

Understanding partnership, employment and housing patterns of immigrants and their descendants in England and Wales through ethnic concentration

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Short abstract

Partnership, employment, and housing are all affected by proximity and spatial contexts hence analysing ethnic concentration is key in further contextualising the life domains. This study highlights the importance of linking spatial processes to demographic processes which emphasises the novelty of our study. The segmented assimilation theory posits that there are persisting differences by ethnic group, migrant origin, and migrant generation. We explore these differences in England and Wales using the Census 2011 microdata (N~ 2.6 million). We distinguish between immigrants and their descendants, not just ethnic groups and contribute to existing assimilation literature by analysing ethnic density in local authorities. We employ multinomial logistic regressions. Generational differences in marriage, being in managerial and routine occupations, and homeownership and renting privately are large. We find large heterogeneity when analysing ethnic density for example for non-native White, Chinese, Black African, and Black Caribbean ethnic groups, the more ethnically dense a local authority is, the more likely that an individual is never married. For managerial occupations, the denser the local authority is, the less likely a South Asian and a Black African individual is to hold a managerial occupation. The reverse of this trend is true for non-native White and Chinese individuals. Finally, in housing, for Indians and Pakistanis, the higher the ethnic density, the more likely they are to be a homeowner. The reverse is observed for Bangladeshi and Chinese individuals. For all Asian groups, the ethnic density differences are the largest which may reflect relative socio-economic stability or area characteristics.

Extended abstract

Topic

Partnership, employment, and housing trajectories are key life course domains and for immigrants and their descendants are important for their assimilation and mobility in host societies. These experiences vary not only between ethnic groups but also within ethnic groups and across space. While the UK literature is very dense in understanding the ethnic group variation in these life course domains, less is known about variation between immigrants and their descendants and how these variations on the individual and group level are affected by place. Spatial contexts are influenced and shaped by key, interconnected processes such as economic forces, governmental policies and restrictions but also are affected by complex, unobservable processes such as norms, values, and personal choice.

In England and Wales, there is a decreasing trend of geographical unevenness between ethnic groups and the native population however there is increasing and persisting clustering for certain groups. The clustering may indicate mobility improvements, but trends of higher mobility and lower segregation are being observed for generally more disadvantaged ethnic groups. Our research contributes to understanding on which groups within these ethnic groups rely on their co-ethnics and whether the impact of this reliance is positive or negative. Geographic literature discusses the impact of moves but not necessarily the experiences of different migrant generations in key life domains and how spatial contexts plays a role. Furthermore, demographic theories that account for the effect of disadvantage can be further contextualised by adding spatial components to attempt to explain more of the persisting and or diverging trends that we see between and within ethnic groups such as low partnership divergence, occupational sorting and immobility, and housing tenure mobility.

Theoretical focus

Several hypotheses posit explanations for understanding the behaviour of immigrants and descendants in host societies. These hypotheses theorise that immigrants reconcile influences of host and origin societies, and that the extent of cultural integration is a key factor in distancing from the origin society. The extent of cultural integration and the socio-demographic profile of a migrant affects partnership divergence, labour market success and housing tenure mobility. For descendants, their behaviour is mainly affected by familial and community cultural integration and the extent of discrimination and disadvantage experienced. Intergenerational occupational and housing tenure mobility is a key contributor to descendant success. In addition, being exposed to partnership divergence is a key factor in descendants displaying partnership divergence themselves even if the host society is more liberal. These theories lack a spatial contextualisation despite being considered the bedrock for understanding the behavioural process of immigrants and their descendants. Our research has a demographic and spatial theoretical focus. Many ethnic minority groups face disadvantages such as limited resource access, restrictive policies, and discrimination and display unique settling patterns such as (in)voluntary clustering in poorer or less well-resourced areas which is reflected by the segmented assimilation theory. The life domains of this study are all affected by proximity and spatial mobility hence analysing ethnic density is key in contextualising trends in the life domains. This study highlights the importance of linking spatial processes to demographic processes in the life domains which emphasises the novelty of our study. Geographic literature focuses on spatial variables as outcomes or use aggregated indexes such as segregation or clustering indexes. There is less focus on using spatial variables as explanatory variables for demographic life domains or focusing on the individual level rather than at the aggregate level which will add more specificity and help us understand group differences. Secondly, when conducting group level analysis, geographic literature mainly focuses on ethnic groups rather than disaggregating by migrant generation. The segmented assimilation theory posits that there are persisting differences by ethnic group, migrant origin, and migrant generation therefore more focus needs to be placed on the segmented assimilation theory but not just in the housing domain. Using this original framework will help us understand which ethnic

groups and migrant generations are most affected by spatial processes and further contextualise the barriers and opportunities that these groups experience.

Data & methods

We use data from the 2011 Census microdata sample for England and Wales. It contains information on individuals (as well as their households and geographic information at the local authority and regional level) who live in England and Wales. We use multinomial logistic regression models and are presented as average marginal effects.

Findings

Large heterogeneity exists in descendants' partnership patterns. Descendants are less likely to be married in all ethnic groups compared to their immigrant counterparts. Evidence of partnership diversity is limited, such as greater cohabitation and divorce. There is a greater likelihood to be never married and therefore single. In employment, descendants in all ethnic groups are more likely to be in a managerial occupation and less likely to be in a routine occupation compared to their immigrant counterparts. While there are improvements in employment outcomes, after controlling for education, we still see employment gaps between ethnic minority groups and the native population. However, the differences between descendants of different ethnic groups are closing and for more disadvantaged ethnic groups, their descendants are more represented in intermediate occupations. For housing, surprisingly, descendants in all ethnic groups, except Black Caribbeans, have a higher likelihood of being a homeowner and a lower likelihood of living in privately renting accommodation compared to their immigrant counterparts and differences between ethnic groups are broadly similar.

We find that, as expected, ethnic concentration has varied effects between ethnic groups and have different effects in different life domains. We are able to show that ethnic concentration is most influential in managerial occupations and housing tenure. For partnership, there are very small differences in partnership as partnership is affected by unobservable characteristics such as norms and values. The ethnic concentration patterns for occupational social class broadly reflect the patterns of disadvantage that we observe for ethnic groups in the current assimilation literature. The more ethnically dense a local authority is, the less likely South Asian and Black groups are to hold a managerial occupation with the opposite being observed for non-Native White and Chinese groups. We find that residential location has a stronger effect on managerial occupations compared to routine and intermediate occupations. The ethnic concentration patterns for housing tenure broadly reflect the historical settling patterns of ethnic groups in the UK therefore also reflecting the relative proportions of housing tenure types in those local authorities. Relatively richer ethnic groups have greater likelihoods of being a homeowner as ethnic density increases. We find that the trends for social renting seem to reflect a preference for historical patterns and area characteristics rather than simply socio-economic status or resources in settling patterns. Surprisingly, the likelihood for private renting is similar across ethnic groups.