

Erasing versus Enumerating Sexual Minority Families: Findings from the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Scholars of sexual minority families in Western countries have shown that lesbian and gay populations, particularly households headed by same-sex couples, can be accounted for using data sources like censuses and national surveys. Less is known about sexual minority families in non-WEIRD (Western, educated, industrialised, rich, democratic) countries where no laws regarding same-sex partnerships like marriage or civil unions exist. We examined three population datasets and their corresponding protocols in the Philippines, a Southeast Asian country where homosexuality is not criminalised but where same-sex partnerships have no legal status. Results indicate that sexual minority families were systematically erased in the 2010 Philippine Census and in the 2013 National Demographic and Health Survey, partly due to heteronormative definition of marriage and 'cohabitation'. In contrast, we found evidence for same-sex headed families in the 2013 Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Study dataset. Implications for erasing versus enumerating sexual minority families will be presented.

Introduction

With the developments in LGBT issues globally, such as marriage equality and same-sex partnership recognition, there is a need for more reliable data on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender populations, including sexual minority families. Scholars in Western countries have shown that such sexual minority populations, particularly households headed by same-sex couples, can be accounted for using traditional data sources like censuses and national surveys (Black et al., 2000; Gates, 2011, 2013, 2014). However, much less is known about sexual minority families in so-called non-WEIRD countries (Western, educated, industrialised, rich, democratic; Henrich, Heine & Norenzayan, 2010) where no laws regarding same-sex partnerships like marriage or civil unions exist. Previous work by social researchers have shown that lesbian and gay adults in such contexts do enter committed partnerships, head households, and form families, much like heterosexual counterparts. However much of these findings have been based on qualitative data and rely on non-representative samples, partly due to the lack of formal recognition of same-sex couples in legal and administrative matters such as civil registry data.

Method

We examined population datasets and their corresponding protocols in the Philippines, a Southeast Asian country where homosexuality is not criminalized and social acceptance of homosexuality is moderate but where same-sex partnerships have no legally recognized status (UNDP, USAID, 2014).

We examined household data from three demographic sources: (1) the 2010 Philippine Census of Population and Housing (CPH), conducted by the National Statistics Office (NSO), now the Philippine Statistical Authority, (2) the 2013 National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS), also conducted by the NSO, and (3) the 2013 Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Study, conducted by the Demographic Research and Development Foundation in partnership with the University of the Philippines Population Institute. In addition, we consulted available protocols used in the training of data collection personnel and in the conduct of these studies, supplemented by conversations with local informants involved in the design, gathering, and processing of these national datasets.

Results

Our findings indicated that sexual minority families were not accounted for in either the 2010 CPH and the 2013 NDHS. This erasure was systematic and could take place in three points of the population research process: during the design of instruments, during the interview process itself, and during data processing and management. This erasure of sexual minority families was partly due to official definitions of marriage and of 'cohabitation' that excludes same-sex couples (see Table 1).

In contrast, we found evidence for the existence of a small number of same-sex headed families in the 2013 YAFS dataset. We validated the classification of these cases as sexual

minority families based on reported gender of household heads, reported gender of partners, and reported marital status as live-in partners. We conducted a further examination of the data from these seven (7) cases to build a descriptive profile of same-sex partner headed families, the first systematic attempt to do so using nationally data representative data in the Philippines.

The YAFS study design was open to the possibility of capturing LGBT populations during its study formulation and implementation phases, as evidenced by the evolving inclusion of items related to sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE) since 1994.

Table 1. Comparison of the CPH, NDHS and YAFS

CHARACTERISTICS	CPH	NDHS	YAFS
Year	2010	2013	2013
Number of households	20,171,899	14,804	17,111
Implementing agency	National Statistics Office	National Statistics Office	Demographic Research and Development Foundation, Inc./ University of the Philippines Population Institute
Questions on and definitions of marriage and cohabitation	<p>Asked in the Household Form</p> <p>Is _____ single, married, widowed, divorced/separated, or in a common-law/live-in arrangement?</p> <p>Married is a person married in a religious or civil ceremony, either living together with spouse at the time of visit, or temporarily living apart because his/her spouse is employed elsewhere or is in the Armed Forces.</p> <p>Common-law/live-in is a person cohabiting or living consensually with another person as husband and wife without the benefit of a legal marriage.</p>	<p>Not asked in the Household Questionnaire but asked in the Individual Questionnaire</p> <p>Are you currently married or living together with a man as if married?</p> <p>A married or currently married person is one who has been united in matrimony with another person of opposite sex through religious or civil rites, whereas, living with a man is one who lives together consensually with another as husband or wife. To be considered married, the couple should still be living together, or if living apart from each other, the separation must only be temporary.</p> <p>Note: Respondents for the 2013 NDHS are females of reproductive ages, 15-49.</p>	<p>Asked in both Household and Individual Questionnaires.</p> <p>What is (NAME)'s marital status?</p> <p>Currently married is a person living consensually with another as husband and wife with the benefit of a legal (formal) marriage, be it in a religious or a civil ceremony.</p> <p>Currently living-in is a person cohabiting with another as husband and wife without the benefit of a legal (formal) marriage.</p> <p>Currently married or currently living-in includes persons temporarily living apart because the spouse is living in an institution or living in another area for professional or business reasons.</p> <p>Note: allows for the recording of same sex couples.</p>
Data collection interval	Every 10 years*	Every 5 years	Every decade (1981, 1994, 2002, 2013)

*mid decades censuses are collected depending on the availability of budget (taken in 1995, 2007 & 2015)

Table 2. Socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the seven same-sex couples

Same sex-couples	Age		Highest Education		Employment		Household size	Number of children*
	HHH	Partner	HHH	Partner	HHH	Partner		
Couple 1	34	42	Elem Grad	College Year 1	Farmer	Housework	3	1
Couple 2	34	22	HS Grad	College Year 2	Store owner	Store owner	3	1
Couple 3	37	27	Elem Grad	Grade 4	Farmer	Farmer	2	0
Couple 4	48	38	Elem Grad	HS Year 2	Farmer	Laundry woman	3	0
Couple 5	30	22	HS Grad	HS Grad	Jeepney Operator	Housework	10	0
Couple 6	50	52	Grade 5	Elem Grad	Farmer	None	3	0
Couple 7	48	50	Grade 5	College Year 1	Business	Business	5	0

*child by either the household head or partner

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