

Editorial

This issue includes four articles based around the theme of the Radical Statistics conference in March 2014 all discussing topics related to the questions – Is Britain Pulling apart? It concludes with two comment pieces, one a response to Gorad’s paper that appeared in Radstats 110 and one that focuses on the academic boycott of Israel.

We begin with a contribution by Daniel Silver. He discusses and criticises the use of ward-level statistics of poverty, and shows how these may be used to disguise issues related to poverty levels. His contribution draws on important evidence from a project by the Open Society Foundation, “Understanding Europe’s White Working Class Communities”, which carried out a comparative study across six European cities.

Nissa Finney then turns a critical eye to ethnic segregation. She begins by revealing that, contrary to much news commentary, there has been increased ethnic mixing, not segregation, over the last decade. Moreover, statements about ‘white flight’ from areas of ethnic diversity are not substantiated. Instead she identifies processes of demographic change (differential birth and death rates) and constraints on economic choice, including some ethnic groups’ reliance on the private rental market, as drivers of specific pockets of segregation.

Nigel de Noronha continues the focus on housing. He analyses social class polarisation in Britain with a particular emphasis on those living alone in the private rented sector. By analysing the patterns and trends in solo living in the private rented sector and how do they vary across different neighbourhoods he finds that there has been a polarisation in this area where those from higher classes often live in their own property, whilst younger people are more likely to live in private rented houses. Routine and unemployed classes on the other hand are more likely to live in social housing.

Roger Seifert’s article looks at the political and social background to calls for a ‘living wage’ as opposed to a ‘fair wage’. He highlights growing social inequality and the declining share of national wealth going to workers. Using a wealth of historic and contemporary data and analyses, he argues that contrary to previous political and

economic action around 'fair wages', the idea of a living wage represents a serious challenge to the confines of market-based thinking. This is because 'fairness', erroneously presupposes that a market system based on structurally unequal power can be fair, while demands for a living wage necessitates political action and state intervention.

In a critical comment Larry Brownstein responds to Stephen Gorard's suggested Trustworthiness scale outlined in the previous issue of Radical Statistics' journal. He argues in favour for the use of such a scale, however, sees potential issues and errors in Gorard's discussion, and in particular with the way in which Gorard approaches confidence intervals.

The final commentary is by Jonathan Rosenhead. He makes the case for statisticians, along with other academics, to participate in an academic boycott of Israeli institutions. Directly addressing arguments about exceptionalism and academic freedom, he highlights the institutional complicity of Israeli universities in systematic policies of 'politicide'.

Our next issue of Radical Statistics will include prize-winners from the 2014 Radical Statistics Essay Competition. If you have an article or short comment piece that you think would be suitable for a future issue of Radical Statistics or ideas about a themed set of articles please get in touch with us.

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