

## Critical perspectives in demography and population studies strand

Strand organiser: Dr. Rishita Nandagiri (London School of Economics)

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**Critical perspectives in demography and population studies: The crafting of population knowledge (30-minute session 1A). Tuesday 15 September 2.30pm**

**The persistence in gendering: work-family policy in Britain since the 1960s – Jenny Chanfreau, University College London**

Social policies form relevant context for understanding demographic outcomes of interest, such as fertility, and implicitly or explicitly tend to be conceptualised in research as responses to objective social issues or inequalities. Yet while changes to employment legislation have ostensibly facilitated the combination of paid work and family responsibilities, the gendered division of labour persists and contributes to economic inequalities such as the gender pay and pension gaps and the ‘motherhood penalty’. Bringing together existing research and policy critique with the framework of policy as ‘gendering practices’, this paper instead focuses on the role of policy itself in constructing and upholding an unequal gender arrangement. Tracing how UK social policies have over time articulated and positioned gendered possibilities for combining paid work and child-rearing to draw out some of the complexities and inconsistencies over time that shape gendered and classed work-family life courses, the paper concludes that the gendering of ‘the worker’ and ‘the parent’ conceptualised in UK policy has persisted over the last several decades. Attending to these historical policy pathways that have maintained and shaped the gender arrangement helps problematise the policy context of demographic patterns of interest, and in turn invites researchers to reflect on its influence on our ‘crafting of population knowledge’, in the words of Susan Greenhalgh.

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**Acting in good faith: ‘Studying Up’ population-related policies in India – Rishita Nandagiri, London School of Economics**

Abortion policies, and related population and family planning programmes, are part of reproductive statecraft (Corrêa et al., 2016), tied to discourses of woman- and motherhood, community and nation (Bacchi, 2000; Yuval-Davis, 1993). India passed the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act (MTP) in 1971, arguing for liberalisation as a health imperative- i.e. tackling illegal abortions reduces unsafe abortion. Yet the MTP Act remains dogged by associations with family planning efforts and suspicions of a larger state-run population control strategy. Considering the MTP Act in the social and political contexts surrounding its passing highlights the strong family planning and population control sentiments present at the time. These historical concerns with overpopulation- which continue to persist and influence population policies today- are essential to the reading and interpretation of the MTP Act and its implementation. I conduct a critical (re)reading of the Act and its subsequent amendments; as well as other relevant laws and policies. Influenced by Wright and Reinhold’s (2011) “studying through” and Nader’s (1972) “studying up”, I use primary data collected in India (2017) to interrogate the enduring implications of these policies for women’s reproductive lives. Findings demonstrate the construction of women in relation to their fertilities and tied to larger national and global population and development goals. These constructions limit and restrict women’s access to a range of sexual and reproductive health care services, mediated through normative understandings of womanhood. Findings suggest an urgent need for reform that carefully consider the problematisations and notions embedded within these measures.

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**Critical perspectives in demography and population studies: gender, violence and intersectionality (45-minute session 1B). Tuesday 15 September 4.00pm**

**The political borders of the statistical others: how sample design prevents intersectional study of mobility – Marion Lieutaud, London School of Economics**

Survey data on migration and population diversity has grown, statistical classifications of race/ethnicity have become more pluralistic, and sex is taken for granted: presumably the co-presence of these classifications would have naturally opened a window for quantitative intersectional research on migration. This, I argue, is in fact deeply political, deeply circumstantial and opportunistic, and it has moved and covered what Crenshaw would have called the points of intersectional failures, but it has not done away with them. This research dissects the genesis and the design of two large-scale surveys which are major sources of data on migration and population diversity in the UK and France, respectively: Understanding Society (2009-) and Trajectory and Origins (2008-2009). Critical research on statistics has focused on statistical classifications, in the census especially. More recently, statistical modelling has also become an object of feminist critique, but my attention goes to sample design and questionnaire design. Drawing on interviews with the survey designers, as well as archives and working reports, I show how the construction of the statistical 'others' takes precedence over and largely neutralises the possibility of analysing migration as an experience of mobility – not just alterity. I show how the sample design reflects not a pluralistic or performative approach to belonging/othering, but an assigned racial binary white/non-white, meaning that white migrants are spared statistical scrutiny and that the conflation immigrant/non-white/culturally alien remains entrenched in statistical data. Finally, I show how the same movement that takes migration only as a proxy for sub-categories of 'others' also denies the questionnaire space that would allow for gendered and intersectional experiences of mobility to become statistical objects in their own rights, gender being largely relegated to the 'sex' binary and to gender-mainstreamed indicators on labour division and the family.

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**Violence against women, privilege and intersectionality. A case study from the French overseas territories – Stephanie Condon, Institut National d'Etudes Démographiques (INED)**

Intersectionality developed as a conceptual tool to understand the particular vulnerability of African American women to gender-based violence (Collins, 1998; Crenshaw, 1991; Davis, 1981). Analyses of oppression and violence experienced by women of black and ethnic minorities generally focus on how gender, class, and race operate in relation to one another. Other power hierarchies examined in association with these can be sexual orientation, nationality, age, religion, health/disability. Most academic writings on intersectionality and gender violence are theoretical, whilst empirical studies of the implications for individual circumstances or trajectories are mainly qualitative (Thiara, Condon, Schrötle, 2011). Few examples of studies exist that use a quantitative approach to understanding how such power relations combine to position some women at a disadvantage with regard to protection against violence. Another observation is that most studies focus on women in minoritized or racialized, subaltern groups and the impact of multiple oppression and discrimination on their experience of violence. How women from other more socially privileged groups experience the continuum of everyday violence (Kelly, 1987) is rarely studied. The question of how intersectionality affects the experience of such women, for example by silencing it, is the issue we will address in this paper, framed in the context of migration. Using data from a recent survey on gender based violence conducted in three French overseas territories we will examine the social positions of migrant women born on the French mainland and their experience of violence in these contexts shaped by the colonality of gender (Lugones, 2010).

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**Journeyscapes: the regional scale of women's domestic violence journeys – Janet Bowstead, Royal Holloway, University of London**

Tens of thousands of women and children relocate in the UK to escape domestic violence in a mass of individual and hidden journeys. These journeys typically have multiple stages: some forced by the abuser, but many caused by policies and practices of authorities and services. As Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the UK, the state should have duties to minimise their losses, and support their resettlement; but such duties are not currently acknowledged at either local or national scale. The scale of government is crucial in understanding – and potentially addressing – this failure. Domestic violence services – such as women's refuges – are generally provided at the scale of local government; whereas women commonly cross administrative boundaries to achieve safety, or even just to find a service vacancy at a time of crisis. This presentation will report on research using administrative data from support services – over 140,000 domestic violence journeys to access services in England over 8 years – mapping and quantifying the local, regional and national scale of this forced displacement. Drawing also on qualitative data from women who have relocated, it highlights the complex and often hostile terrain through which they travel, and policy and practice changes that could journeyscape such routes. Focusing on women and children's needs when they relocate, it will present an evidence-based formula for effective domestic violence service provision in terms of location, capacity and catchment area; highlighting the different roles and responsibilities of local and national government; and the regional as the functional scale.

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**Critical perspectives in demography and population studies: rethinking sexual and reproductive health? (45-minute session). Wednesday 16 September 11.00am**

**Male circumcision and sexual functioning: The role of cultural background – Nitzam Peri-Rotem, University of Exeter**

Male circumcision (MC) is one of the most common surgical procedures performed worldwide. Yet, this procedure has remained highly contentious and, empirical evidence about its health benefits and implications on sexual functioning is mixed. While the prevalence of MC and its drivers vary greatly across countries and social groups, the role of cultural background in mediating the relationship between MC and sexual functioning has so far received little attention. Sexual functioning is largely subjective and can be shaped by societal and cultural expectations around sex and body image, including genital image. Therefore, it is hypothesized that MC is more likely to be linked with improved sexual functioning among those groups where MC is more prevalent. To test this hypothesis, I analysed data from the British National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyle from 2010-2012 (Natsal-3). Using a logistic regression model of nearly 4,000 sexually active men aged 16-74, I estimated the odds of experiencing sexual dysfunction as a result of male circumcision status, religion, educational attainment, previous health conditions and relationship status, alongside both partners' age and ethnicity. It is found that MC status is linked with reduced likelihood of sexual dysfunction only among those identified as Black British, while no association is found for other ethnic groups. In addition, MC reduces the chances of experiencing sexual dysfunction when the female partner is of either Black or Asian origin. Hence, the consequences of MC on sexual well-being should be understood in light of the cultural meanings and norms surrounding it.

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**Challenging categorical thinking: An application to maternal healthcare access inequalities in Zambia – *Laura Sochas, London School of Economics***

“Categorical thinking” in health inequalities research (the practice of treating social categories as natural, de-contextualised, and internally homogeneous) has been widely criticised by intersectional feminist scholars, a critique echoed by anthropologists, sociologists and social epidemiologists. While the homogeneity aspect of the critique has sparked enormous innovation among quantitative intersectional scholars applying an intercategorical approach, quantitative researchers have paid far less attention to other dimensions of the critique. This paper shows that quantitative or mixed method studies of health inequalities can and should respond to the anti-categorical thinking critique as a whole. This can be achieved by considering not only the potential for heterogeneity but also the context-specific meaning of categories, by analysing the social processes that might explain inequalities at multiple levels, and by framing analyses within the mutually constitutive forces that are both creating the categories and the inequalities between them. The approach applied in this paper is demonstrated by explaining socio-economic inequalities in access to maternal healthcare in Zambia, in a way that combines anticategorical, intracategorical and intercategorical intersectional approaches (McCall, 2005). This approach is enabled by merging datasets to create variables at the individual, household and health system environment level; employing decomposition methods that allow the meaning of explanatory variables to vary across socio-economic dimensions and levels; contrasting analyses according to different measures of socio-economic status; and making use of context-specific qualitative data and other authors’ studies to interpret categorical meanings and situate them within the macro context.

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**Evaluating masculinities and SRHR: critically analysing the research production chain – *Joe Strong, London School of Economics***

International commitments towards achieving universal sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) are consistently produced. Despite these, significant obstacles and slow progress (and regression) of SRHR have remained. Male involvement in SRHR has increasingly been recognised as fundamental in both evidence and policy, though mechanisms for engagement and data production are sparse. Importantly, studies on men and SRHR require centring care seekers, e.g. women seeking abortions, to avoid replication of hetero-patriarchal systems. Critical men’s studies (aka critical masculinities studies) is an emergent theory with which to conduct research with male participants. The feminist-influenced theory understands men as gendered beings across power dynamics. Research remains limited in exploring the application of this theory on the research production chain. Moreover, the framework itself remains under-researched, particularly relating to male involvement in women’s SRHR. The aim of this research is to critically analyse the research production chain for evidence on men and SRHR. The objectives are to describe the current research production chain, to analyse the utility of critical men’s studies, and evaluate how effective these processes are in centring women SRHR seekers. Ghana is used as a case study, due to the productive data collection systems (DHS, PMA2020) and studies on men and SRHR. The mechanisms of knowledge production, from funders to data collectors, will be described. These chains will be analysed utilising the critical men’s studies framework. Findings will reflect on the current strengths and limitations of current research on men and SRHR.

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