Critical demography and novel methodological approaches

Strand organisers: Joe Strong (LSE) and Michaela Šedovič (UCL)

15:15 - 16:45 Tuesday 10 September: Critical demography

Understanding social life in an individualised and informalised social reality
David Bomark - University of Strathclyde

My paper is a call for action to change how we understand participation in social life to avoid anachronistic understandings of what community life ought to look like. Society is increasingly becoming more individualistic and informal, which some see as the end of community, when in fact, it is merely a change to the social fabric. Participation in formal group activities is declining, but people are not less social and still do activities. However, people do these activities in informal settings, and people's motivations are increasingly reflexive in nature rather than collectivistic.

Currently, surveys like the Community Life and Taking Part survey only collect data on participation in formal associational life and cannot account for the breadth and wealth of informal social life people take part in. While this is can be a challenging task, my paper provides an example from my PhD research on how such data was collected on a small scale, using a mixed methods approach. It shows the importance friendships play for participation in different activities, and how the concept of third places is highly relevant in an individualised and informalised social reality. This work aims to improve current research practices to facilitate an up-to-date understanding of how people participate in social activities.

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Mapping Cultural Production: Global Trends in LGBTQ+ Family Representation through Getty Images Sales Data
Francesco Rampazzo - University of Oxford, Christina Pao - Princeton University, Kristopher Velasco - Princeton University

Rights and recognition of LGBTQ+ communities have dramatically expanded around the world. This research explores the evolving representation of LGBTQ+ families in global visual imagery and its implications for cultural globalisation. Despite significant legal strides for LGBTQ+ rights worldwide, there has been limited attention given to the visual representations of these families and the growing market for such cultural products. Drawing on a unique database of sales data of images from Getty Images, one of the largest sellers of stock images, covering the period from 2005 to 2023, this study addresses two central research questions: (1) How has the representation of LGBTQ+ families evolved over time in comparison to heterosexual families? (2) Do patterns of image sales reflect a Western-centric process of cultural globalisation? Preliminary findings reveal a marked increase in the depiction of LGBTQ+ families over the study period, particularly in countries with supportive legislation. Additionally, analysis of sales data suggests a predominant production and sale of LGBTQ+ family images from Western countries, especially Europe, to non-Western regions, highlighting the intricate interplay between cultural production, market demand, and global dynamics. These findings underscore the influential role that visual representations play in shaping social norms and emphasise the necessity for a nuanced understanding of cultural globalisation processes within the realm of LGBTQ+ rights and recognition.

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Residential Realities: Unveiling Interethnic Dynamics and Immigrant Responses to Diversity in Swedish Neighbourhoods
Elena Pupaza - Stockholm University

Responses to international immigration are almost exclusively studied from the point of view of the majority population. This project fills this gap by studying how different immigrant groups in Sweden value, respond

to, and get shaped by other foreign-born individuals moving into their residential areas. However, the predominant reliance on population registers within Scandinavian academic and policy spheres confers a greater clarity on objective behaviours over subjective attitudes. This situation is exacerbated by the well-documented challenge of low survey response rates, particularly among youth and immigrant demographics. To overcome these theoretical and methodological challenges, and engender engagement among young, foreign-born respondents, a gamified survey experiment is implemented. Within this gamified milieu, users can create their own avatar, thus replacing the standard demographic battery of questions, and, through a series of conjoint experiments, they choose their neighbours from randomly generated avatars representing prevalent archetypes of foreign-born residents in Sweden. An accurate interpretation of diversity preferences involves the study of both behaviours and attitudes in a harmonized approach. Therefore, the project's second stage entails leveraging the objective nature of the Swedish population registers to analyse how these revealed preferences uncovered in the first stage manifest in real-life behaviours and to quantify the impact of local area diversity on the long-term adaptation of foreign-born nationals. Examining interethnic relations across immigrant communities is essential for evaluating social cohesion in increasingly diverse societies. In its totality, this project maps a complex understanding of diversity preferences and inter-ethnic tensions in Sweden.

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The Grass Really is Greener on the Other Side: Immigration and Changes in Emotional Well-Being on Twitter
Jisu Kim - Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research, Ingmar Weber - , Saarland University - Emilio Zagheni, Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research

Immigration results in various outcomes for immigrants where one can find happiness due to higher quality of life or emotional distress due to unexpected challenges. Study of expressed emotions of immigrants can be challenging due to expensive surveys and lack of even longitudinal data that follows the measures over time. Here, we curate a high quality data and develop an approach to explore how the emotional experiences of immigrants in the United States evolve post-migration by examining their Twitter activity. More specifically, we study whether they exhibit higher levels of positive sentiments compared to non-immigrants (individuals who do not relocate), and whether their emotional states align with those of the US locals.

Our findings indicate that the migration event indeed leads to increased positive sentiments after relocation when compared to non-immigrants. However, we did not discover conclusive evidence of migration effect on negative sentiments. In terms of comparing immigrants with the US locals, we observed that, on average, local users experience higher levels of positive sentiments. Nonetheless, we did not identify any significant differences between immigrants and the US locals when it comes to negative sentiments. Interestingly, both immigrants and locals express similar concerns regarding news and social topic, with a such topic having the greatest impact on driving negative sentiments.

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Measuring quality of the immigration attitudes measures: A case study of the 32 years old cohort in England.
Michaela Sedovic - UCL, Liam Wright - UCL, Elena Pupaza - Stockholm University

Immigration is a high-salience topic in British public debate. At the same time, it is less often studied in-depth compared to other countries (e.g., the US) as research favours exploring interethnic relations. However, attitudes towards immigrants determine an individual's behaviour, including political behaviour such as voting and shape environment in which people live. Studies show that a hostile anti-immigrant environment negatively impacts not only immigrants but also native ethnic minorities. Thus, studying attitudes towards immigrants can shed light on current intergroup relations in society. We will employ the newest data sweep of the Next Steps (NS), British Cohort Study (age 32), with two goals. First, to study attitudes towards immigrants. While using the NS data would only allow investigating the attitudes of a particular cohort, the sample size and diversity will allow us to focus on subsamples and their determinants in a detail that few other datasets allow. Understanding these determinants is critical, especially during heightened interest in immigration that might arise due to the upcoming national elections and changes linked to Brexit. Secondly, we will focus on the data quality and analyse if the data collection in stages (a standard approach with large

panels) might impact the data quality of attitudes measures. Using Difference-in-Differences and ITSA methods, we will compare data collected across four stages of the latest NS data sweep (2022-2023) with the most salient migration-related topics trending over time and assess if the media cycle might have had an impact on the quality of collected data.

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