

Editorial

This issue of *Radical Statistics* is dominated by two articles on deaths in Northern Ireland that have resulted from the conflicts. They make depressing reading. Most of the figures are presented without comment and with little interpretation. These articles are perhaps not typical of what may be expected in this journal but may be seen as sources of data that may not be readily available elsewhere. Perhaps *Radical Statistics* has a duty to ensure that they are published.

The Survey of Members provides an interesting insight into what members get from the Group and what they expect. I'm somewhat sheepish about the things that editors are supposed to do. But in this group, more than most, the members are supposed to be in charge. The editor rotates and the Troika is a merry-go-round that anyone is welcome to jump onto. John Bibby helps in his usual fashion by being provocative, but isn't "trying to say nice things about Roy Carr-Hill" going a bit far. Or should this be seen in the light of his comment number 2. (Sorry Roy.)

Cliquey! What, us?

Andrew Philpott Morgan gets a booby prize for failing to resist including the term "Maxwellian" in his contribution. But what about "mathematese"? This is presumably meant to be derogatory, but does it mean "the language of mathematics"? Is not mathematics itself a language. Another booby prize is available for the best contribution on this topic.

Nyarai Humba describes the book *Gender and later life* as, "Highly readable, clear and challenging ...". Her review will encourage many of us to try to read it. (I hope that I am not being too assuming of a political position on the part of readers.)

Mike Parker

Starting or revitalising a subgroup

Ludi Simpson

[After the survey in 1991, several members offered to start or to revitalise subgroups. Ludi Simpson put together the following notes to help them. The Troika discussed the notes, were keen that such advice did exist, and suggested that the conference should have a chance to comment on and agree them, particularly the 'rules' for subgroups. These were felt to be useful but should be thought of as guidelines, especially for new projects; established subgroups will set up their own rules which may not involve coming back to the Troika for ratification of every step that's taken.

So please read through these notes with two things in mind. First, are they appropriate and can you improve them? If so contact Ludi on Bradford (0274) 635469 and/or come to conference. Second, if they encourage you to contact other members with a view to new RadStats work, then go ahead.]

Here's some of the questions that you might be thinking about.

What does a subgroup do? Where does it start?

Well, this is up to the subgroup. It usually starts because one or two people have a bright idea and gather others to them to help with it. Or a seminar or conference comes up with a proposal that needs a group working on it and seems appropriate to Radical Statistics. Generally members of Radical Statistics expect some output in written form from a subgroup, a pamphlet or book, or press releases, or contributions to some other campaign, but it doesn't always start with that in mind.

If possible, find others who can discuss with you the best way to start up, and the best current issues to discuss in a subgroup. Then arrange a meeting with an agenda, and advertise it appropriately, preferably in the newsletter with an accompanying article or note of explanation, and directly to local members or those who have expressed an interest in the relevant areas.

For example, your first meeting might consider:

A seminar or study group, of members in your local area, or of members interested in a live political issue from the viewpoint of statistical methods or of the political use and production of statistics. The outcome of this may, but need not be, a publication.

A contribution to the "Lies, Damn Lies ... " series. This is a series of

broadsheets each taking an establishment claim supposedly based on statistical evidence, and debunking it. The health group has a Bullshit Envelope into which unlikely establishment claims go for later treatment...

A session at RadStats conference, organised by a subgroup, usually stimulates discussion and further activity of the subgroup.

Who else might be interested?

The database of members can give you a list and address labels for all the members who have expressed an interest in the fields listed on the table overleaf. The database can also list you the other Radical Statistics members who live in your area - if you can define it by postal areas (BD or G etc).

Prepare a letter to be sent to new members who express an interest in the relevant field of work: the subscription form invites new members to pick from the list overleaf.

Are there any rules for subgroups?

Well, Radical Statistics doesn't have a constitution as such. It is action-oriented, based around the activities that its subgroups do and not around a political platform. So this is a bit chicken and egg; you make up the rules that promote the work needed to be done! However, the following guidelines have been agreed by the Conference or the Troika at one time or another, to ensure that all members can participate in subgroups, and that publications do not use the name Radical Statistics without some clearing:

1. Meetings should be open to all members, and usually are advertised outside the membership.
2. Public products that carry the name Radical Statistics or one of its subgroups, are OK-ed by the Troika, to ensure wild or personal assertions are not given the group's name.
3. Public products of a subgroup are normally worked on by more than one member.
4. Aims, activities, and products of a subgroup should fall within the concerns of Radical Statistics Group as given in the promotional leaflet.
5. Subgroup activities are regularly reported in the Newsletter, and to the Annual conference.

How does a subgroup raise funds if they're needed?

The main group can help out with initial expenses if they can't be raised by a collection, up to say £100, to get the subgroup going. After that, a subgroup can usually find ways of raising the funds it needs itself. But the Troika can always agree to fund some special project if its needed. It has in the past underwritten the costs of a subgroup publication.

Who can I turn to for advice?

RadStats' Troika is the group's organising committee. It is currently made up of:

Ludi Simpson, 41 Park Crescent, Bradford BD3 4JZ. Tel: 0274-642 838 (h).
Christy Maginn, 30 Critchley Road, Speke, Liverpool L24. Tel: 051-425 2036 (h).
Andrew Philpott Morgan, 20a Dunollie Road, Tufnell Park, London NW5 2XP.
Tel: 071-485 9968 (h & w).

The two currently active subgroups are:

Health Group: convenors **Alison Macfarlane**, 40 Warwick Road, St Albans, AL1 4DL. Tel: 0727-52111 (h), 0865-224876 (w); **Yoav Ben-Shiomo**, Dept. of Community Medicine, UCL Medical School, 66-72 Gower St., London WC1E 6EA. Tel: 081-671 6734 (h), 071-387 7050 (w).

Northern Group: convenor **Anthony Staines**, 10 Westcombe Avenue, Leeds LS8 2BS. Tel: 0532-662584 (h), 0532-443517 (w).

Interests expressed by Radical Statistics members as at September 1991

These are members who have responded to:

"I may be interested in working with others on (up to six please!): ..."

either on the membership survey or on the new members' subscription form. The numbers and percentage of current membership are shown. Of the current 316 members, 206 have stated at least one interest.

Members interests: numbers and percentages

A	Anti-poverty/welfare statistics	46	15%
B	Crime, Law, Police	11	3%
C	Peace/nuclear arms	12	4%
D	Philosophy and politics of statistics	28	9%
E	Education	31	10%
F	Economic statistics	14	4%
G	Government statistics	39	12%
H	Health	145	46%
I	Internationalisation and trade statistics	6	2%
L	Local government	23	7%
M	Teaching statistics	29	9%
N	Developing countries	30	9%
O	Housing	13	4%
P	Un/Employment	15	5%
R	Race	23	7%
S	Surveys for pressure groups	32	10%
T	Transport	7	2%
U	Trades Union campaigns	8	3%
W	Statisticians as workers	6	2%
X	Women in statistics	26	8%
Y	Green/environment issues	23	7%
Z	Other	15	5%

The marketing of Radical Statistics

Andrew Philpott Morgan

Some time ago I came across RADSTATS. By chance I had noticed a letter in the RSS News and Notes which appears prior to the conference each year. It appeared that there was a group out there devoted to the social and political issues underlying statistics. My own experience at that time in actual statistical work was that it displayed considerable sensitivity to political undercurrents of the context and objectives set for it. Such a group seemed to have a vital role to play.

Nevertheless at the first conference I attended I made a criticism of RADSTATS to a member of the troika: hardly anyone has heard of you! The point, to some extent conceded, was turned around: would you like to do something about it! Well...er...yes. This eventually consisted in jointly putting together a promotions leaflet and even more eventually a marketing exercise to attempt to identify where statisticians might be found. Statisticians being producers and users of statistical methodologies or information in a very broad sense and particularly the latter.

At last the marketing exercise has been completed, or at least its first stage. The exercise has a strong bias towards the social sciences and to the producers and users of information. The humanities such as history or politics have been left out despite their greater use of statistics in recent years. Although areas of particular interest such as peace studies have been included. No doubt, throughout the physical sciences there are those who might be interested and have been left out. Of course all statistics departments have been included and a few mathematics departments if they have a statistics group or statistician. Only a few biology departments have been included where it is evident statistical work is being done and all ecology departments have been included, and naturally all medical schools and related departments have been included. The social sciences has had blanket coverage with the inclusion of all which would use statistical information.

Below is a breakdown by subject and region of the 709 departments or units within institutions each of which received two promotion leaflets:

By subject

Education	79
Economics and business studies	129
Environment, construction, geography	95
Health and related	136
Media, information, communications	14
Social studies, race, women, policy	117
Statistics, maths, OR, computing	139
Total	709

By region

East Anglia	8	Yorks & Humberside	65
South East	238	North	35
South West	37	Scotland	93
East Midlands	48	Wales	36
West Midlands	54	Ireland	22
North West	71	Eire	2

Those of you in or near institutions should see one on a noticeboard soon if not already. There is a special Troika prize for the most statistical institution which went to the Edinburgh University. In the national stakes, Manchester University, Swansea University and Ulster University figured as pretty statistical. It has probably been noticed that the distribution is rather skewed towards a particular region. However this hides a further skew towards the most prominent city of the that region which alone accounted for 110 mailings.

Any comments or further information can be gained by writing to me (see inside cover). Please let me know if I have left you out. Moreover, should anyone wish to follow up marketing for a group I can provide an ASCII disk with field and record separators of their choice for a subject, a region, a city, or any combination. Just send me a disk NOT HD and a SAE and you're on your way.

An agenda for a Radical Statistics Economic Subgroup

Andrew Philpott Morgan

The absence of a subgroup concerned with economic issues has long left a gap within RADSTATS. There are, no doubt, numerous reasons for this such as the the number of groups/organisations which treat this as a special interest in its own right and while run by economists would certainly attract statisticians. Moreover, at least in my experience the statistician's auxiliary position is further entrenched in this area than in others as the economist is formally involved in a good deal of statistical work. However, while I would strongly argue that the role of statisticians has been neglected, the traditional division of labour of exclusive specialisms is not seen as justified and the subgroup would actively encourage the participation of all interested.

As with other subgroups within RADSTATS, the aim is to demystify and bring out the political assumptions underlying social production, information selection, modelling and the interpretation of statistics. Moreover, the adjective 'economic' (self (as opposed to the noun 'economics') is seen not as reflecting a compartment, but as an aspect of a single reality which cannot be ultimately separated from other aspects such as the social, education etc. This means, of course, that important inputs can be made into the subgroup by those who are neither economists nor economic statisticians. The term 'economic' also reflects my own preoccupation as initiator that there is a distinctive contribution to be made by statisticians to developing a political arithmetic which is not merely a side issue to political economy, but one which runs from the elaboration of policy concepts through to forecasting and decision systems.

In terms of general issues the subgroup may be seen as radical in two senses. In the first, political, sense it hopes to focus on work which is rarely found elsewhere as a basis for campaigns. This includes a discussion of expediency which is widespread in socio-economic work, the role of researchers in this position who may well be pulled between integrity and meeting the vested interests of those who set the objectives of the work. As a fairly recent example, a colleague who was consulted for a major project for a marketing company and was told that: 'We want you to undertake a study of advertising to show that advertising does not increase the total consumption of alcohol but only the brand shares'.

Or again, on a forecast being made of a company's earnings, it was made clear that an 'underforecast' would mean concern at the company's bank and in its share price. Subsequently, the firm did not meet its forecast, had overstretched itself financially and now its difficulties have accumulated. 1991 has been a Maxwellian year for illustrations as expediency and recession combined!

The second concerns the scientific adequacy of statistics itself and the functioning of the statistical establishment in maintaining a status quo in accepted work. Harvey Goldstein in RS 45 has given an illustration of the way in which inadequate methodologies are applied to sustain particular ideological positions. The following are some further illustrations.

At a seminar at Nottingham University some time ago the author of a book on spectral analysis asked, 'Can anyone think of any applications?'. The audience, consisting of specialists from numerous Statistics Departments, was silent. An academic economist rang up a statistics department asking if anyone had some 'typical' stationary time series data as he could not find any and he needed some to illustrate modelling to undergraduates. The data may not be typical despite most modelling systems being based on the assumption of stationarity. Many practising statisticians complain about the direction taken by the academic establishment whose premier publication, JRSS Series B, would appear to be the province of mathematicians. No doubt about it, mathematics is the most important tool available to statistical science and sometimes those who are not fluent in mathematese are left behind. A more crucial question is whether it is statistics, ie potentially applicable, more like spectral analysis (useful as a conceptual tool, but should not be taken too far) or in the hyperspace of mathematical analysis (as interesting as it may be) and of little relevance to statistics as an applied science.

In more concrete terms the subgroup is seen as a broad umbrella for a diverse range of economic interests such as those working in the areas of business & marketing; management science & OR; industry, services, trade, finance, employment & unemployment studies; forecasting & decision analysis and so on. Moreover, like other subgroups the plan is to contact and possibly work with other groups / organisations such as CSE.

I have done/am working on the following areas: income statistics, industrial statistics, international comparisons, internationalisation, forecasting particularly of qualitative shifts in global economy and political arithmetic.

Gender and later life

by S. Arber and J. Ginn

Review by Nyarai Humba

Gender and later life is a book which essentially explains why most older women are disadvantaged. Central to their explanation, and clearly demonstrated, is womens' earlier unpaid 'caring' role in society and the effect this has on their financial health circumstances in later life. The combined effects of sexism in earlier life and ageism in later life are discussed in easy, readable language. Statistics are presented graphically and are simple to read.

What I liked most about the book is the way the authors manage to link ageism with sexism, classism, and racism. They show how different segments of society - blacks, proletariat, old people, and, in particular, women, are denied access to goods, prestige, services, and to mental and physical well-being. The case is made for women, whose inferior position is ascribed them from birth, and whose contribution is largely unacknowledged or unfairly remunerated. The inferior position of women in later life is a consequence of their ascribed role in society and therefore radical feminism ignores this group at their own peril - especially since most women will become old.

While the statistics were depressing and I grew angry at the knowledge that I still had the indignities and humiliation reserved for the old in this society, on top of my experiences as a black, a woman, a single parent, working class, and a foreigner! - the book was optimistic about the future and "grey power". As a self-defined feminist, I confess to having internalised the assumptions of ageism and to accepting the elderlys' marginal position. This book has, with facts and figures, shaken me up and opened my eyes so I could see the connections in this jigsaw of oppression.

Highly readable, clear and challenging - I recommend it as essential reading for all those in the struggle for equality of opportunity for all.