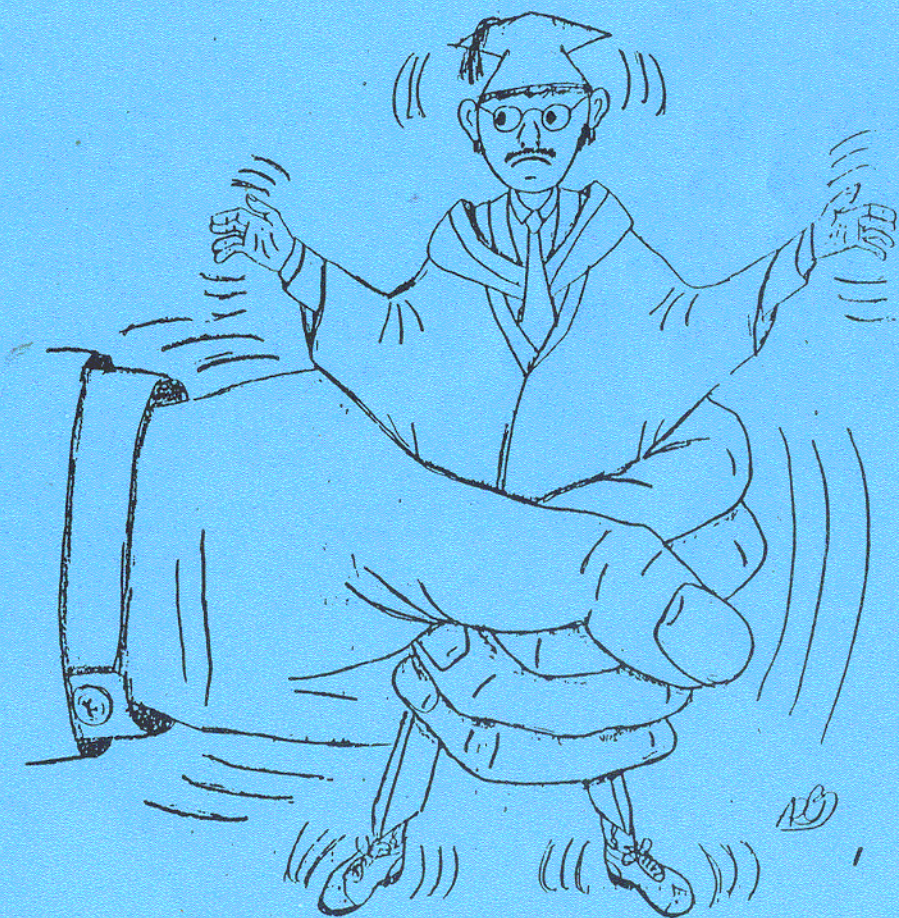


RADICAL STATISTICS 37



ISSN 0268-6376

FEB 87

The Radical Statistics Group is a network of individuals based on the distribution of this Newsletter. The small amount of central administrative work is done by a three person committee elected at the Annual General Meeting known as 'The Troika' - names below. The editorship of the Newsletter rotates - next editor listed below. Apart from producing a Newsletter, the work of the Group is done by its sub-groups, whose membership is open to all interested parties; simply contact the person below. Use the Newsletter to advertise if you wish to start a new sub-group.

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"Well, I'm damned if I'll defend to the death
your right to say something that's statistically insignificant"

Are you interested in joining the HEALTH INFORMATION NETWORK?

The idea of a health information network arose from the conference held last April on the subject of Making Health Information Work.

A brief outline of the conference is given below together with suggestions made for future activities:

MORNING

Speakers on: The development of the Radical Statistics Health Group.
Health Information available at the regional level.
Possible sources of information at health district level
National health statistics.
RAMP, or how to divide and rule.
Sub-regional RAMP - a description of how resources are allocated to districts in a losing region.

AFTERNOON

Participants split into four workshops to discuss the following topics:

1. Health information at the national level.
2. Health information at regional and district level.
3. Local health canvasses.
4. Local health profiles and local 'Black reports'.

There was a final plenary session to discuss possible future developments.

The following suggestions were made:

- Set up a mailing list for a national health information network
- Develop quality assurance measures
- Work with others to disseminate information in a simple form to counter the government's statistical fiddles such as claims of more beds and shorter waiting lists.
- Produce a publication which covers what is going to be missing from the text of the next OPCS decennial supplement on occupational mortality.
- Produce a response, focussing on information needs, to the Green Paper on Primary Health Care and the review of Community Nursing.
- How to build a local health profile when you don't have much in the way of resources.
- How to assess the health implications of the transfer of patients from hospital to community.
- Revision of RAMP

Some of these were thought to be topics for discussion at another conference rather than potential publications.

The health information network seemed well worth pursuing and a questionnaire has been circulated to all those who attended or expressed an interest in the conference. The idea is that the network will be a way of enabling people with an interest in health information and the way it is used to make contact with one another. We decided that there would be two lists. One will be circulated to anyone who would like it. The other will not be circulated and will have details of those people

willing to help others but who do not want their names and details circulated.

If you are interested in joining this network please could you complete the questionnaire included in this newsletter* and return it to Jenny Head. Please could you make photocopies of the questionnaire and pass it on to other people who might be interested in the health information network.

* See p.

Radical Statistics conference

The Health Group is planning four workshops as part of the Radical Statistics conference to be held in York on Saturday February 28. The topics for the workshops were suggested at the last Making Health Information Work conference and in replies to our 'network' circular. We hope that at least some of these will lead to further activity. The workshops planned are on:

1. NHS resource allocation What, if anything, has RAMP achieved? Is there a more effective way of moving towards equality of access to health care for those in equal need?
2. Inequalities in health - Currie and chips for all? Can we use what we know about the social and political determinants of ill health to respond to the government's victim blaming heart disease prevention campaigns?
3. Local health profiles A few local authorities have set up health units which, among other things, are doing these health profiles in detail. What can their experience teach those of us who live in other areas and want to do a simple profile with minimal resources?
4. New developments in NHS data collection Will the new 'Korner' systems help us answer the questions which the 'old' statistics did not answer? What help will they be in monitoring moves from hospital to 'community' care?

We hope you will decide to come. Fuller details of the whole conference including times and venues are given elsewhere in this newsletter. If you would like to know more about the Health Group's part of the conference, or have any suggestions to make, please contact Jenny Head on 01 387 7050 ext 5702 (work) or Alison Macfarlane on 0727 52111 (home) or 0865 816876 (work).

Radical Statistics Health Group

Non-publication and selective publication of government statistics

Since raising this issue at the AGMs of the Society for Social Medicine and the Medical Section of the Royal Statistical Society, the Health Group has not done much more on this subject, apart from finally getting round to replying to the British Medical Association to comment on the letter they had received from DHSS. Copies were sent to the Chief Medical Officer and the DHSS statistician involved. As the statistician has now moved to another department, we do not anticipate a speedy reply!

Meanwhile there seems to be a certain amount of activity elsewhere, as can be seen from Paul Allin's letter to us. In addition, the RSS Medical Section and the Society for Social Medicine have decided to hold a joint meeting on the subject in the summer. The RSS Medical Section has asked me to do their end of the organisation together with someone representing the Society for Social Medicine. Any ideas people have about the ground to be covered and possible speakers will doubtless be very welcome.

Alison Macfarlane

* See next page ** See p.

Progress Report on Proposal for Radical Statistics Book and suggestions for the way forward to production.

I hope that you will be glad to hear that the proposal for a Radical Statistics book is alive and well. The problem is that it is still at the stage of a proposal. The purpose of this report is to begin a discussion of ways to convert the proposal into the product.

Originally the book was to be edited by Colin Thunhurst David Drew and, as far as I can understand, John Bibby. However due to other commitments Colin and Dave have withdrawn their wish to edit and

I think John Bibby has as well. Consequently Jean Ullman and myself have offered to take on the editorial responsibility. When Colin and Dave first suggested the idea in RSW 33 there was considerable interest including offers to write and rework various articles.

Such a book promises (i) to bring together the work done by different subgroups within RSG into one coherent volume ensuring that it is not lost (ii) to air critiques of contemporary misuses and constructions of statistics (iii) to make Radical Statistics more accessible to nonexpert groups and possibly promote recruitment to the RSG (iv) to act as a 1980s supplement to Demystifying Social Statistics which was first published in 1979. I would, therefore, ask you to get excited about the prospect of such a book.

In practical terms Pluto's going bankrupt has put us back

in negotiations with a publisher but according to the information Colin kindly sent me, Alison & Busby would almost certainly give us a contract under their Wellgien Ltd consortium which will continue to publish in the Pluto spirit.

Before I say any more, here is my suggestion for the structure of the book, some of which is derived from Colin's list in RSW 35. N.B. - Firstly, this is only my suggestion to get the discussion ball rolling. Secondly, additional firm commitments to help with the editing are welcome. Thirdly, offers of other articles or suggestions for restructuring are also welcome.

Title : Radical Perspectives On Statistics

By : Radical Statistics Group

Editors: Ullman and Abraham

Introduction: What is Radical Statistics? (Bibby, Ullman, Abraham)

Section One : Statistics - Radical or Conservative?

Editors comment: In this section we shall explore the traditions and strands of radical statistics which coexist with the many conservative and mystifying elements of statistical practice. We show that conservative control of statistics is not, and has not been, inevitable. It is rather that critical understanding of quantification in a conservative political context requires radical choices to be made in the construction and application of statistics.

1. Origins of the Royal Statistical Society (Bibby)

2. Radical and conservative choices in statistics education (Abraham)

3. Opinion Polls (Marsh)

4. Radicalising Survey Methodology (Car-Hill)

5. Radical Demography (Booth)

Section Two: Demystifying Health and Risk Statistics

Editors comment: In an immediate sense we tend to think of our health as depending on the competence of doctors, nurses and other professionals that we would choose to trust. Sometimes this is the case but our health is also affected by less visible political, economic and environmental considerations.

Statistics play two crucial roles in this respect. Firstly, they can be seen to provide politicians with scientific evidence of the 'significance' of health risks people face on exposure to radiation, the arms race, food chemicals, drugs etc. Secondly, they can be used to present political choices about the allocation of resources to health services as 'rational' imperatives for economy in which people are assumed to have equal opportunity in private health care. In this section, by taking a number of cases we will examine the political bases for much of what constitutes health statistics.

6. An analysis of the risk of nuclear war (Shenfield)

7. Statistical significance testing and the Black Report on Sellafield (Hutchinson)

8. Whose measures in food and drug toxicology? (Abraham)

9. Unsafe in their hands (Rad Stats Health Group)

10. Inequalities in health: in defence of the NHS (McFarlane, Thunhurst)

11. Can we trust politicians with health statistics? (McFarlane)

Section Three: Critical Statistics of Education

Editors comment: We urgently need to debate the future of our education system. Statistics are frequently used, with or without justification, to frame this debate. In this section we shall try to show, on the one hand, how statistics can and cannot help us make judgements about our education system and, on the other, how current anti-educational forces within the system militate against the intellectual empowerment of more people able to make such judgements.

12. Key issues in educational research (Plewis, Ecob)
Could be shorter version of Reading between the numbers

13. Is there equality of opportunity in education in Southampton? (Mar Molinero)

14. Class size and pupil attainment (Simpson)

15. Politics of numeracy (Evans)

Section Four: Inequalities Behind the Statistics

Editors comment: Official statistics do not give us 'neutral' information about the state of affairs in our society. Like other statistics, they are collected for certain political or bureaucratic purposes. Thus, what is collected, and how, is coloured by the interests of the state. Poverty, sexual inequality, racism and unemployment reflect the inhumanity of our society. The articles in this section consider how they are both reflected and neglected in statistics.

16. Politics and statistics of poverty (Thunhurst)

17. How statistics understate certain sections of the population (Ullman)

18. Black youth unemployment in Sheffield (Clough, Drew)

19. Race and sentencing (Drew, Walker, Jefferson)

20. Antisocial trends (Wiles)

Section Five: The Measure and Mismeasure of Global Problems

Editors comment: Sometimes it is important to measure the quantities of various social artefacts and phenomena. For example, indicators of this kind can give us useful information Third World underdevelopment and development. But in some cases the collection and manipulation of statistics regarding a phenomenon can distract us from its fundamentally more important qualitative features. In this section three areas of global significance help to illustrate these points.

21. The nuclear numbers game (Wiles, Lintott)

22. National comparisons of urban growth in the Third World (Simpson)

23. Statistics of mass hunger and the food/population equation (Abraham)

Section Six: Who Can Use Radical Statistics?

Editors comment: After a consumer view of Rad stats this section contains short articles of information for practical use.

24. A consumer's appraisal of Radical Statistics (Hopayan)

25. Racism: an information pack (Drew, Gurnah)

26. Statistics of the nuclear arms race: critical guide to sources (Rad Stats Nuc Dis Group)

27. Surveys for pressure groups (Evans, Drew)

28. Solidarity with Central America: building radical statistics in Nicaragua (Simpson)

Conclusion: Radical Statistics - Future Prospects (Ullman, Abraham)

On average, articles would be 4,000-5000 words in length

giving a total of around 100,000-110,000 words.

Obviously none of this can go forward without most or all of the people mentioned being willing to contribute. But many of the articles only require reworking previously written material. Eg. chs 2,3,4,7,9,12 (based on Reading between the numbers), 13,15,21,26,27.

My suggestion would be that we aim to get all the articles to the editors by October 1987 which means submitting the final draft of the book to Alison & Busby by Jan. 1988. The book would then come out later in 1988, a decade after Demystifying. If these are to be realistic deadlines to aim for then we need to meet to discuss the book soon. It would be a great help if all those interested could come to the Rad State AGM on Feb 28th and March 1st. Even if it could not be formally discussed at that meeting we could arrange a further meeting then. I emphasise again these are suggestions, not prescriptions, to set things in motion. What do you think?

John Abraham

Please send responses to: John Abraham

Mantell Building,

University of Sussex,

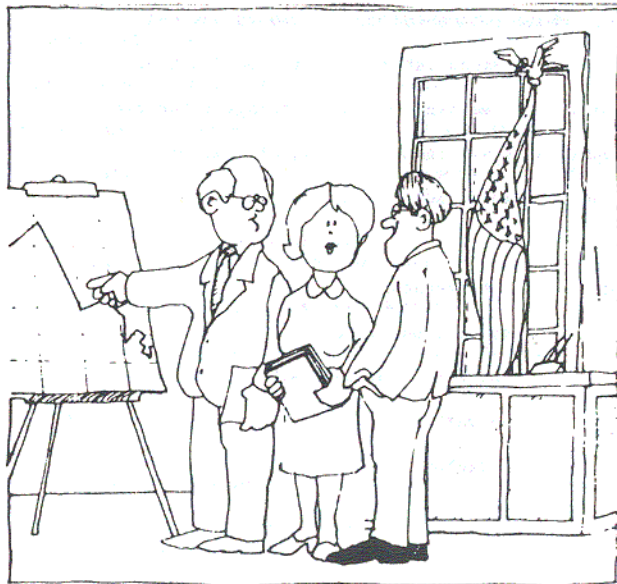
Falmer,

Brighton.

ALTERNATIVE SOCIAL TRENDS - "PROGRESS" REPORT

Tragedy, hopefully temporary, struck this project, just as it was coming to fruition, as a result of the bankruptcy of Pluto Press. We were contracted to submit the manuscript to Pluto Projects by 30th September, and by half way through September only the punctuation needed checking - when the receiver arrived at Pluto. Pluto Press continues, bought out by Alison and Busby, and Pluto Projects, now Vision Slide Ltd, has been bought by its own workers. Their need for quick money spinners means that our contract was cancelled.

The version of AST produced for Pluto consists mainly of data, with only a brief introduction and commentary. There are eight chapters: Health - Learning - Use of Time - Necessities - Physical Environment - How people relate to each other - Personal Safety and Security - The people vs the law. This was to a very large extent rewritten to Pluto's specification, and we also have large chunks of previous, longer versions. Since Pluto's demise we've been sending the manuscript to all likely publishers, and are hoping to get a favourable answer before all the data becomes out of date. More news later.....



"I know we have to collect statistics so we know where the economy is going. But do we have to publish them, so that everyone else knows too?"

(d'apres Statistics, Concepts and Controversies, by David S. Moore, which also provided the source of many of the other cartoons reprinted in John Bibby's, Quotes Damned Quotes and, 2nd edn., 1986.)

HUMAN RIGHTS QUARTERLY

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HEALTH INFORMATION NETWORK QUESTIONNAIRE

Please complete this questionnaire if you would like to join the network.
(Please make photocopies and pass on to others before filling in)

Name.....

Address.....

Work tel:..... Home tel:.....

Interests, experience.....

I would like to know about.....

Health Information Network

Please tick ONE of the following statements:

- I am willing for my name, address, tel. no and interests to be circulated to other people on the Health Information Network mailing list and would like to receive a copy myself.
- I may be willing to give help but don't want my name circulated to other people. I would like to be included on the mailing list and receive a copy of the list which is circulated.

Data Protection Act

This Act requires us to obtain your permission if we include your name on a computerised mailing list. If you DONT wish your name to be part of the computerised mailing list please indicate below:

I do not want to be included on your computerised mailing list.

Please return completed questionnaire to Jenny Head, Dept. of Community Medicine, University College and Middlesex School of Medicine, 66-72 Gower Street, London WC1E 6EA enclosing £1.00 (please make cheques out to "Radical Statistics Health Group") if you want to receive a copy of the network mailing list.

RADICAL STATISTICS CONFERENCE

***** Resources for Education: Programme *****

- 10am Welcome & coffee * enquiries: *
- * D.Saunders 01 806 2822 *
- 11am Introduction * J.Shapiro 01 348 3485 *
- ***** + **** *
- 11.15am Education and Statistics: Ian Plewis.....[A]
- Schools in Context: Cecilio Mar Molinero.....[C]
- 12.45pm Lunch, light refreshments available at King's Manor.
- 2.15pm University Cuts: Ian Diamond.....[E]
- Non Compulsory Education: Mao Qing.....[G]
- 3.45pm Tea
- 4.15pm Reports from sub-groups: Race,Nicaragua Statistics Fund

These sessions are held at Priory Street Community Centre, Priory Street, York. tel 0904 39968
Map reference PSCC, parking: Nunnery Lane.

***** Health Group: Programme *****

- 10am Welcome & coffee * enquiries: *
- * Alison Macfarlane *
- 11am Introduction * 0727 521111 *
- *****
- 11.15am Workshops B or D
- Inequalities in Health, Currie & chips for all?.....[B]
- New developments in NIS Data Collection[D]
- 12.45pm Lunch, refreshments available at King's Manor.
- 2.15pm Workshops E or H
- NIS resource allocation.....[E]
- Local health profiles.....[H]
- 3.45pm Tea
- 4.15pm Report back. Where do we go from here?

These sessions are held at King's Manor, St. Leonard's Place, York. tel 0904 430000
Map reference KM, parking: Marygate.

Registration Slip

Please complete CLEARLY and return to:

Dave Saunders, 38 Clevelys Road, London E5.

delete as applicable:

I would like to attend the Radical Statistics Conference.
I cannot attend the Conference but would like to subscribe to the Radical Statistics Newsletter (see foot of page)

Name.....

Address.....

Organisation.....

Telephone..... Work..... Home.....

The charge for the day is '5.00
(*1.00 unemployed, '3.00 discretionary charge for low priority)
Cheques should be made out to Radical Statistics.

If you would like to use creche facilities which could be provided at the Priory Street Community Centre, please indicate below and also contact Roy Carr-Hill 0904 430000.

Creche required...yes/no...for...children...aged.....

I am interested in attending sessions.....

I would like to present a discussion paper on.....

Further enquiries:

Janet Shapiro 01 348 3485 or 01 607 2789 ex 3476
Dave Saunders 01 806 2822 or 01 980 4611 ex 3921
Roy Carr-Hill 0904 430000 ex.5949 or 0904 643075

Radical Statistics Subscription fee '5 per year for individuals,
'7 for institutions, and '1.50 for the unwaged.

The Radical Statistics Newsletter is available by subscription. Current rates are £5 per year for individuals and £7 for institutions and £1.50 for the unwaged. The Newsletter is available from the Radical Statistics Group, c/o BSSRS, 25 Horsell Road, London, N5 1XL. Tel. 01-607-9615.

The Radical Statistics Newsletter is produced three times a year in May, July and December.

Editors: send the typed newsletter to one month before they want the newsletter to reach readers. Copy to be typed on A4 paper.

Contributors: send articles to the Editor by the copydate on A4 paper, typed, with good margins all round, in double or 1½ spacing (a change from the previous request for single spacing because of hi-tec reduction reproduction). All members of RSG are invited to contribute to the Newsletter - articles may vary from very short to quite long. Letters and reviews are also welcome.

Addresses: The Editor's address usually appears in the last Newsletter, but articles can also be sent to The Editor, RSG, c/o BSSRS, 25 Horsell Road, London N5 1XL.

NEXT EDITOR: % Rad Stats (address above)

COPY DATE: 31 March 1987

DATA PROTECTION ACT

In accordance with the DPA, any member is entitled to ask

- (a) for a printout of his/her personal details (name and address) as kept on the Radstats computer
- (b) that his/her personal details should not be so stored.

Anybody wishing to avail themselves of this right, please contact the Troika with requests in triplicate.