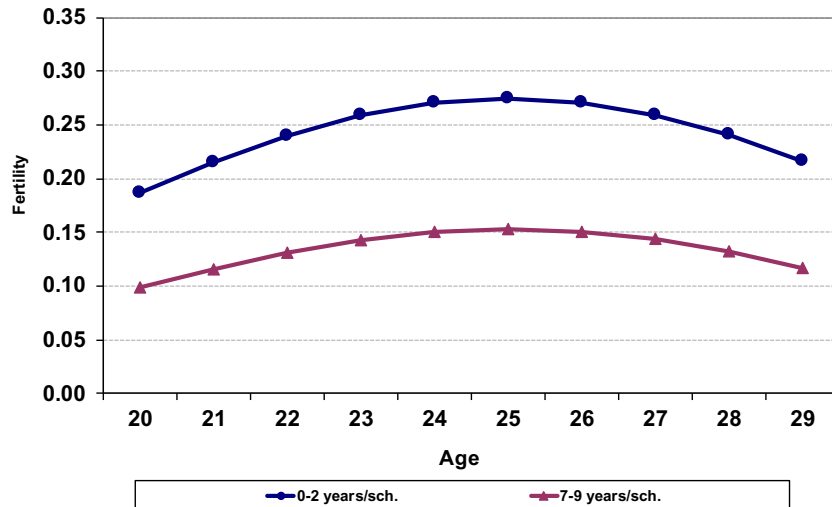
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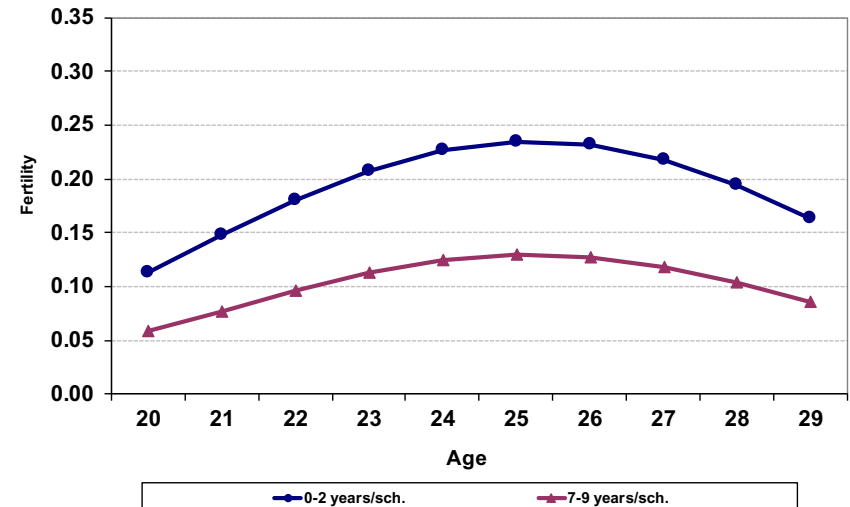
20–29 Age group

Women with at least 3 children

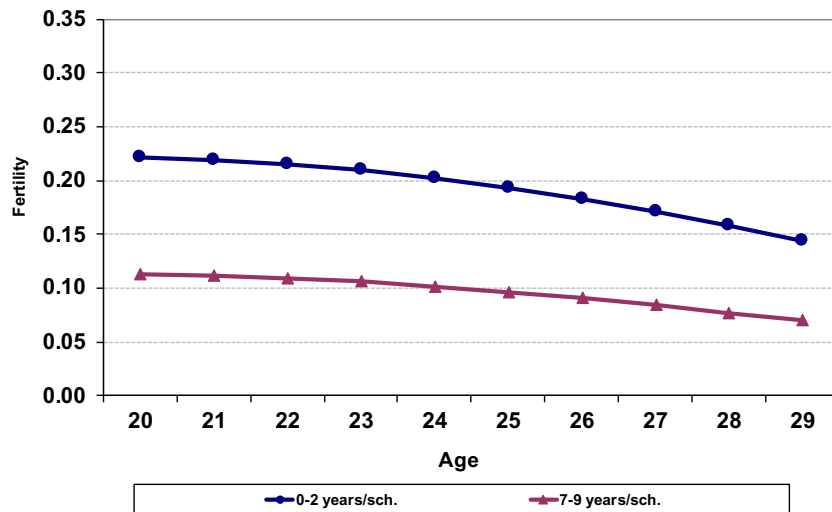
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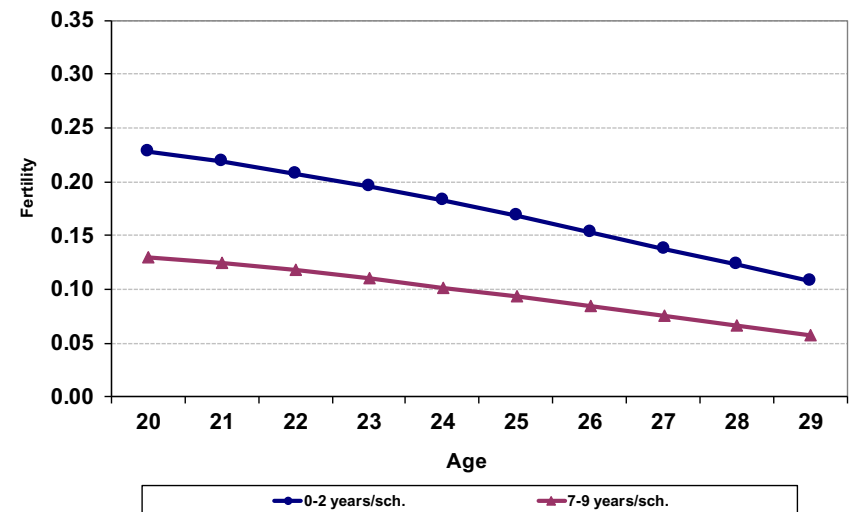
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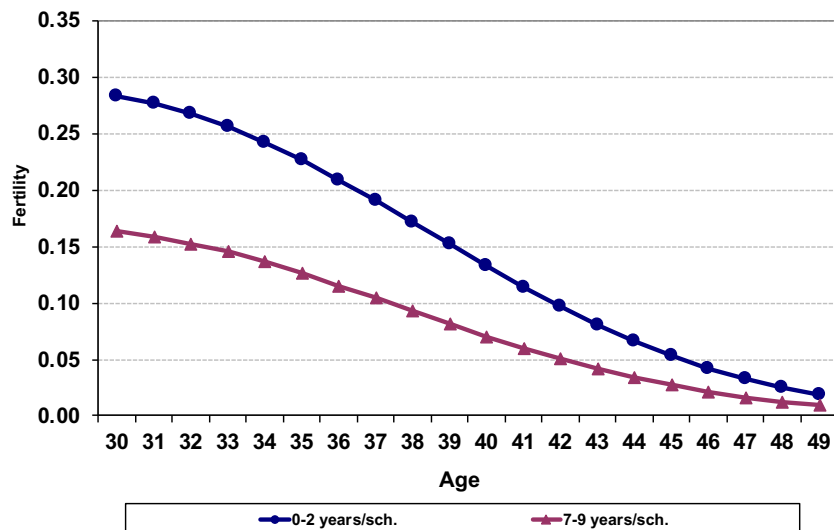
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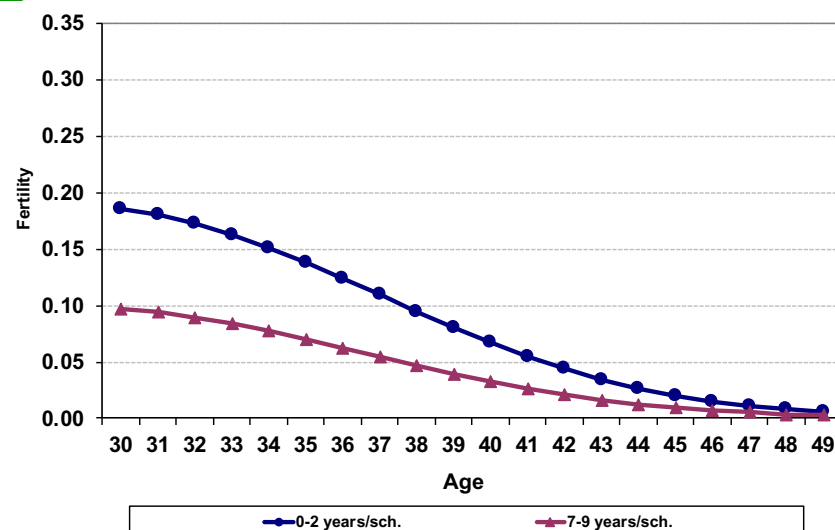
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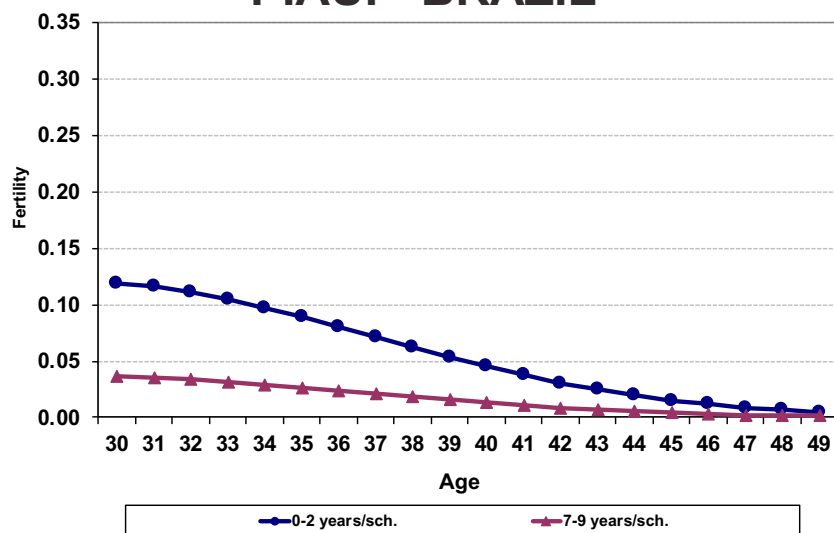
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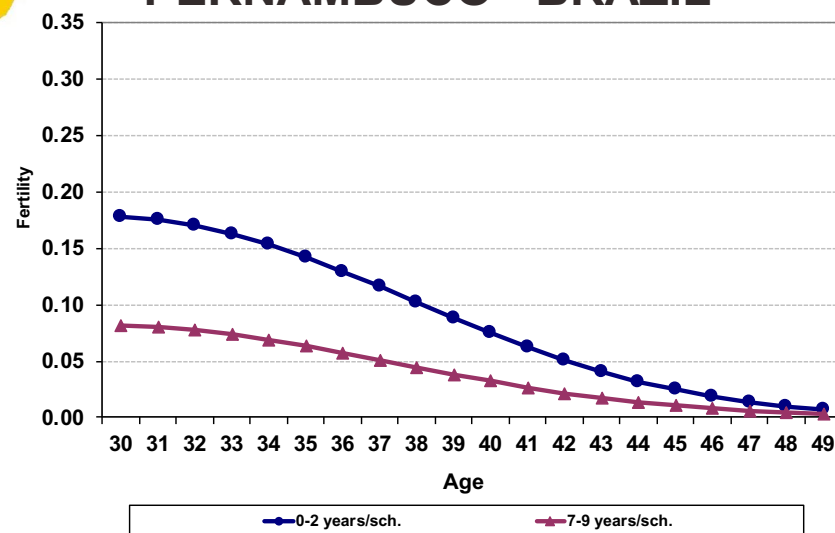
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New issues and methodologies

- Some research has focused on power and empowerment as key ways to understand gender
- Others have looked at resistance to policies and norms to understand gender's role
- Several scholars have examined the way that gender's role in institutions such as the economy or state has been linked to demographic outcomes

References

Amaral EFL, Potter JE. 2009. "Population policies, government programs, and fertility: A comparison between Brazil and Mexico." *Notas de Población*, 35(87): 7–33.

Poston, DL (Ed.). 2019. *Handbook of Population*. Cham: Springer. Chapter 4 (pp. 107–142).





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