**Quantitative Methods for Migration | Nichola Khan**

This course will introduce you to some common quantitative research methods in migration studies. You will critically evaluate approaches to interpreting, using, and also producing statistical data. You will query where data comes from, how it is collected, used, and used erroneously, to support theoretical models, explanations, and discursive constructions of migration and migrants. You will become equipped to evaluate quantitative research methods in depth, and you will acquire a strong foundation for developing the methodology and specific methods for conducting your own quantitative research.

**General guides and textbooks on quantitative methods**

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social Research Methods.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Franklin, M. (2013). *Understanding Research: Coping with the Quantitative-Qualitative Divide*. Routledge.

Gliner, J.A., G. Morgan, N. Leech (2011). *Research Methods in Applied Settings: An Integrated Approach*

*to Design and Analysis*. New York: Routledge.

Harford. T. (2021). *The Data Detective. Ten Easy Rules to Make Sense of Statistics.* NY: Riverhead Books.

May, T. (2011). *Social Research: Issues, Methods and Process*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Vargas-Silva, C. (2012) (ed). *Handbook of Research Methods in Migration*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

**Databases**

Several international organisations provide data on migration. Publicly available datasets are hosted by the OECD, UN International Organisation for Migration, World Health Organization, World Bank, Eurostat, Office for National Statistics. Go online, explore what kinds of data are available/how to use these websites:

OECD Databases on Migration-<https://www.oecd.org/migration/mig/oecdmigrationdatabases.htm>

Eurostat- Migration and Migrant Population- <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics>

IOM’s Global Migration Analysis Data Centre- <https://gmdac.iom.int>

IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix-

<https://data.humdata.org/organization/international-organization-for-migration>

UN Dept. Social and Economic Affairs International Migration Data- <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/index.asp>

World Bank Migration and Remittances Data- <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaissues/brief/migration-remittances-data>

World Bank Migration Data Portal <https://www.migrationdataportal.org/institute/world-bank>

WHO Migration and Health

<https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-determinants/migration-and-health>

WHO Refugees and Health- <https://www.who.int/health-topics/refugee-and-migrant-health#tab=tab_1>

**Further Resources**

Migration Observatory- <https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/migration-observatory/>

IOM World Migration Report 2020 <https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/wmr_2020.pdf>

Eurostat. 2020. *Migration Integration Statistics*. Edited by Katarzyna Kraszewska, Piotr Juchno, Ani Todorova, Eurostat, Unit F2- Population and migration. Luxembourg: Statistical Books. (free to download <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/12278353/KS-06-20-184-EN-N.pdf/337ecde0-665e-7162-ee96-be56b6e1186e?t=1611320765858>)

**Teaching format:** Weekly lecture, seminar.

**Readings**: Essential readings/resources: Recommended readings/resources: Further readings/resources.

**Teaching:** Worksheets, practical exercises, structured discussion, online quizzes, discussion board.

**Assessment**: Critical appraisal of a published study (choose one of three provided), including fit with existing evidence, and the potential relevance of the evidence presented from a migration policy perspective.

**| Week 1: The role of quantitative evidence in migration research and policy** **(who counts?)**

Overview of the course. The session will consider why we try to measure migration, what it is we want to measure, some typical categories of who migrants are, typical sources of data, sources on estimates, typical measures (census, survey, demographic, economic, labour surveys), and associated challenges e.g. in regard to choice of reference population, measuring stocks vs. flows, *de facto* vs *de jure* populations, gross vs. net migration, boundaries and crossings, and limits to definitions by time period. There follows an overview of the core principles of research design for quantitative social research. We will look at the logic and fundamental principles and concepts of quantitative research and the quantitative method, including types of measure and variable, methods of sampling and obtaining data, and the idea of descriptive and inferential statistics. Last, we discuss some critiques of the flaws inherent in measures of migrant data. We look specifically at the UK government’s use of the International Passenger Survey (IPS) to collect migration information, and discuss some developments and alternatives.

**Seminar:** Perusal of databases, example of survey questionnaire + structured discussion (IPS).

**Essential readings**

Gliner J.A., Morgan, G.A., Leech, N.L. (2011). *Research methods in applied settings: An integrated approach to design and analysis*. New York: Routledge (Chapters 1, 2, 3).

House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee (PASC). (2013). *Migration Statistics* (provides a good discussion of problems in using government estimates of migration to and from the UK).

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmpubadm/523/523.pdf>

Migration Observatory- <https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/migration-observatory/>, ‘Local Data Guide- Trends, Outcomes, Understanding the Evidence’, and ‘Counting the Uncountable: Data and Trends across Europe’.

Sardoschau, S. (2020). The Future of Migration to Germany: Assessing Methods in Migration Forecasting.

*DeZIM Briefing Notes*. DBN Issue #04. Berlin: DeZim Institut.

ONS (2021). *International Passenger Survey* (now includes attitudes and experiences of COVID) <https://www.ons.gov.uk/surveys/informationforhouseholdsandindividuals/householdandindividualsurveys/internationalpassengersurvey>

**Estimating irregular migration: proxies and politics**

<https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/commentaries/recent-estimates-of-the-uks-irregular-migrant-population/>

<https://metro.co.uk/2021/11/15/number-of-european-migrants-in-uk-underestimated-by-25-15602432/amp/>

<https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/irregular-migration-in-the-uk/>

https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates19.asp

**| Week 2. Methodology: empiricism, positivism, and quantitative research**

How do we know what is true, or acquire knowledge about the world? This session examines some fundamental ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning quantitative research. We begin by investigating the method of knowledge generation used in the formal sciences, principally the idea of the ‘experiment’. This will introduce a number of key philosophical terms that inform quantitative social research and design: empiricism, positivism and realism. Namely i) empiricism is the doctrine that all true knowledge comes from observation and experience; ii) positivism assumes there are sequential causes for real-world phenomena, and values are unrelated to facts; iii) realism holds that theoretical construction provides a true story of the world, and acceptance of a scientific theory involves the belief it is true. Though positivism becomes a contested term, it can be usefully employed alongside critical approaches. We examine some key types of quantitative data relevant for migration research and policy. While experimental methods have limited application, natural and field experiments *have been* used to measure changes in migration or remittances following institutional or environmental change, policy change effects, and to inform policy.

**Seminar:** i)compare two pieces of quantitative research that examine one phenomenon (similarities and differences); ii) construct research questions and hypotheses that connect theoretical frames to research aims.

**Essential readings**

Baláž, V. and Williams, A.M. (2015). Experimental Research Methods in Migration: From Natural to True

Experiments. *Population, Space and Place* 23(1): e1974.

Castles, S. (2012). Understanding the relationship between Methodology and Methods, 7-25. In C.Vargas-Silva (ed.) *Handbook of Research Methods in* Migration. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Erickson, M. (2015). *Science, Culture and Society: Understanding Science in the Twenty-First Century.* Cambridge: Polity, (Chapter 2: In the Laboratory).

**Critiques of quantitative approaches**

Leach, E. (1967). An Anthropologist’s Reflection on a Social Survey. In D.G. Jongmans and P.C.W. Gutkind (eds.) *Anthropologist in the Field*. Assen: Van Gorcum.

Marsh, C. (1979). Problems with Surveys: Method or epistemology? *Sociology* 13(2): 293-305.

Hacking, I. (2007). Kinds of People: Moving Targets. British Academy Lecture, *Proceedings of the British Academy* 151:285-318. <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/documents/2043/pba151p285.pdf>

Hacking, I. (1991). How Should We Do the History of Statistics. *In* G. Burchell, C. Gordon and P. Miller (eds.). *The Foucault Effect; Studies in Governmentality.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press (reviews the history of the notion of chance, argues the rise of statistical thinking is connected with control over people).

**| Week 3. Method and statistics: data, facts, and ‘damn lies’**

Part one of this lecture examines the practical process of quantitative research. We examine types of data, methods of sampling, representativeness, variables, and ways of measuring them. We consider how we can construct research questions around migration that are appropriate to quantitative methodologies. We look at the principles of hypothesis formulation, exploring the principle of cause and effect, and study design. Part two shifts our focus to a critical discussion of how to interpret statistical evidence, how to recognise sources of measurement and error and to sift statistical truth from lies. We examine some examples of ways that statistical ‘facts’ are used to underpin discursive constructions and weak arguments about migration and migrants. In some cases, statistics may stand in place of theory altogether.

**Seminar**: Writing a quantitative research proposal (abstract, problem statement, research questions, aims/ objectives, hypotheses, literature review/theoretical framework, definition of variables, methodology)

**Essential readings**

Gliner, J.A., G. Morgan, N. Leech (2011). Ch 3: Variables, Research Questions and Hypotheses. In *Research Methods in Applied Settings: An Integrated Approach to Design and Analysis*. NY: Routledge.

AKM A.U, Hossain, M.A, Azizuddin, M., and Nawaz, F. (2020). Social research methods: migration in

perspective. *Migration Letters* 17(2): 357- 368.

Harford. T. (2021). *The Data Detective. Ten Easy Rules to Make Sense of Statistics.* NY: Riverhead Books.

Rosling, H. (2018). *Factfulness: Ten Reasons We’re Wrong about the World*. Flatiron Books (see website with tasks and tools for challenging statistical facts <https://www.gapminder.org>)

Wilkinson, R. & K. Pickett. (2010). *The Spirit Level. Why Equality is Better for Everyone*. London: Penguin.

Simon, P. (2012). Collecting ethnic statistics in Europe: a review. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 35(8):1366-91.

**| Week 4. Concepts and measurement: what’s wrong with integration?**

This class focuses on concept formation and measurement. We will discuss the place of concept formation and (measurement) validity in quantitative research, and some challenges involved. The researcher’s role is important in reproducing and deconstructing policy concepts. (Post-)positivist researchers aim to define and measure concepts that approximate ‘reality’, but their choices also influence reality. First, we examine ‘integration’ as a notion deeply embedded in a methodological nationalism found throughout mainstream research and policymaking on ‘immigration’—one reproducing a colonial, nation-state centred vision of society sustained by global inequalities. ‘Immigrant integration monitoring’ serves as a neo-colonial form of knowledge that is intricately bound up with contemporary workings of power, core Eurocentric notions of ‘society’, and of knowledge generation, validation and scope. Next, we explore some problems posed by attempts to draw distinct boundaries between first and third ‘generations’ of migrants (with half and quartile measures) to denote socio-cultural integration. Different measures of education and integration have led to different conclusions about educational inequality and ability between racialised groups. Critics—pointing to a pervasive ‘methodological whiteness’ which represents nations as ‘white’ into which racialised others either fail to assimilate, or else gain disproportionate advantage. Applying a decolonial lens to research structures, norms and processes can challenge hierarchies extrapolated from quantitative data. Quantitative methods are a valuable avenue for challenging social hierarchies and structures of oppression, *if* they incorporate critical perspectives on contemporary race and migration politics.

**Seminar:** Comparative discussion of quantitative studies of integration, and measures.

**Essential readings**

Adcock, R. & D. Collier (2001). Measurement Validity: A shared standard for qualitative and quantitative research. *American Political Science Review* 95(3): 529-546.

British Academy (2015). Count us in: Quantitative Skills for a New Generation. London

<https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/documents/220/Count-Us-In.pdf>

Favell, A. (2019). Integration: twelve propositions after Schinkel. *Comparative Migration Studies* **7,** 21.

Gerring, J. (1999). What makes a concept good? A criterial framework for understanding concept formation in the social sciences’. *Polity* 31(3): 357-393.

Kellstedt, P. M. & G. D. Whitten (2009). Chapter 5 ‘Measurement’ 86-101. In *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Rumbaut, R.G. (2004). Ages, life stages, and generational cohorts: decomposing the immigrant first and second generations in the United States. *International Migration Review* 38(3):1160-1205.

Schinkel, W. (2018). Against ‘immigrant integration’: for an end to neo-colonial knowledge production. *Comparative Migration Studies* **6**, 31. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-018-0095-1.

Schinkel, W. (2017). *Imagined Societies. A Critique of Immigrant Integration in Western Europe*. CUP.

Onyango, J. and N. Ndege (2021). How do we decolonise research methodologies? STEPS Centre. <https://steps-centre.org/blog/how-do-we-decolonise-research-methodologies/>

Zwiener-Collins N., Jafri J., Saini R., Poulter T. (2021). Decolonising quantitative research methods pedagogy: teaching contemporary politics to challenge hierarchies from data. *Politics*. (Online first). <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/02633957211041449>

**| Week 5. The research ethics of representation, procedure, and public engagement**

Quantitative research is profoundly shaped by researcher biases, politics, and policy environments of migration. This session discusses ethical questions and dilemmas relating to representation and research on migration—in a climate where ir/regular migrants and asylum seekers face increasing restrictions arising from repressive state measures e.g. the UK’s ‘hostile environment’ and Nationality and Borders Bill. Questions include: how do ethical modes of ‘urgent’ or ‘public’ research apply, or calls to ‘study up’ or ‘down’? How can we mitigate risks and harms to over-researched or highly vulnerable groups? How should we address risks to researchers and participants in research involving irregular migrants, clandestinity or criminality? How do sector and institutional trends, policy and changes impact on research ethics approvals? How can we reconcile professional and institutional frameworks to allow us to develop research with ‘integrity’ but also innovative thinking about ethics based on qualities like social justice, morality and care as alternatives to rigid rule compliance? The issues involve ways researchers must navigate paths through highly sensitive and politicised contexts and positionings between analysis and activism, distance and proximity, and security and endangerment. Questions about position also concern ways research itself can be a public exercise in empathy with oppressed communities, advocacy, or a force shaping public opinion.

**Seminar:** Writing your research ethics application (dissertation).

**Essential readings**

Düvell, F., A. Triandafyllidou, and B. Vollmer. (2008). Ethical issues in irregular migration research. EU: CLANDESTINO. <https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/PR-2008-Clandestino_Ethics.pdf>

Fassin, D. (2015). The Public Afterlife of Ethnography. *American Ethnologist* 42(4): 592-609.

Holmes, S. and H. Castañeda. (2016). Representing the “European refugee crisis” in Germany and beyond: Deservingness and difference, life and death. *American Ethnologist* 43(1): 12-24.

Fassin, D. (2005). Compassion and Repression: The Moral Economy of Immigration Policies in France. *Cultural Anthropology* 20(3): 362–387.

Istratii, R. and K. Hasan (2019). Ethical Reflexivity and Research Governance: Navigating the Tensions (Online Module). SOAS - Decolonising Research Initiative, available on [SOAS Research Online](https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/32038/).

Mookherjee, N. and N. Keya. (2019). Birangona: Towards Ethical Testimonies of Sexual Violence during Conflict. Durham: University of Durham. [Online] Freely Available in Bangla and English from:

<https://www.ethical-testimonies-svc.org.uk/how-to-cite/>

**| Week 6. Surveys**

Surveys are a typical, popular research method in migration studies, seen as an efficient way of collecting reliable information on characteristics of a population. Once survey data has been collected it is difficult to collect additional information. Survey researchers therefore need to plan their data collection carefully and when possible test their approach in a pilot study. The lecture will discuss the key steps in moving from a research question to formulating a questionnaire and its implementation in the field. Questionnaire designs have captured migration not just as a one-way flow between continents and countries. They have incorporated return migration, circulation, transnational and intergenerational practices as a more nuanced and significant method for designing better migration policies. We consider the scientific criticism that social survey research is a simulacra of what an experiment does, but nowhere near as valid. We ask if better survey design is the answer to problems with the fact are variables are constructed in arbitrary ways, and that hard fixed measurement is impossible. We consider if it is a valid defence to say we can design out these criticisms, and some large-scale migration surveys in light of these criticisms.

**Seminar**: Examination and discussion of examples of i) surveys of (potential) migrants and their descendants; ii) examples of general population surveys used to examine immigrant integration**.**

**Essential readings**

Beauchemin, C. (2012). Migrations between Africa and Europe: Rationale for a Survey Design. Methodological Note 5, <https://mafeproject.site.ined.fr/en/>

Bloch, A. (1999). Carrying out a survey of refugees: some methodological considerations and guidelines. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 12(4): 367-73.

Bryman, A. (2012). Ch. 11 ‘Asking questions’, 245-268. In *Social Research Methods*. Oxford Univ. Press.

Carling, J. (2012). Collecting, analysing and presenting migration histories, 137-162. In Vargas- Silva, C. (ed.) *Handbook of Research Methods in Migration*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Survey question bank <http://www.surveynet.ac.uk/sqb/qb/>

Cross-cultural Survey Guidelines <https://ccsg.isr.umich.edu>

**| Week 7: Research design: quantitative approaches and mixing methods**

Quantitative and qualitative methods are not incompatible, although certain epistemologies might be. Mixing methods can provide valuable insights into the same research question, although their appropriateness depends on your research question. This session will consider the respective strengths of quantitative vs qualitative methods, before exploring the added value of mixing methods in terms of what we believe can be known (regularities, constructions), what we want to know (are our research question about frequencies, meanings, or causal relations), theoretical generalisation, the accessibility of the target population, and sensitivity of the topic. We consider the relation between data analyses from different methods including within and between subjects designs, multi-sited approaches, the added value of mixing, and some advantages and challenges of mixed methods designs.

**Seminar:** Discussion of multi-sited mixed methods to investigate individuals and families across borders; role of transnationality in reproducing social inequalities; benefits/challenges of mixed methods approaches.

**Essential readings**

Cliggett, L. and D.L. Crooks. (2007). Promoting Multi-methods research: linking anthropometric

methods to migration studies. *Migration Letters* 4(2):159-169.

Fauser M. (2018). Mixed methods and multi-sited migration research: innovations from a transnational perspective. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* 12(4):394-412.

Gamlen, A. (2012). Mixing Methods in Research on Diaspora Policies, 319- 34. In C. Vargas-Silva (ed.)

*Handbook of Research Methods in Migration*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.

Johnson, R.B., A.J. Onwuegbuzie, and L. Turner. (2007). Toward a Definition of Mixed Methods

Research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* 1(2): 112-133.

**| Week 8: Data on international migration and migration policies**   
The need for policies that facilitate positive outcomes from migration will grow. Migration flows will likely increase substantially as economic development generates new opportunities and motivations for migration, as new conflicts and refugee populations emerge, and the effects of climate change increase. At the same time, measuring ‘the’ effects of policy and flows (size, nature, direction) is difficult, if not impossible. This lecture examines some case studies in order to critically explore some evidence for the idea that policies shape the effects of migration. It provides an overview of some main sources on international migration data and migration policies, and evaluates their advantages and limitations.

**Seminar:** Tasks related to Oxford DEMIG project, its databases and its main question: ‘How do migration policies of receiving and sending states affect the size, direction and nature of international migration?’

**Essential readings**

Clemens, M., C. Huang, Graham and K. Gough. (2018). *Migration is What You Make it. Seven Policy Decisions that Turned Challenges into Opportunities*. Centre for Global Development*.* GGD Note, May.<https://www.cgdev.org/publication/migration-what-you-make-it-seven-policy-decisions-turned-challenges-opportunities>

de Haas, H., Natter, K. and Vezzoli, S. (2014). Compiling and Coding Migration Policies: Insights

from the DEMIG POLICY database. IMI Working Paper Series 87 / DEMIG 16, Oxford: IMI.

Özden, Ç., Parsons, C. R., Schiff, M. & Walmsley, T. (2011). Where on earth is everybody? The evolution of global bilateral migration, 1960–2000. *World Bank Economic Review* 25(1): 12-56.  
Vezzoli, S., M. Villares-Varela, M. & H. de Haas (2014). Uncovering international migration flow data: insights from the DEMIG databases', IMI Working Paper Series 88 / DEMIG.