

Critical demography & qualitative research

Session convenors: Dr. Rishita Nandagiri (London School of Economics), Dr. Ernestina Coast (London School of Economics), Dr. Sarah Walters (London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine)

4.45pm Monday 5 September

What constitutes an abortion? Examining the use of vignettes and card sorts in a mixed-methods study of reproductive health experiences, USA

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Sexual and reproductive health research, policy, and programming has supposed a consistency of meaning around pregnancy and abortion. This is bolstered by positivist approaches to surveys within demographic research, which assume that all respondents will similarly understand pregnancy-related questions. This mixed-methods study applied a constructionist approach to design vignettes and card sorts to interrogate how women understood abortions. Vignettes and card sorts were iterated through cognitive interviewing (n=64) and embedded in a national survey (n= 2009). 6 pairs of vignettes and 14 card sorts presented varying scenarios about pregnancy experiences. Each survey respondent was randomly assigned one vignette in each pair, with the pairs differing to examine which components of a scenario might influence on abortion understandings. Women also sorted each card sort into “yes/no/maybe/don’t know” as to whether constituted an abortion. Women’s understandings of what constituted an abortion were varied and embedded in specific aspects of the scenario, e.g., gestational age, contact with a clinic/physician, and the person’s intention. Importantly, variation in responses challenge assumptions around a universality of meaning; women’s understandings of pregnancy and abortion were not rooted in positivist, medical definitions. Blurred boundaries between types of pregnancy loss illustrate the need to broaden our recognition of the complexities and nuances of abortion understandings. Survey vignettes and card sorts enhanced the capacity to capture understandings of what constitutes an abortion. The methods emphasise the potential from embedding qualitative approaches to demography into future SRHR research.

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Introducing a mixed methods approach to operationalising Reproductive Justice
Laura Sochas; Department of Social Policy & Intervention, University of Oxford

The concept of Reproductive Justice originates in critical and qualitative literatures, strongly influenced by critical race theory. For this reason, quantitative or mixed methods operationalisations of Reproductive Justice are very rare. However, this paper argues that such approaches are also important, particularly when attempting to link Reproductive Justice to health outcomes or other measures of people’s wellbeing. A quantitative approach allows for a systematic, comparative analysis of the association between the ways in which countries’ policies affect Reproductive Justice and health outcomes, while taking into account variation at the individual-level. However, there are limits to what a solely quantitative analysis can achieve in operationalising Reproductive Justice: a mixed methods approach is needed to highlight possible mechanisms behind health harms; explore the meaning of unjust policies in a context-specific way; and illuminate marginalised populations’ agency. This paper outlines a mixed methods approach to operationalise Reproductive Justice, by demonstrating how quantitative and qualitative methods can be used in conversation with each other to honour key aspects of the Reproductive Justice concept: (1) Positive rights; (2) Intersectionality; and (3) A focus on reproductive desires rather than fertility outcomes. The approach will be demonstrated with respect to a specific research plan to investigate how family and migration policies in Europe constrain stigmatised populations’ rights to have children and to parent with dignity, and the effect this has on people’s health and wellbeing.

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Gender and migration from mainland France to the overseas territories: an intersectional perspective on a 'lifestyle migration'.

Stephanie Condon, INED

Movement of mainland-born people to the French overseas territories is an enduring although statistically invisible feature of the migration dynamics linking these former colonies to metropolitan France. Many of these people are actually descendants of emigrants from the territories, whilst others have no family links there. The latter category developed from the state policy of sending emissaries to organize the administration, policing and 'modernization' of these territories following their change in status to 'overseas departments' in 1946. By the 1990s, a more spontaneous movement of mainland French seeking a new lifestyle under tropical climates became more visible. The occupational status and generally comfortable living standards of these people, as well as their skin colour, lead to their identification as a category – Les Métros – whose privileged social status contrasts with that of most members of the local population. However, a closer look reveals internal differences and a diversity of trajectories. Using data from recent surveys and qualitative follow-up interviews, we examine the social positioning and trajectories of recent migrants from mainland France to Reunion Island or the French Caribbean. An intersectional perspective, generally used to analyse processes of multidimensional subordination and inequalities, helps us unpack the apparent homogenous life courses of white women migrants whilst comparing them to the experiences of descendants of emigrants. Lifestyle motives may combine with other motives for moving to one of the islands. Subsequently, the interplay of gender, race and coloniality can produce complex outcomes for women including experiences of discrimination, violence, loss of social status

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"I don't think she discriminated me, but I am not 100% sure.": Understanding non-migrants' attitudes towards immigrants and its link to immigrants' subjective wellbeing.

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The link between migrants' wellbeing and their interactions with non-migrants remains under-interrogated. In this mixed-methods research, based in Slovakia (a new destination country), I present results from an analysis of a 300-person survey and 50 interviews, both of which I contributed to designing and collecting. I show mixed-methods offer a novel approach to understanding the nuances of intergroup interactions. I investigate the links between migrants' subjective wellbeing, contacts with non-migrants and local culture, and their interpretation of non-migrants' attitudes (ATI) and behaviour. Following a triangulation mixed-methods design, I analyse the qualitative data thematically and the quantitative using descriptive statistics. To my knowledge, this is the first study focusing on migrants' wellbeing in Slovakia. My preliminary results show that immigrants are aware of non-migrant's ATI and their nuances, most prominently the importance of migrants' ethnicity and social class. Immigrants interpret the behaviour of non-migrants (and institutions) towards themselves as based on attitudes towards immigrants as a group and not themselves personally. This impersonal treatment affects migrants' wellbeing. Firstly, immigrants are uncertain of their relationships with others as they are constantly treated as a part of a group. Secondly, it doesn't allow them to leave the migrant identity, which forces them to perform the habitus of a "good migrant", especially when in contact with non-migrants. My findings speak to existing quantitative research on intergroup contact between migrants and non-migrants and raise questions about the suitability of current methods collecting quantitative data on intergroup contact and the depth of information they capture.

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Who gets contraceptive side-effects? Using women's own voices to understand variation in side-effect experiences among hormonal contraceptive users in Central Oromia, Ethiopia

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Background: A key barrier to reducing unmet need for contraception is the experience of contraceptive side-effects. Currently, little is known about drivers of side-effect variation as clinical trials rarely take women's own voices into account. We aimed to use an exploratory sequential mixed methods approach to investigate why some women experience worse contraceptive side-effects using hypotheses and language originally put forward by women themselves. **Methods:** We conducted qualitative interviews exploring variation in side-effect experiences. Based on these results we created a locally specific quantitative side-effects measurement tool. Next, we recruited 259 new injectable or implant users and 115 non-users across urban and rural locations in Adama, Ethiopia. They were followed up for 3 months to measure side-effects experiences and other factors identified in the qualitative phase as potentially important for driving variation in side-effects. **Results:** Women reported that side-effects had a serious impact on their day to day lives and contraceptive decisions. They reported that lower income women, who could not afford a good diet and had harsh physical lifestyles, were more at risk of side-effects. We will use multivariable linear regression to investigate the effect of these factors, identified during the qualitative phase, on risk of side-effects. Directed acyclic graphs will be used to determine adjustment covariates to minimise confounding and obtain accurate effect estimates. **Implications:** This research will provide a novel understanding of side-effect prevalence and aetiology, measured through directly considering women's concerns, language, and knowledge. Our findings may challenge existing clinical practice for designing contraceptive methods and dosing regimens, as well as contraceptive counselling policies, which currently ascribe to a one size fits all model.

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