

Editorial

Issue 112 of *Radical Statistics* includes the winner and runner-up in the 2014 *Radical Statistics* essay competition (open entry) and features a host of articles on topics as diverse as a 19th century radical German demographer, deprivation in a former mining area in Yorkshire and official statistics in Norway. As such it nicely highlights the range of topics that can be subjected to a radical statistics perspective!

The essay by the first prize winner, Elisabeth Garratt, provides an excellent overview of the rise in foodbanks in the UK. This is an area that has received growing policy and media attention. This essay highlights that increased use of food aid is cannot be explained by its growing acceptability or people taking advantage of charity, but rather is associated with growing food insecurity. The essay also usefully outlines what different types of data can, and cannot, tell us about food insecurity. The second placed essay, by Dr Pauline McGovern, provides a highly engaging take on the use of path analysis. In her essay she makes use of creative and engaging metaphors and research on the effect of former occupation on the health of retired people. The essay is an excellent example of how we can present statistics in an immediate and creative way. Look out for the two student competition winning essays, which will be featured in the next issue of *Radical Statistics*.

The issue continues with two articles that, in different ways, examine area-level statistics. The first, by Sinead D'Silva and Paul Norman, explores the utility of administrative data in producing a simple scale of 'social stress' at the area level. Focusing on areas in Doncaster that have suffered coal mine closure, and consequent job loss and deprivation, they show that a relatively simple scale, constructed from publically available area-level data, provides a surprisingly good proxy for more complex Indices of Multiple Deprivation. The second article, by Mark A Green and Mark Strong, focuses on health-related quality of life (HRQoL). They note that it can be difficult to illustrate the impact of neighbourhood deprivation on HRQoL. As such they propose a novel solution: using BMI (a summary of weight that is socially meaningful) when explaining epidemiological effects to lay audiences. For instance, enabling us to see the approximate equivalence, in terms of HRQoL, of individual morbid obesity and living in a deprived neighbourhood.

The article by Asle Rolland engages with an important debate regarding the independence of official statistics. The article highlights crucial dimensions related to independence, and the desirability and potential limitations of independence, drawing on empirical examples and references to common practice, regulations as well as underlying philosophical principles.

Continuing the focus on official statistics, albeit in this instance, their unavailability, Frank and Sarah Houghton, explore the health situation in Ireland, arguing that it is highly correlated with poverty, but that it is difficult to show this with any precision due to insufficient information, the tendency of the Irish government to restrict access to what information exists and diminishing regulation and data oversight. They suggest that there is no clear and transparent health funding model and the Irish health care delivery system is in a dire state, especially for the impoverished.

The final article is a biography of radical statistician Robert René Kuczynski (1876-1947). Kuczynski was a German economist, demographer and one of the founders of modern German vital statistics. As an urban statistician he investigated the housing conditions of the working population. He also was a proponent of democracy in Weimar Germany, but in 1933 he had to leave Germany and settled in England where he lectured in demography at the LSE, and later became a demographic adviser to the Colonial Office.

Issue 112 returns to contemporary issues to conclude with two brief comments by Christina Beatty and Alison Macfarlane. These highlight the British government's increasing insistence that academic partners destroy data within an (overly) restrictive timescale.

Finally, a reminder that Radical Statistics welcomes your contributions. If you have either a full-length article or a brief comment that you would like to contribute, or if you are interested in reviewing a book that you believe is of potential interest to Radical Statistics' readers, please get in touch with us at the email below. Further information about how to submit is also available at: www.radstats.org.uk/journal

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