

Confessions of a Statistician: a response to Danny Dorling's reply to "Dubious Clues".

Danny Dorling ("Why what I read makes me think what I think", *Radical Statistics*, 2010, issue 103) does not refute my assertion that he misrepresented the work of others. Instead he suggests that my criticisms were motivated by my associations with Karl Pearson and Mervyn Stone, being a member of the Department of Statistics at University College London -- founded by Karl Pearson in 1911 and headed by Mervyn Stone in the 1980s. He might have said more. My grandfather studied with Karl Pearson. My husband has been over 40 years in the department. Karl's son, Egon Pearson, befriended my husband and myself when we were young statisticians. Furthermore, I come from a relatively privileged academic background and have benefited from the inequality of resources in the UK and, even more so, in the world!

However, these autobiographical details have no bearing on the substance of my critique, "Dubious Clues" [*Radical Statistics*, 2010, issue 103] which showed that, in "Statistical Clues to Social Injustice", *Radical Statistics*, 2010, issue 102, Danny misrepresented the work of John Snow, Karl Pearson, and the OECD PISA team.

Danny does not argue against the detail of my criticisms but he writes "I am sick of uninformed attacks from people who dislike what I am finding, but seek to either prevent me from printing my results, or nit-pick around the edges, rather than argue over fundamentals." (*Radical Statistics*, issue 103, page 72). This does offend me. So far from wishing to prevent his ideas from being published I am disappointed that he did not argue his case better. My criticisms were not uninformed and I hope we agree over some fundamentals such as that social injustice is wrong and that statistics should not be misused to justify it, even if we disagree about others such as the importance of scholarship and honesty in describing other people's work.

The 2011 Annual General Meeting, <http://www.radstats.org.uk/conf-history.htm>, accepted the motion "Radical Statistics will not knowingly publish falsehoods, gross misrepresentations of the work of others or misuses of statistics, except for the purpose of exposing and/or correcting such falsehoods, misrepresentations or misuses. The editors of the *Radical Statistics* newsletter have a duty to ask authors to correct any identified misuse of statistics, falsehood or gross misrepresentation of the work of others before an article is accepted for publication. Should disputes be unresolved between editors and authors, editors will refer to the Troika who will liaise and arbitrate."

Jane Galbraith,

jane@stats.ucl.ac.uk 30th April 2011.