

From Statistical to Relational Analysis in Indigenous Demography: Modelling Populations as Kinship Networks

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Seminar Room 515



L5, 207 Bouverie Street,
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This seminar examines the value to Indigenous Australian communities of an augmented demographic methodology that accounts for systemic kinship relationships. Following the calls of Smith et al (2008), and Taylor (2009), for the formalisation of a more consilient Indigenous Demography, I present findings from a kinship network analysis of the Aboriginal population (n=76,048) of South-East Australia as an example.

Rather than treating individuals as data points attached to classes of attribute, kinship network models treat populations as integrated structures linked together by relationships of contiguous fertility, mortality, and migration. Using this methodology, higher level attributes, such as health, education, employment, and income patterns may be construed as emergent phenomena emanating from configurational network dynamics, rather than as the discrete attributes of isolated individuals.

Especially significant for a more consilient form of Indigenous Demography, is the special scope that kinship network analysis provides for modelling populations in real space and time. The resultant three-dimensional structures reveal both quantitatively and qualitatively, the dynamics at work within populations exhibiting unique characteristics, such as distinctive geographic associations, genealogical cohesion, and conservative migration patterns.

Dr James Rose is a graduate of the Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, specialising in social anthropology. Dr Rose has over 15 years' research experience in Indigenous Australian population dynamics, social network analysis, and relational database management systems, including extensive fieldwork with remote and urban Indigenous communities spanning Central, Northern, and South-East Australia. Dr Rose directs a private consulting company servicing the native title, land rights, cultural heritage, and Indigenous health sectors in Australia, and sits on a number of institutional advisory groups. These include, among others, the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Statistical Advisory Group within the Australian Institute of Health & Welfare, and the Scientific Committee of the Kinsources project, funded by the French National Research Agency.