

ABSTRACTS

The ideological use of demographic statistics

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'*Preparing for our ageing society*', the *Opportunity Age* discussion document published by the Department of Works and Pensions in 2008, begins: 'Within 20 years half of the adult UK population will be over 50. One in four children born today will live beyond 100. These are dramatic shifts that have far-reaching consequences for us all, and our ageing population will change our society in many ways.'

In this paper, we begin by re-visiting an early analysis (Bytheway, B., 1981, 'Demographic statistics and old age ideology', *Ageing and Society*, 1.3, 347-64). We will then consider how demographic statistics are currently being used in the UK in the development of cultural and political ideologies. In particular we will focus on the ways in which their use reflects the 'alarm and hope' strategy of campaigning groups, and how such strategies foster ageist prejudices regarding 'our ageing population'.

The proposed Scottish Longitudinal Study of Ageing (SaLSA)

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A scoping study was completed in 2008 for the Scottish Government, Office of the Chief Researcher, by the Scottish Centre for Social Research in association with the University of St Andrews, to consider the case for establishing SaLSA and to explore the most appropriate means of meeting existing data gaps.

The work has confirmed that ageing is an important issue and that there are a number of evidence gaps, some of which could be met by longitudinal data. These include employment issues (labour market transitions and outcomes), experience of care services, health trajectories and outcomes, social inclusion and inequalities, and the ageing process.

It is proposed that an action plan be drawn up to identify how these gaps can be filled cost effectively, whether by new research, reviews of existing research, analyses of existing longitudinal and cross sectional data, including surveys such as the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA) and the Survey of Health and Retirement in Europe (SHARE), or improved data linkage.

Using Governmental data records to understand characteristics and reasons for social care workers referrals to the POVA List in England and Wales

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With the UK ageing population and changing demographics, an increasing number of people receive social care services. Safeguarding people who use such services is receiving an increased attention from both policy makers and researchers. Since July 2004, employers of social care staff working with vulnerable adults in England and Wales in registered services have been legally required to refer workers or volunteers dismissed for misconduct because they have harmed vulnerable adults or placed them at risk of harm to the Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA) List. This paper reports on part of a multi-method study including quantitative and qualitative elements, to produce a rounded picture of the factors involved in decisions to place staff members on the POVA List. Based on secondary data analysis of all records of POVA referrals from August 2004 to November 2006 (5294 records) as well as a detailed sample of 298 referrals, this paper focuses on the methods adopted to examine the prevalence of different types of alleged harm and their association with various staff, employer and service users' characteristics. The paper also discusses the challenges associated with using large governmental data records, which are not originally designed for specific quantitative data analysis, and illustrates various approaches adopted by the research team to extract, validate and examine such data in an analytical framework and the challenges of feeding results in to the policy making process.

Inequalities in later life health and well-being: are socio-economic and social support disadvantages offsetting or compounding factors?

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Myths and statistics: An exploration of the assumptions connected to ethnicity and family support

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The aim of this paper is to explode some of the myths surrounding the 'look after their own' idea which predominates in the discourse around ethnicity and support. With reference to the Home Office Citizenship Survey, ethnic group differences in the determinants of help received from, and given to, family members and friends will be presented.

National statistics have found that South Asian ethnic groups have more complex households and greater numbers of children than the White British population (Modood et al, 1997). There is a popular perception that particular minority ethnic groups have a stronger sense of filial responsibility than is found in Western European societies, which is thought to lead to a greater level of support for older family members. A combination of these concrete statistics and intangible popular theories has led some social services staff to believe that their services are either not wanted or not required by minority groups (Murray and Brown, 1998). However, this claim has been refuted by other authors (Atkin & Rollings, 1996; Downes, 2007) who suggest that some minority ethnic older people are actually in greater need of support, because of factors such as poorer health and lower socio-economic status, than the white majority in Britain. Nevertheless, the extent of family and community support for older people of different ethnic groups in Britain, and in particular the factors which determine such support being given, have yet to be studied.

This paper, based on recent doctoral work, will go some way towards identifying the factors which predict family and community support amongst older people from different ethnic groups in Britain.

Ageing, ethnic diversity and myths of migration

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Britain's growing ethnic diversity is subject to many claims. These are often exaggerated truths or misconceptions. Some of these claims reinforce a litany which sees immigration as a burden and the start of a spiral of segregation, white flight, lack of integration, culture clashes and violence.

In fact, Britain's growing diversity owes more to natural ageing of young minority populations than to immigration. This natural ageing has consequences for projections of population (and care needs), for friendship groups, and for migration out of cities.

The presentation will review the age characteristics of ethnic diversity in Britain, before examining some of the myths and the reality of race and migration that relate to ageing, drawing on a book to be published in January 2009 "Sleepwalking to segregation'? Challenging myths of race and migration".

Rational policies and political rationality in policy for social care of older people? How far has the first been used to provide the foundation for the second: some econometric evidence?

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States must 'mainstream' the consequences of demographic change in their policy-making, the UN has preached. A corollary is that they must mobilise evidence for policy discourse. Like all the meatiest injunctions from the pulpit, actually accomplishing successful policy change by a process of mainstreaming is easier said than done, judging from the slow start and in many states uncertain achievements in, for instance, income support policies for older people. Statisticians will have had most contact with the technical limitations – the tendency for standard collections not to be capable of producing valid and reliable indicators of quite the concepts relevant to arguments for the world of today and tomorrow; inadequate numbers and technical skills of experts to undertake the work; inadequate bases for applied analysis laid by the basic social scientists and others are among the more obvious. But also there are the limits to what the political system can take: limitations to how radical political leaders and the officials who serve them can sound without upsetting the apple cart, to what degree and kinds of change can be accepted by those with the power and influence to block changes, to the speed with which assumptions can be changed or unbending opponents can be outmanoeuvred. Policy reflects politics. If the topic is something as broad and pervasive as mainstreaming policy for demographic and social change, it is more likely that in most states, working within and with political more than technical limitations are likely to be the more powerful set of constraints. It follows that the application of political rationality to achieving the goals should often receive higher priority at certain stages of policy processes than achieving rational policies if they conflict. Yet political success without policy success is likely to be self-defeating in the long run: policy failure can cause the ultimate political failure, viz loss of power.

Reform of social care for frail older people is at an interesting stage of development. During the noughties there may have been a dangerous outbreak of mainstreaming, though as might be expected in a constitution and culture which fosters the growth of central departments of stealth and total obscurity (as one such department was nicknamed some decade ago), few would know the degree to which this rather than (for instance) the unintended consequences of action with other rationales was actually the reason. Latterly, there have been signs that government has worked hard to build new consensus and coalitions. They have done well at that. (A pity about the recent recession, massive political uncertainty, and still more massive uncertainty about the medium- and long-run growth prospects and so for the vital public expenditure environment for policy-making, of course.) But policy specification has been dangerously vague. What this paper does is to use the results of econometric modelling of the production of welfare to demonstrate that taking some features of the leading policy statements at their face value could actually risk diminishing key benefits produced by the policy system.

Plunging Pensions and the Credit Crunch

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It has become an orthodoxy in the developed world that state Pay-As-You-Go pension schemes lead to unfairness to later generations. Reforms to cut state pensions and increase the role of funded schemes have been promoted as a more equitable policy and one which benefits the economy. Critics have argued that, far from relieving a burden on future generations, private pensions have contributed to unstable inflation in capital markets, placing workers' savings and jobs at risk and reinforcing pension inequalities.

This paper summarises international trends in pension policy and in pensioner poverty and inequality, using official statistics. I then examine the arguments around intergenerational equity in the light of the current 'credit crunch' and recession, drawing on work by a range of academic social scientists.

Don't Waste your pension on ginkgo

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Means and Ends

John Grimley Evans

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Government is increasingly managing and evaluating the Health Service as if it were an arm of Public Health. This is conceptually inappropriate, and potentially damaging to older people, a section of the population already the victims of casual and institutionalised prejudice. Age groups are facile labels that can obscure the individual heterogeneity that increases with age. Scientists have a duty to be sensitive to the biological realities that statistics can hide.