26-Feb-2018  
  
Dear Dr Minton:  
  
Thank you for your submission to the special issue of Contemporary Social Science on 'Making Sense of the Impact of Brexit'.  
  
Firstly our apologies for the time taken in responding to you.  
  
We have had back two referees reports on your paper (see referees 2 and 3 below). Both see merit in your work.  
  
However, in line with the comments of one of the referees, we see the link with the theme of the special issue as rather tenuous and don't feel that the paper fits with the issue.  
  
We therefore regret to say that we are rejecting the paper as being out of scope.  
  
Please note that this is not a reflection of the quality of your work. The referees offer suggestions for how the paper can be developed for publication elsewhere, which we hope is of use to you in targeting another journal, for example in the sociology or contemporary history field.  
  
We wish you well in your work.  
  
  
Professor David Bailey  
Aston Business School  
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Reviewer(s)' Comments to Author:  
  
Reviewer: 1  
  
Comments to the Author  
None - please see comments to Editor above  
  
Reviewer: 2  
  
Comments to the Author  
This is a promising paper with some potentially interesting content, but in my view it requires substantial re-working before reaching a standard suitable for publication.  
  
The core of the paper is the attempt to model excess male mortality in Northern Ireland attributable to the political and sectarian violence of ‘The Troubles’ by comparing actual mortality to a counterfactual model. This is done using a rather complex model, illustrated by coloured Lexis surfaces.  The model suggests a rather lower estimate for excess deaths of young (age 15-40) males than those obtained by allocating reported deaths to this category. It is a decay model, where an initial substantial impact is followed by exponential decline in the effect.  
  
This analysis is hitched, in my view rather unconvincingly, both to the current issue of the EU/UK land border and Brexit, and to some ‘mathematical ecolological’ theories about the nature of ethnic conflict in societies.  
  
I think the paper would be publishable if the following changes were made:  
  
1  
The material which discusses the origin and nature of the Northern Ireland conflict in particular, and ethnic conflict in general should be dropped. The empirical evidence of the paper does not bear on this and they deserve a much fuller discussion in their own right.  
  
2  
The focus of the paper should become the point that the author surprisingly pays relatively little attention to, namely how to attribute deaths to ‘The Troubles’. Empirically allocating a reported death to a particular cause faces both the problem of how to make that allocation (e.g. a speeding terrorist kills a pedestrian: political death or road accident?) and the fact that deaths avoided by ‘The Troubles’ (less suicide, other health improvements that are unanticipated consequences of the situation etc) cannot be counted this way. It is thus no surprise that attempts to capture excess deaths in this way produce higher estimates.  The author’s method has widespread application in other conflict situations where counting deaths resulting directly from military or political action typically understates the often more substantial increase in mortality caused by the dislocation of public health and medical care systems.  
  
3  
To establish this point it makes sense not only to use a counterfactual model, but also to make and empirical comparison with areas with mortality unaffected by the troubles, basically the rest of the UK.  In addition the author has to establish clearly in the minds of the reader why any model, and also why the particular model chosen, is needed in the first place. Why not just eyeball figure 3 and save a lot of effort! I think the author would find it useful here to say a little about the tremendous decline in mortality in this agegroup from the ‘20s to the 60’s and also why floor effects mean that this absolute improvement could not be sustained. He’d also do well to explain to his readers the distinction between deaths and mortality, and something of the complexities of computing mortality rates  
  
4  
Finally the author needs to make much more effort to render his data and his statistical analyses comprehensible to the non expert reader. The space saved by (1) should be devoted to this end.  
  
  
Reviewer: 3  
  
Comments to the Author  
A fascinating paper that I recommend for publication. But would suggest some minor changes:  
  
General comment - there is some slippage between first person singular and plural in the paper. Would advise resolving this.  
General comment - some of the formatting on references is wrong  
p3 line 2, EU referendum was 2016 not 2017  
p3 Sections of opening could be recast to reflect more recent events  
p5, final line. The Easter Rising declaration was signed by 15 men but many more participated in the rising  
p6, line 4. Error when referring to 'majority Protestant 'Southern Ireland''. This should be majority Catholic  
p6, line 6 - Northern Ireland never voted on Home Rule. There was no referendum