

Radical demography

Jamie Goodwin-White and Ludi Simpson

What might a radical demography be? This article reports a session where Jamie Goodwin-White and Ludi Simpson gave examples from their own work on the geography of immigration and migration, in an attempt to stimulate discussion at the conference. A characterisation of radical demography would perhaps also characterise the radical streams of other disciplines, including radical statistics, and so contribute to the continuing discussion on the nature of the Radical Statistics Group.

Recent discussion of 'public sociology' characterises it as having a target audience which is neither a paying client nor the academic profession of sociology, and this helps to identify the following examples of demography that might count as in need of radical treatment. The article then summarises Jamie and Ludi's contributions, returns to the characterisation of different sociologies, and briefly reports discussion of the Migration Watch campaign.

Early in 2006, the mayor of New Orleans based strategic plans on the results of his commissioned findings that the population of New Orleans would return to only half its size before the devastation of Hurricane Katrina in summer 2005. Opposition pointed to the exclusion of poor families from those plans, and the already 80% return to Tulsa where more inclusive plans had been laid. When population development is largely under the control of public planning, population forecasts do not provide evidence to influence plans but already embody them. One can ask: Which half of the population is the mayor and the development corporations planning to encourage to return to New Orleans?

The head of the UK government's Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), Trevor Phillips, claimed in September 2005 that Britain was 'sleep-walking to segregation', that some districts were well on the way to becoming 'black holes which people fear to enter and from which no-one can leave' (Phillips, 2005). Critics say that the population dynamics of new immigrant communities have historically resulted in clusters in the inner cities, often temporary, and that the segregation pointed to is nothing more than a growing Asian population: is it this he is worried about?

The demography of 'Race', 'colour' and 'ethnic group' has long been a contested task. The head of UK government statistics said in 1966 that 'Colour cannot and will not be asked' in a census, only for his successor to insist in 1983 that it can and must be included (Leech, 1989).

Some are concerned that recent investment in survey data, at the cost of population statistics, encourages individualised explanations and solutions, and discourages study of the social and structural.

Attempts to define Britain and Britishness depend on a static notion of who lives in and contributes to national identity. The same debates in the USA on the definition of 'American' have more recent precedent for adopting a pluralist view of the contribution of immigrants to an emerging changing national culture.

Concern with the economic and social progress of second-generation children of immigrants often makes assumptions that integration means assimilation to the same residential patterns as the indigenous population.

Jamie Goodwin-White

In the US an academic framework has successfully permeated public discussion of the integration of new immigrants. That framework is spatial assimilation theory, which has normative concerns with concentrations of non-whites. It defines and measures immigrant progress as a move from segregated, clustered immigrant cities or neighbourhoods into native-born (mainly white) neighbourhoods.¹ Part of the reason for this is the supposed 'identificational shift' immigrants undertake when moving into 'mainstream' American spaces. While much of the focus on dispersal is derived from concern with the social and economic obstacles that leave immigrants clustered together and segregated from native whites, surprisingly little attention is paid to the processes that shape and maintain different patterns of immigrant and native settlement. Read into more popular and often polemical discussion, spatial assimilation ideas form a basis of host country anxiety about the self-segregation and failed integration of immigrants who reside in concentrations of co-ethnics.² This results in concern over a spatially-evidenced lack of integration, rather than awareness of the difficulties in integration in the way supposed as normative. In immigrant cities, certainly, there are increasingly few white neighbourhoods. A further demographic issue is that these neighbourhoods tend to be older in composition than the immigrant populations, with what are doubtless limited options for the employment and education of the often much younger immigrant population. Alternately, they are areas marked so strongly by white self-segregation, however attained, that – were non-white immigrant movement into them possible – it would certainly not indicate a move in any way "into the mainstream". Space is not, after all, as fluidly permeable as all that. It is still process made manifest, in terms of the power relations – economic, legal, and social – that have structured its value, access to it, and movement through it by different bodies.

1 In the typical formulation, this is expressed as a move from the inner city – where immigrants often first arrive and reside – to the suburbs.

2 Note the persistence of the racial (rather than necessarily nativity) formulation here.

The emphasis on individuals' or groups' assimilation as marked by movement, rather than a focus on place and its meaning to residents, is thus profoundly limiting. In part, the emphasis involves a fundamental misconception that it is people who change their orientation to the national by movement through paradoxically stagnant spaces. If place is interpreted, via spatial assimilation theory, as so many mile markers of immigrant progress- then the markers themselves are unchanged by the bodies moving through them. And yet, this cannot be. In a sense, demography's concern with the constituency and composition of places has not gone far enough. Place matters for immigrants because place is fundamentally about access and constraint – about the right and ability to exist in certain places, and the differential opportunities and costs of various locations.

Los Angeles provides a case study. Much academic and policy attention has been devoted to the 'problem' of immigrant Latinos clustering in concentrated 'unequal' Los Angeles - and the idea that the second generation will fail to assimilate if they continue to live there. Yet second generation Latinos are less likely than their parents to leave California, especially if university-educated (Ellis and Goodwin-White, forthcoming), casting some doubt on the equation of dispersal with economic incorporation. There has been decreasing immigrant Latino inequality in Los Angeles in last decade, partly as a result of the Living Wage (which developed from the immigrant-led Justice for Janitors campaign) raising the wages in many low-paid immigrant jobs. Even though the immigrant/native wage gap is still high in Los Angeles, the racial wage gap (whether Latino/white or black/white) is narrower than in other (non-immigrant) cities (Goodwin-White, unpublished paper). So, dispersal from Los Angeles may not be a sign of economic progress, and remaining may not be linked to a failure to assimilate or integrate - but a sign that Los Angeles itself is changing.

At a neighbourhood scale, Harold Meyerson (2004) suggests that clustering, far from being a barrier to integration, has allowed Latinos in Los Angeles to organise political power that resulted both in transformative labour campaigns (like the immigrant-led Justice for Janitors campaign) and second generation political positions – from the mayor to the city council to school boards. Meyerson's argument that this happened in Los Angeles rather than in Houston, Texas, reveals not only the importance of neighbourhood-level immigrant concentrations, but the importance of city and regional-level concentrations. Los Angeles' history of successive waves of immigrants, and the continuing presence of their descendants, has changed Los Angeles demographically, and made the emergence of a Latino middle class inevitable (Waldinger and Feliciano 2004). While this 'new' clustering is lamented as a sign of urban malaise and an unassimilable immigrant underclass, there is considerable evidence that the descendants of the turn-of-the-century European immigrants have persistent concentrations in the cities where they forged ties of work and family over time (Lieberson and Waters 1980). None of

this, of course, is to deny that the most recent immigrants face continuing disadvantage in the labour markets of immigrant cities, and that these most exploitable workers face deplorable conditions. It is, however, to say that the extraordinary attention given to the problem of immigrant clustering in immigrant cities and neighbourhoods is sometimes less about concern for their futures than it is about an anxiously nationalist concern for the demographic progression of neighbourhoods, cities, and nations. We might do well, then, to separate the threads of the spatial assimilation discussion. If immigrants and their descendants do not certainly face dire futures by failing to disperse – then what, exactly, is at stake?

What I want to suggest here is that geography can be used instrumentally – especially the academic and popular discussions of human spatialities wrapped up in discussions over immigrants and their incorporation/assimilation. Recent coverage of the newly-published *The New East End: Kinship, Race and Conflict* (Dench, Gavron and Young 2006) has noted the crowding and voluntary segregation of immigrant households in London's East End. The discussion in local media (following the book) has lamented the disappearance of the extended families and support networks of the white working class in East London³. The suggestion, of course, is that the influx of immigrants and their children, as well as the provisions the welfare state has made for their presence, contribute to this decline in (white working class) British family and community values. Yet these vaunted 'British' values (or those seen as nostalgically threatened in the American heartland by urban immigrant masses) are very same spatial practices that are coded as 'crowding' and 'self-segregation' when immigrants perform them - especially in contested (integrated!) spaces – like Tower Hamlets or East Los Angeles. The instrumentality of these human geographies is made clear when white grandparents in Tower Hamlets suggest that their grandchildren must move away – destroying the extended family child care strategies of the white working class – so that Bengali families can crowd too many aunts and uncles and children in an estate. (And often the Bengalis evidenced in these laments are 3rd generation Brits!) The grandparents' lament, whether white or Asian, is not the problem in these formulations. The question is who has engineered the specifically spatial terms of these debates, with the implications for different rights to place and belonging?

While I don't offer an answer to that question here, choosing rather to use it as a starting point for more radical demographies, I want to suggest that the question is critically important at a variety of scales. Place and space are used both in anti-immigrant *and* academic debate to frame *difference* by using terms like segregation, invasion, and 'non-white' spaces – whether estate, neighbourhood, or city. This means that the neighbourhood becomes both a site of popular public concern (problematized) and, concomitantly, the place where the national is

³ See, for example, Bunting (2006).

imagined to be at stake. In both academic and popular discussion, the focus has not been about regions or neighbourhoods in terms of why place matters (in terms of things like jobs, housing, inequality, health, and access), but rather in terms of what bodies mark that space and how they do so, whether in 'ghettos' or 'immigrant areas'. *The Guardian's* recent *Multicultural Britain* maps, while accompanied by thoughtful demographic text, were met by my university students with questions along the lines of 'where are *they*?' and 'how many are *they*?'. Not bad questions, perhaps, if we can 1) challenge the 'we and they' (i.e. not all Bengalis are immigrants) and 2) think about how immigration and asylum settlement policies, discrimination in housing and employment, and economic fortunes and constraints within cities, across regions, and globally have engendered these patterns. In other words, geography could be instrumentalised quite differently – to investigate places as processes that affect lives unequally but that could be made more democratic – and certainly with some solidarity that inhered more in this future than in metaphors of impending racialised invasion of an imagined present. After all, in less than a decade these students will be, like my contemporaries, quite aware that their choice of where to live is more constrained by the rise in housing prices in the Southeast (driven by relatively affluent whites) than by any anti-British self-segregation of non-white asylum seekers. Their university education will see to that.

From all this, one can suggest that a Radical Demography would pay substantive attention to place (why people are in certain places rather than others?) rather than focusing immigrant or ethnic concentrations as a societal problem. Radical Demography would explore, for example, disinvestment in the East End and restrictions on immigrant/refugee settlement, as well as the informalisation of employment in the area – rather than promoting racialised citizenships among residents. A Radical Demography would not equate spatial dispersion with integration, or concentration with (self-)segregation, and would challenge static notions of place as identity. In fact, in the US as well as in Britain, neighbourhoods themselves are changing in ways that make dispersion and geographical assimilation a problematic concept. Assimilation and integration, in multicultural societies, are shifting referents (What is Britain? What is an immigrant neighbourhood?). Radical Demography would seek to challenge ideas of place (whether Britain or America, London or Los Angeles) that are racialised in their definitions, replacing these with processural understandings of places that change along with their populations. Britain, then, would be seen as a nation in the ongoing process of becoming, rather than a place that has been or is now, threatened. The geographies of a radical demography, then, would be instrumentally investigative, with democratic motivation.

Ludi Simpson

While it is not OK these days to evaluate an individual negatively on account of the colour of his/her skin, it seems quite acceptable to damn an *area* for its dark colour. With no reference to social conditions, September 2005 was a field day for anti-black headlines. "Segregation at levels of black ghettos in US cities" (Guardian, 1 Sept 2005), with no published evidence. "Ghettos blighting Asian integration" (Times, 1 Sept 2005) posed opposite ends of a scale of integration-segregation. Multiculturalism is failing to bring Britain's races together, says Ted Cantle" (Times, 21 Sept 2005) laid the blame for residential clustering on social policy. This had followed Trevor Phillips' CRE speech in Manchester, headlined as "Are we sleepwalking towards apartheid?" (Sunday Times, 18 September 2005), which lightens the doom-laden sense of rigid separation with the notion that a change might be as easy as waking up. Phillips' speech took as its starting point the London bombings of ten weeks before, and repeated this link in subsequent radio interviews: "Our worry is this is fertile breeding ground for extremists" (Trevor Phillips radio interview reported in Daily Mirror, 23 September 2005). Scary stuff!

Academic debate did not use such scary language but nonetheless has measured segregation indices of racial residential patterns originating in US sociology of Black-White relations, and answered the politicians concerns with evaluations of 'Remarkable' segregation, 'stubborn' segregation, an outlook which is 'not optimistic' (reported for example in a review by Simpson, 2004). Some of the September 2005 headlines were inspired by an unpublished presentation to the British Geographers' conference using segregation indices based purely on residential patterns of different ethnic groups, reported for example in the Telegraph 1st Sept 2005 as follows: "Dr Poulsen said isolated enclaves were a feature of immigration: 'You could argue that tighter control on immigration was the only way to curtail continuous growth.' He said that Europeans' assumption that immigrants would be assimilated into the wider culture with time had not been thought through... The danger is the assimilation process is so slow that for many it is just not possible."

The persistence of the message that 'black areas are bad for all of us' is in spite of opposition from other academics. The fear of inner cities, of immigrants, of non-indigenous cultures, appears to run very strongly among senior policy figures, editors and politicians as well as among right-wing political organisations. It should not be so surprising that this anxiety feeds the measurement practises of academics and their public output. The history of both statistics and demography is littered with the accepted racism of eugenic approaches to human differences, in the work of Galton, Spearman, Fisher, Whelpton, Yule, Edgeworth, Dublin, Thompson and others (Zuberi 2001 gives a detailed review, and Simpson 2006 a short one).

If the figures are presented in the way in which segregation indices encourage, table 1 shows that the population other than White residents is growing, such that there were at the time of the 2001 Census twice as many electoral wards with a non-White majority. Furthermore, a larger proportion of the total non-White population lived in such areas, 23% compared with 22% ten years previously. The proportion was higher for the Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups: over one third live in areas which have a non-White majority.

Table 1. Electoral wards with non-White majority	1991	2001
	57	118
Proportion of the group which lives in these areas:		
All non-White groups	15%	23%
Pakistani and Bangladeshi	22%	35%

From Table 1, it appears that there is greater concentration of non-White groups and especially Muslim populations. Think again. The populations referred to are young populations: immigrants who are in their majority yet to reach retirement age, and their children who are also themselves having children. They have grown in size from immigration, but more so from natural growth (births being more than the few deaths in any young population).

The new non-White majority areas are those neighbouring the previous ones and represent not retreat into one's own group, but migration *away* from the original settlement areas. Table 2 shows that in the year before the 2001 Census, there was further movement from the non-White areas *of both White and non-White residents, the movement out of non-White residents exceeding the White movement*. As a percentage of the existing population, the movement was very similar for each group.

Table 2. Net migration within UK, 2000-2001	Non-White	White
118 Electoral wards with a non-White majority	-14,716	-9,747

These few figures showing dispersal from the main centres of settlement are supported by other national studies, and by detailed studies of each major city in Britain (www.ccsr.ac.uk/research/migseg.htm).

So, even before challenging the notion that integration is measured by the Whiteness of the area an immigrant and his or her children live in, the claim of retreat and movement back into non-White areas is shown to be simply false. There is on the contrary movement out of original settlement areas. That the concentration of Pakistani and Bangladeshi populations is higher than other Black and Asian groups may have something to do with their shorter period since their immigration.

In fact, historical studies of Jewish, Irish and other immigration to Britain suggests that clustering and population growth are just what one would expect, and do indeed contribute to the social solidarity and integration into the housing, labour and education of Britain. Immigration leads to clusters and population growth, because immigrants answer occupational labour shortages in specific locations. Clustering provides social and economic capital, so that 'chain migration' of friends and relatives, and family building follows. The young age-structure leads to rapid natural growth in settlement areas, which becomes greater than immigration as it has for the Black, Indian, Bangladeshi and Pakistani populations of Britain. All these factors lead to continued clusters of non-White population.

Demographic pressure on housing might then lead to migration from the original settlement areas, or dispersal. Such movement would be expected to neighbouring areas with similar social conditions (enlarging the existing clusters) as well as 'counter-urbanisation' to better housing, often further away. Such dispersal is historically not only into a melting pot, but includes new clusters to maintain cultural and economic capital: a residential mosaic. There are also non-economic constraints to dispersal, what Ceri Peach (1996) has called 'bad segregation', that involve the hostile reception in potential new areas of housing, and the red-lining by estate agents that shepherds White and Asian people into separate 'appropriate' areas (Phillips, 2006). The movement of the White population away from inner city ethnically diverse areas, the white flight of the segregation story, can be interpreted also as movement due to housing pressure, or equally lack of movement *into* diverse areas, rather than excess movement out of them: there is research to be done to clarify the nature of net White out movement, but as we have seen it is not in net terms any greater than movement out of non-White residents.

As for what makes a public sociology, Michael Burawoy has had some success in restoring 'public sociology' to professional recognition. In his presidential address to the American Sociology Association he suggests that the founders of sociology, the likes of Weber, Durkheim and Marx were not concerned with a professional audience, nor were they using sociology in an instrumental way to answer a specific question (see typology below taken from Burawoy 2005). Although most sociologists would draw on different types of sociology, he focuses on the need for more sociology which has a public in mind that is neither the academic profession nor the paying client.

	Audience: academic	Audience: other
Instrumental	Professional sociology	Policy sociology
Reflexive	Critical sociology	Public sociology

One might consider the same typology for demography. Professional demography includes the development of methods such as life table analysis and estimation of population change. Policy demography includes reports on ageing for the EU and on housing need for a local authority. Critical demography includes the debates within academic journals on the social determinants of fertility or the properties of segregation indices, reflecting on the need to develop theory and methodology. Public demography would need to engage publicly with issues such as those raised at the start of this article, and reflect on their resolution with a particular public in mind (the poor of New Orleans, or pensioners). *Radical* demography would appear to be close to this public demography. Its proponents would lean on and contribute to critical debates in literature, on professional methods and theory, and could develop work with specific clients on specific policy questions. But this would not be especially radical if it did not also have a wider public in mind who would benefit from and whose conditions and interests motivate the work.

Burawoy's public sociology is a good starting point for definition of a radical approach to demography, but not sufficient. Notions of democratic and accurate content are missing, as is the mission to demystify, to clarify the assumptions behind technical methods.

Migration Watch Watch

The conference then discussed the Migration Watch UK website and campaign (<http://www.migrationwatchuk.org/>). It is an example of public demography in that it is not directed at the profession, and uses professional demographic data (and a professional demographer as Honorary Consultant) to influence policy on immigration but not on behalf of a policy client but on behalf more generally of England. However it commits many of the assumptions that Ludi and Jamie have criticised; it concurs with the Commission for Racial Equality that "we are sleepwalking to segregation". Its concerns boil down to two: England is overcrowded; England cannot integrate immigrants at the current rate of immigration.

Comments during the discussion pointed out that 'overcrowding' is relative; that inclusion of Scotland and Wales make Britain relatively under-crowded in Europe; and that Migration Watch Advisory Council probably took up a great deal more space than the average immigrant.

Migration Watch press releases, in the name of its chair Sir Andrew Green, make clear that Black immigrants are their main concern. Their focus is on 'non-EU immigrants' and they value Polish immigrants more than others. Their language reveals a xenophobic world view, emphasizing assimilation to this view rather than a form of integration that might expose and alter this view.

Migration Watch takes the brief to 'watch' migration. Radical Statistics might watch Migration Watch.

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