



# Research with Hidden and Marginal Populations: Issues and Complexities

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## introduction

### Applied research

Why researching hidden and marginal populations?

### Assumption:

Marginal population are more vulnerable

## Taxonomy

- Rare populations
- Hidden populations
- Elusive populations
- Marginalized populations
- Excluded populations
- Blurred populations

## Rare population

Small number (n)

Small proportion (n/N)

Issues: N, cluster

## Moving population

Space: migrants, trafficking  
Time: children, adults

## Hidden population

Difficult to reach

(indigenous people)

Characteristics difficult to see (trafficked girls)

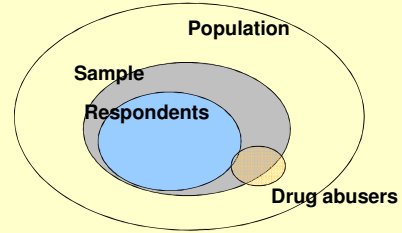
Issues: capacity of the researcher

### Elusive population

Hiding, not reporting, non respondent (G&L, drug addicted, homeless)

Issues: incentive - disincentive

### Non respondent



### Marginalized population

Process of falling into a marginal position

Away from the average, not considered relevant

Issues: judgment, interest

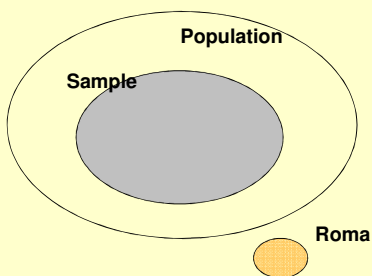
### Excluded population

Three common elements that are widely regarded as central:

- **Relativity:** Exclusion can only be judged by comparing the circumstances of some individuals, groups and communities relative to others at a given place and time.
- **Agency:** People are excluded by the act of some agent. This focus on agency can help in the identification of the cause of exclusion and ways to remedy it.
- **Dynamics:** Exclusion may be based on bleak future prospects, not just current circumstances.

Atkinson, A.B. (1998), 'Social Exclusion, Poverty and Unemployment', LSE

### Excluded population



### Blurred population

Lack of a clear definition  
Changes in the definition

- Street children
- Children in the street
- Children of the street
- Child soldiers
- Children involved in armed conflicts
- Children associated with armed forces or groups

Child victims of trafficking

## Counting

Not quantitative idolatry, but because counting something presupposes two basic operations of key concern for researchers and policy makers alike:

- **conceptual identification,**
- **practical identification,**

such as being able to say “this is a victim of trafficking”

(Pedersen and Sommerfelt 2001).

## Counting

- **Policy planning**
- **Monitoring**
- **Impact evaluation**
- **Advocacy**
- **Social change**

## Counting

Why do ecologists know more about rare birds, or fishes in the sea, than we know about street children?....

....Birds cannot even talk.

## Some possible approaches

- Oversampling
- Sampling from several frames
- Cluster sampling
- Adaptive sampling
- Capture-Recapture
- Respondent Driven sampling

## Some possible approaches

Without solid qualitative research it is not possible to define appropriate quantitative methodology

## Relevance and visibility

Invisibility → irrelevant → exclusion

$$\text{visible} = \alpha P = \alpha \frac{n}{N}$$

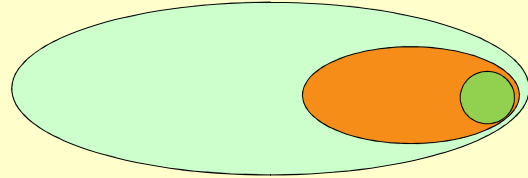
### Protection Paradox

Only marginal population become visible

(Unaccompanied minors in refugee camps)

### Positive Deviance

Solutions to community problems already exist within the community.



young children who grow and develop adequately in poor families and communities, where a high number children are malnourished and frequently ill.

### Ethical questions

Research in the best interest of marginal populations

- **Planning:** Is the research necessary? Can people be hurt in being included/excluded in the research?
- **Data collection /analysis:** risks assessment,
- **Use:** increase stigma? confidentiality?

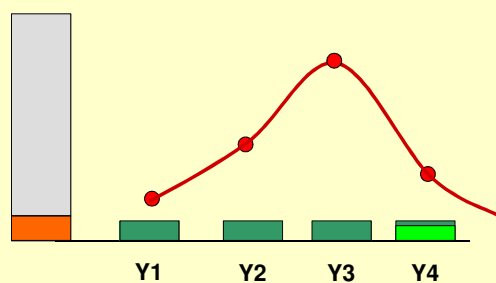
("children of war")

### Ethical consideration

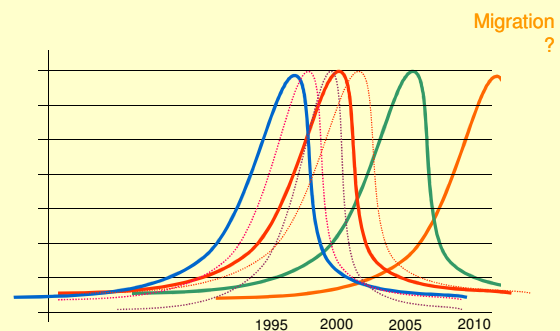
- Do not harm: risk assessment
- No means no - informed consent
- Not only questions: responsibility in providing information
- Doing a high quality research
- Ensure the safety of researchers
- Avoid raising unrealistic expectations
- Using the research: respect privacy and ensure confidentiality and anonymity

### Rise and fall of marginal populations

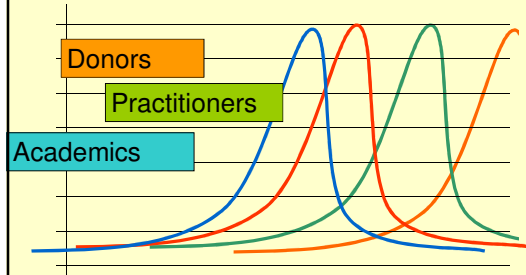
- Stock and flow



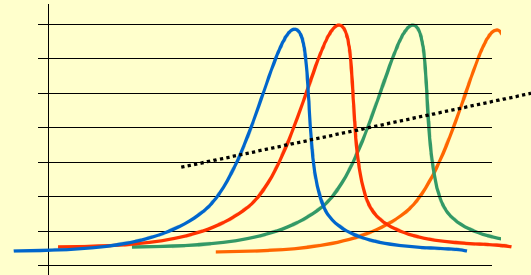
### Rise and fall of marginal populations



## Rise and fall of marginal populations



## Rise and fall of marginal populations



Thank you!



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