

Historical demography

Strand organiser: Dr. Violetta Hionidou, University of Newcastle

On democracy and demography.

Tim Dyson, London School of Economics

Accounting for the emergence and spread of modern systems of representative democracy is a central concern of political science. Research on this subject generally concludes that economic development is the principal force behind the process of democratization. However, very little attention is given to the possible contribution of fundamental demographic changes. Accordingly, this paper uses data for Europe in the period since 1850, and for the rest of the world in the period since 1950, to argue that demographic factors have been at least as important as economic ones in facilitating the growth of modern systems of democracy. In this context, a country's position with respect to what might be termed the 'second half' of the demographic transition is shown to be especially crucial. Among the ideas that explain the paper's findings are that: (i) population growth weakens the basis of traditional autocratic regimes, but as it slows so it can strengthen the basis for democratic rule, (ii) fertility decline releases women from lives that are often dominated by household affairs, gradually putting them on a more equal basis with respect to men—developments that have underlain the extension of the female franchise, and (iii) population aging means that societies move from having young age structures—with many children—to having old age structures—with fewer children and more adults—and societies that are more adult in composition are more likely to press for democracy.

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Adjusting family strategies to a changing socioeconomic context: the decline of the stem family over the 20th century.

Begona Elizalde-San Miguel, Jesús J. Sánchez Barricarte, University Carlos III, Madrid

The rapid and intense industrialization process Navarre (North of Spain) went through in the 20th century had a strong impact on family forms. The region experienced an important population decline due to strong migration flows; got an imbalanced sex ratio because of the feminization of these migration flows; and the population distribution among employment sectors changed drastically. All these processes led to the modification of the type of households people decided to live in.

The stem family was prevalent in the North of the region since (at least) the 15th century. For centuries, the "single heir" rule explained the predominance of complex households (extended and multiple according to Laslett's methodology) in this area. These households hosted a married child (the heir), parents and other single relatives. Over the 20th century, cohabitation of the elderly and their children decreased remarkably. While 30% of all households were complex in the first decades of the twentieth century, these were reduced by half by 1996. Solitary households and those with no family structure, rather uncommon in the 1900s, came to represent a regular domestic option. The reason is that single people and widows (increasing due to imbalanced sex-ratio and migration flows) are no longer part of "the family house", and set up their own households. Therefore, families seem to have adapted to a changing environment modifying their domestic solutions, more specifically the people they live with. This paper analyzes whether the characteristics of the stem family have totally disappeared in this area or whether people keep reproducing certain aspects of it.

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Residential persistence in Edwardian Belfast.

Alice Reid, Eilidh Garrett, Simon Szreter, University of Cambridge

This paper will present initial findings from a project which aims to investigate the effect of residential mobility on estimating the influence of cross-sectionally measured independent variables (such as housing) on infant mortality calculated from retrospective data in the 1911 census. The first part of the project, reported here, involves the linking of addresses in the city of Belfast at an annual or biennial basis over the decade leading up to the 1911 census, starting with the 1901 census and street directory and using a further five intercensal street directories culminating in the 1911 census, to yield measures of family and household persistence. Different areas of the city will be considered and the influences of religion, occupation, and life-cycle stage on persistence and mobility will be considered.

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Marriage, inheritance, and household formation on a Greek island, Mykonos (mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century).

Violetta Hionidou, University of Newcastle

This paper outlines my earlier findings on household structure, marriage and inheritance patterns in the second half of the nineteenth century on Mykonos. Further, I assess the situation for the early twentieth century, using as a source the in-depth interviews I conducted with elderly Mykonians in the early 1990s. Thus, the existence (or otherwise) of continuities is examined and, in the light of this, the findings concerning nineteenth-century Mykonos are re-assessed. Moreover, the argument that, in southern Europe, the family is and has been the main welfare agency for the elderly and those in need, primarily because of strong family ties, is discussed in relation to Mykonos. I argue that, for Mykonos, family has indeed been the main welfare agency for the elderly. Nevertheless, family 'ties' are heavily dependent on financial arrangements and the lives of sons and daughters can be, and were, shaped so that optimal provision for the elderly can be ensured.

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Modernisation and mortality in London's East End, 1550-1700.

Gill Newton, University of Cambridge

The growth of London is a key factor in the early modern transition from a traditional rural society to urbanised modernity, and the major part of London's growth in this period was in the suburbs. This paper will focus on the demography of London's eastern suburb, represented by the parishes of St Botolph Aldgate and Holy Trinity Minories. This comprises an area of 80 acres straddling Whitechapel and abutting the Tower of London and the river Thames. This area saw a six-fold increase in its population to 20 000 inhabitants by 1700, with gardens and open ground giving way to densely packed residential, trading and industrial development. This dramatic socio-economic transformation can be seen as representative of similar modernisation taking place on a national scale. Using a family reconstitution of the parish registers, our objective is to examine the nature of this population growth and in particular the impact these changes may have had on mortality at a local level. There will be scope for microgeographical analysis at street or ward level, and for comparison with other London suburbs and the city centre.

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The onset of mortality transition.

M. Murphy, Guo Xu, London School of Economics

This presentation considers the timing and patterns of the onset of sustained mortality decline. Comparison of trends across a number of societies for extended periods of time are shown, including: 1. How far trends are similar across different countries, and can any common factors be identified for those that show similar behaviour? 2. How does the onset of mortality decline occur? Does it become apparent among certain age groups, and if so what mechanisms of diffusion might account for the way in which different age groups adopt new patterns? 3. Estimation of age patterns of mortality change, and onset of timing. This has been used to underpin discussions of, for example, the relative importance of cohort factors and public health innovations in 19th-century England and Wales. Preliminary analysis shows that the widely discussed England and Wales patterns may be unusual, and as broad a set of countries as possible will therefore be analysed. The primary data source will be the Human Mortality Database (HMD), which includes data back into the 19th-century for number of countries. Considerable use will be made of graphical approaches.

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Diet, health and work intensity in England and Wales, 1700-1914.

Bernard Harris, University of Southampton, Roderick Floud, Gresham College, Robert W. Fogel, University of Chicago, Sok Chui Hong, Sogang University, Korea

In their different ways, both Thomas Malthus and Thomas McKeown raised fundamental questions about the relationship between food supply and the decline of mortality. Malthus argued that food supply was the most important constraint on population growth and McKeown claimed that an improvement in the population's capacity to feed itself was the most important single cause of mortality change. This paper explores the implications of these arguments for our understanding of the causes of mortality decline in Britain between 1700 and 1914. It presents new estimates showing changes in the calorific value and composition of British diets in 1700, 1750, 1800 and 1850 and compares these with the official estimates published by the Royal Society in 1917. It then considers the implications of these data in the light of new arguments about the relationship between diet, work intensity and economic growth. However the paper is not solely concerned with the analysis of food-related issues. It also considers the ways in which sanitary reform may have contributed to the decline of mortality at the end of the nineteenth century and it pays particular attention to the impact of cohort-specific factors on the pattern of mortality decline from the mid-nineteenth century onwards.

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Stillbirths and neonatal mortality in eighteenth century London.

Romola Davenport, University of Cambridge, Jeremy Boulton, University of Newcastle, Leonard Schwarz, University of Birmingham

Foetal mortality in historical populations has received very serious attention recently, culminating in the publication of Robert Woods' book 'Death before Birth' in 2009. However our understanding of levels and trends in stillbirth rates in the past remains dependent on very fragmentary and ambiguous historical evidence. Stillbirths were rarely recorded in parish registers by the eighteenth century, although the London Bills continued to report counts of 'stillborn and abortive' burials. Here we report evidence from a novel source, the sextons' books of the large London parish of St.

Martin-in-the-Field which provide a so far unique insight into perinatal mortality in this period. The sextons' books provide details of exact age of death for infants, and include a large number of burials of 'stillborn' and 'abortive' infants, as well as burial fee, street address and cause of death. The age pattern of early infant deaths indicates that many of these 'stillborns' must have been early neonatal deaths, and the wealth of information and notes in both the sextons' burial books and the workhouse records allows some insight into the classification of early infant deaths in this period. We will assess the implications of this evidence for estimates of both neonatal mortality and stillbirth rates in this period, and evaluate the hypothesis advanced by Bob Woods, that the decline in smallpox exposure was a significant factor in the parallel decline of maternal mortality and stillbirth rates in the late eighteenth century.

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The Sardinian experience of the lowest Italian mortality rates in the past: True or false empirical evidence?

Marco Breschi, Lucia Pozzi, University of Sassari

In past Italian demographic experience, Sardinia is a typical outlier, not only for its geographical isolation and its reduced population density, but also for other relevant aspects. According to the Princeton Project results, it was the Italian region with the latest decline of marital fertility. Furthermore, even if it is situated at the heart of the Mediterranean, it is paradoxically the least "Mediterranean" region in terms of marital and family formation behaviours. Moreover, after the National Unification (1861) Sardinia was the Italian region with the lowest infant mortality rates. This record was essentially due to the extremely reduced neonatal mortality rates accompanied by very low still birth rates. A great variation in perinatal mortality rates characterized the Italian provinces. These differences might also derive from the procedures in the classification of stillbirths and neonatal deaths, attested by the contemporary official sources. Up to now insufficient attention has been paid to analyzing these crucial classification problems which might have been more relevant in the Italian experience, due to the late national unification process. Here we present the results coming from the case study of Alghero, a community counting about 10,000 inhabitants, located along the North-Western coast. Through an individual nominative linkage, based on civil as well as parish records of births and deaths (years 1866-1925) and an in-depth analysis of the legal and religious dispositions regulating the recording procedures, we intend to shed light on these unexplored subjects and carefully reconstruct the perinatal mortality rates of this Sardinian community.

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Interactions between childhood mortality estimates and heights in Central Spain, XIXth and XXth centuries.

Diego Ramira Farinas, Spanish Council for Scientific Research, Hector Garcia, University Complutense of Madrid, Alfredo Garcia-Hiernaux, University Complutense of Madrid

The interactions between standards of living and other estimations of health have been usually approached using as a proxy of health of the populations estimates of infant mortality and height as a proxy of levels of net nutrition. Final height of recruits is accomplished after a combination of effects affecting the individual from their conception till their recruiting age. Therefore the use of only health estimates based on the first year of life could be an inadequate approximation to the measurement of health of individuals. This paper will approach this interaction using different estimates of childhood mortality which can explain in a better way changes in the interaction with

standards of living estimates such as height of recruits. The paper will use two different datasets with information on heights of circa 100,000 recruits and mortality information for 24 villages for most of the XIXth and early XXth Century in Central Spain.

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Sex differentials in mortality in nineteenth century England and Wales.

Andrew Hinde, University of Southampton

This paper examines sex differentials in mortality in England in the 1860s, focusing on the impact of particular causes of death. I first decompose the sex differential in the expectation of life at birth by age, showing that regional variation in the sex differential is principally due to mortality at ages five years and above, with females enjoying a fairly consistent advantage over males in infancy and early childhood. The impact of causes of death is then studied, using death registration data from the Registrar General of England and Wales for the 1860s. The analysis first focuses on 11 Registration Divisions of England and Wales. Mortality was most favourable to females in London, and least favourable to females in parts of the Midlands. The causes of death which have most impact on the sex differential are pulmonary tuberculosis (or phthisis), 'other violent deaths' and deaths associated with childbirth. In particular, the overall sex differential is sensitive to the relative mortality of males and females from pulmonary tuberculosis. These results are illustrated by an analysis of eight smaller areas of England and Wales which have distinctive occupational and economic characteristics. One conclusion of the analysis is that the overall sex differential in mortality was often as responsive to the nature of the mortality environment which men faced as to the experience of women. The tendency of previous work to view the sex differential through the lens of 'excess female mortality' has tended to obscure this point.

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Towards a coding for disabilities recorded in the British Census, 1851-1911.

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From 1851 onwards the decennial British census returns contain vast amounts of comparable information on every individual in the country, and are the basis of much of our knowledge of changing social and economic structures in the period. The Integrated Census Microdata Project (I-CeM) will create one of the most important historical datasets in the world, and provide a key resource for British and international historians. They will be working closely with commercial partners, who have created the digitised censuses for genealogical purposes, in a unique exercise in knowledge transfer. The Project team will bring together computerised versions of the censuses for 1851 to 1911, and enhance these through standardisation and harmonisation. Through access to these datasets academic researchers will no longer have to do their own data inputting, and will therefore be able to expand the range and complexity of the research issues they can address from the census returns. Because the datasets will be complete censuses rather samples, this will enable research on new subjects, such as disability history. Among the tasks that the I-CeM team will be performing on the raw census data will be the development of a disability coding schema. This paper will discuss the problems of designing codes for disabilities as recorded by householders and enumerators, and possible coding options. Researchers of disability will be able to engage with a member of the Project team and offer their suggestions for improving the eventual schema to be used.

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‘Saving the poor worms from starving? Traffic in corpses in Georgian Westminster, 1747-1825’

Jeremy Boulton, University of Newcastle

Can we ever know the true number of people who died in any one locality in any one year? In addition to local levels of religious dissent and the extent to which the burials of the very young were registered, it is argued in this paper that, particularly in the eighteenth century, any assessment of the completeness of local burial registration requires an analysis of local interment practices and burial customs. Using evidence drawn from Georgian London the paper argues that we need to revisit the effects of two inter-related phenomena: the effects of burial fees on interment practices and the ebb and flow of a very considerable ‘traffic in corpses’. By the eighteenth century burial space in London was at a premium and there was an active market in the provision of suitable, and affordable, burial ground. This ‘commodification’ of burial, driven partly by considerations of cost, had a major impact on interment practices in London’s West End. The paper concludes by showing that changes in the volume and direction of the traffic in corpses explain overall changes in the number of individuals buried – and registered - in any one locality.

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Doctors and the measurement of maternal morbidity in late nineteenth century Scotland.

Alice Reid, University of Cambridge

Even today the measurement of maternal mortality poses problems, and these were even greater in the past, raising a host of questions for those interested in studying this phenomenon. How accurate were causes of death, and to what extent were maternal deaths hidden among other causes? Should associated deaths from non-maternal causes but possibly exacerbated by childbirth be included with maternal deaths? How comparable are maternal mortality rates based on causes of death with those based on women dying within a certain time since childbirth? To what extent do variations in medical provision affect the answers to these questions? This paper uses linked civil registers and census enumerators’ books for the Isle of Skye and the town of Kilmarnock in Scotland in the second half of the nineteenth century to try to answer some of these questions. The accuracy of cause of death recording is assessed using comparisons between deaths recorded as due to maternal causes and women dying within a certain time since a live birth, and by examination of the distribution of maternal deaths by time since a live birth. Comparisons between Skye and Kilmarnock indicate that medical provision, and particularly the level of death certification, makes a large impact on officially recorded levels of maternal mortality, and is likely to hamper comparisons over time and between places.

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