

Editorial

In March 2006, the Radical Statistics annual conference and AGM were held at Hathersage youth hostel. Speakers, delegates and members resisted the temptation to take to the snow-covered surrounding hills, choosing instead to focus on the theme for this year's conference "Are numbers working for you? Using statistics in campaigns".

This issue of RS presents the papers discussed, albeit with some slight modifications. Each of the speakers addressed different aspects of the way statistics are and have been used and misused, be it by the government, the media, non-governmental organizations or business. While the views expressed in the papers do not necessarily reflect the views of RS (there is no single view on any of these issues), they do raise important questions about the use of statistics as evidence for policy or prejudice.

Ray Thomas' paper, *'Government Spin and Statistics'*, addresses the need for an independent statistical service, noting that without one 'official statistics are not facts about society, but facts about the government of society'. The paper by Ludi Simpson and Jamie Goodwin-White, *'Radical Demography'*, summarises their very participatory conference presentation, which focussed on the use and misuse of migration statistics. Jay Ginn's paper *'Must poverty be politicized?'* contrasts EU and UK data on poverty among older people, pointing out apparent contradictions. Paul Marchant's conference presentation was originally entitled 'Do the claims for spending billions on crime reduction initiatives stand up?' but is presented here as *'Investigating whether a crime reduction measure works'*. He examines a number of statistical issues in assessing the effectiveness of crime reduction interventions, and calls for the Radical Statistics group to become more fully engaged in crime research.

RS has long challenged the dubious use of statistics, and the papers in this issue continue this tradition. RS members at the AGM expressed genuine concern about the future of RS, worried that declining membership might indicate troubled times ahead. This may well be true, and if RS is to survive and thrive it needs its members and those interested in what it represents, to contribute most immediately to the newsletter, to individual working groups and to the AGM. Without sustained solidarity, we may well hang separately. The message from the Troika in this issue encourages members to put pen to paper and contribute!

Delegates may like to know the second-hand book sale run by John Bibby raised £200, which Ludi Simpson will be using to buy books prioritised by the Cuban Statistics Office and the University of Havana Population Studies Centre, CEDE.

Shailen Nandy (guest editor), School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol.

Contributors to this issue

Ray Thomas is a Research Fellow in Official Statistics in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Open University. He was external expert member of the government's Labour Market Statistics Framework Review made in 2001 and Royal Statistical Society Champion Fellow 2003-2005. He has worked with Professor John Adams of Napier University on a study of unemployment in Scotland supported by the Scottish Parliament and has been a regular contributor to *Radical Statistics* over the past ten years.

Jay Ginn was employed as a Senior Research Fellow, Sociology Department, University of Surrey and was a co-director of the Centre for Research on Ageing and Gender until her retirement in November 2004. She is now a Visiting Professor of the university. Research interests include gender, class and ethnic differences in the economic resources of older people and the impact on women of pension system reforms, cross-nationally, especially the shift from state to private pensions. Recent books include *Women, Work and Pensions* 2001 (co-edited with D. Street and S. Arber) and *Gender, Pensions and the Lifecourse*, 2003. Jay is Visiting Professor at the Centre for Research on Ageing and Gender, Surrey University.

Paul Marchant started out in physics/astrophysics, which got him into statistics. Then, in the 1980s, he studied the subject of statistics at MSc level and at that time he joined RadStats. (He took some statistics books to Nicaragua at about that time.) He works at Leeds Metropolitan University and provides statistical support across a range of areas. He is active in the Royal Statistical Society. He has taken an interest in 'What Works' against crime and in evidence based policy, generally.

Ludi Simpson is Reader in Social Statistics at the Cathie Marsh Centre for Census and Survey Research, University of Manchester. He was a statistician for Bradford City Council, 1981-2003. His publications include 'Statistics in Society: the Politics of Arithmetic' (with Danny Dorling) and 'Statistics of Racial Segregation: Measures, Evidence and Policy' (published in *Urban Studies*). For more on Ludi and his work, see <http://www.ccsr.ac.uk/staff/ss.htm>

Jamie Goodwin-White is a lecturer in Demography and Social Statistics at the University of Southampton. Her research interests involve immigration, internal migration and inequality, with a specific focus on the ways in which geography shapes outcomes for the adult children of immigrants in the US.