

ETHNIC DIVERSITY IN UK SOCIAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH:

A review and consultation exercise
exploring the feasibility and desirability
of ethical and scientific guidance

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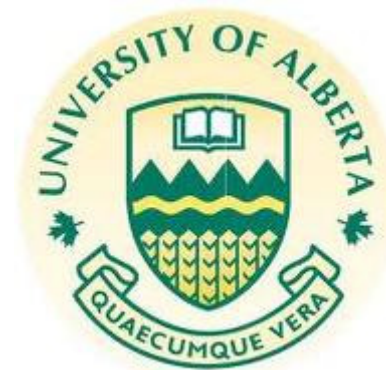
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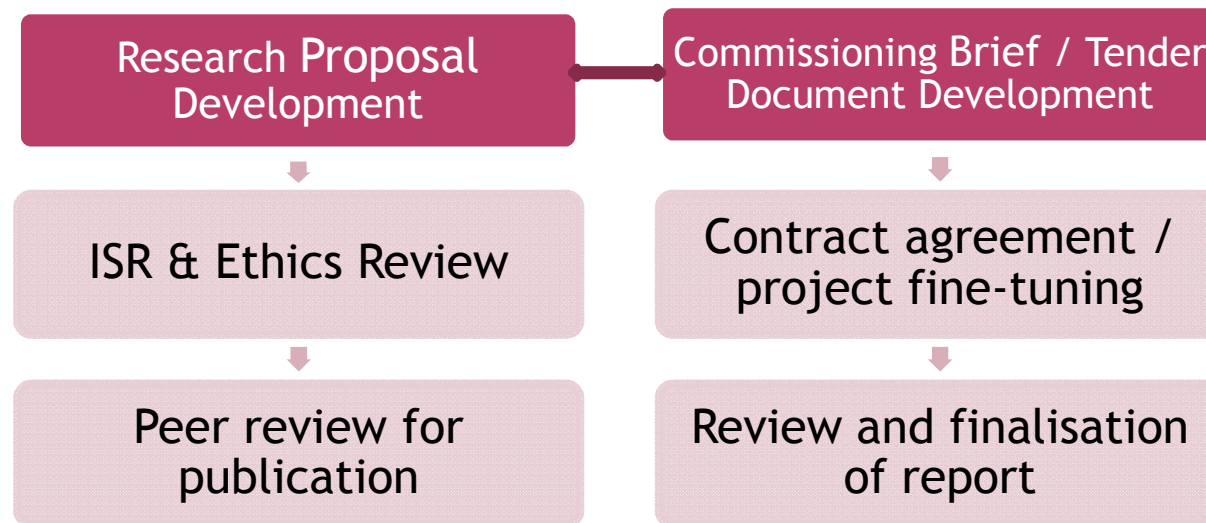


BACKGROUND - 1

- ◉ Expectations of evidence-based social policy and.
- ◉ RR(A)A - significant duties on public bodies. Recognition of need for better data and increased understanding.
- ◉ But, much funded social research focuses predominantly on majority White British and fails to consider race/ethnicity.
- ◉ Where research does engage with ethnicity - varied approaches and practices; complex and contentious ethical and scientific issues arise. Danger that research does more harm than good.
- ◉ Social researchers increasingly expected to consider the importance of attention to race/ethnicity, but little guidance and poor quality assurance.

BACKGROUND - 2

Critical junctures in the research cycle:



Is it feasible and desirable to introduce guidance at these points? Would such guidance have a positive impact?

PROJECT COMPONENTS

Review work & Consultation



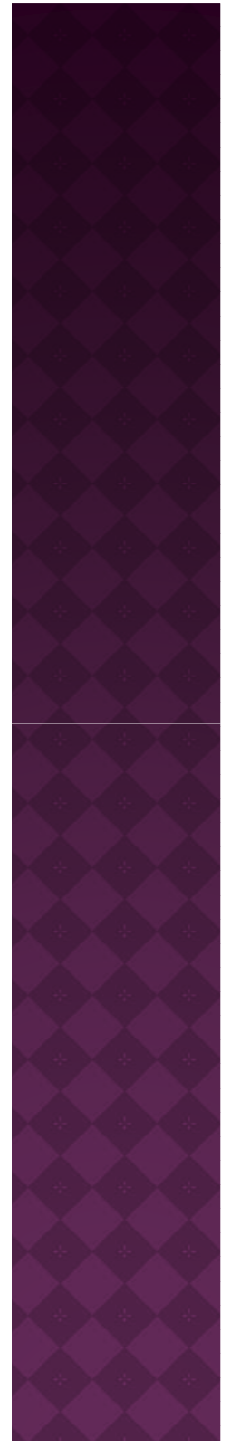
Development of guidance for different stages



Piloting of guidance



Further refinement & other outputs



PROJECT COMPONENTS

Review work & Consultation



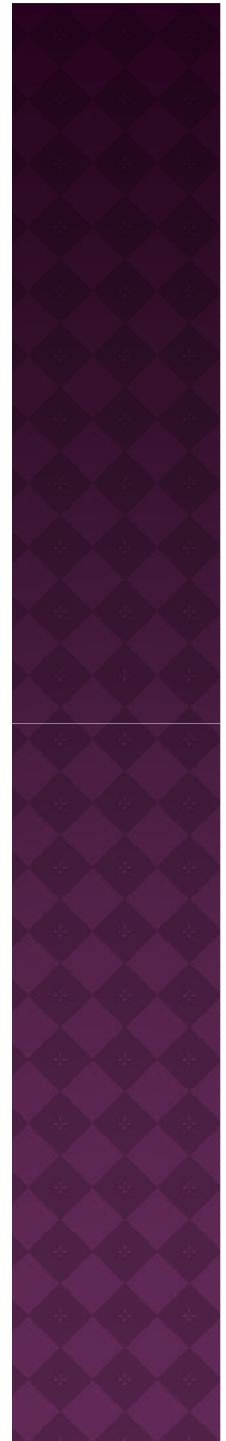
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REVIEW & CONSULTATION

1. Published literature on when and how to include attention to racial/ethnic diversity within 'social policy-relevant' research.
2. Consultation with social researchers in government departments and private research agencies.
3. Ethics committees and Independent Scientific Review Boards.
4. Development Workshops with researchers and research commissioners

REVIEW & CONSULTATION

5. Review of the guidance on scientific ethics and practice provided by 32 Learned Societies listed as members of the UK Academy of Social Sciences.

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Academy of Social Sciences. The header includes the logo and the text "ACADEMY of Social Sciences". Below the header, there is a navigation menu with links for "home", "about us", "activities", "publications", "news", "links", "members' area", "press area", and "contact us". The main content area features a large image of a group of people and text stating: "The Academy is the voice of the social sciences in the United Kingdom". Below this, there is a section titled "Forthcoming Events and News Headlines" with a sub-heading "Annual Debate: 'Prospects for the New US Administration'". At the bottom, there is contact information: "On: Monday 9 March 2009 18.30 - 20.00 at the British Library Conference Centre, Euston Road, London NW1 2DB".

The image shows the cover of a document titled "Code of Ethics and Conduct" published in March 2006. The cover is white with a purple band at the bottom. The logo of The British Psychological Society is in the top right corner.

The screenshot shows the homepage of the British Educational Research Association (BERA). The header includes the logo and the text "bera British Educational Research Association". Below the header, there is a navigation menu with links for "Home", "Contact", "Education Jobs", "Join BERA", "Members Sign-In", and "Shop". The main content area features a large image of a group of people and text stating: "Data collection: The practical aspects". Below this, there is a list of contents: "practising", "negotiating access", "gaining confidence of interviewees", "recording/note taking", "asking difficult questions", "transcription", "verification with interviewees", "reflective fieldwork/emerging concepts and themes", and "what to do if things don't go to plan".

PROJECT COMPONENTS

Review work & Consultation



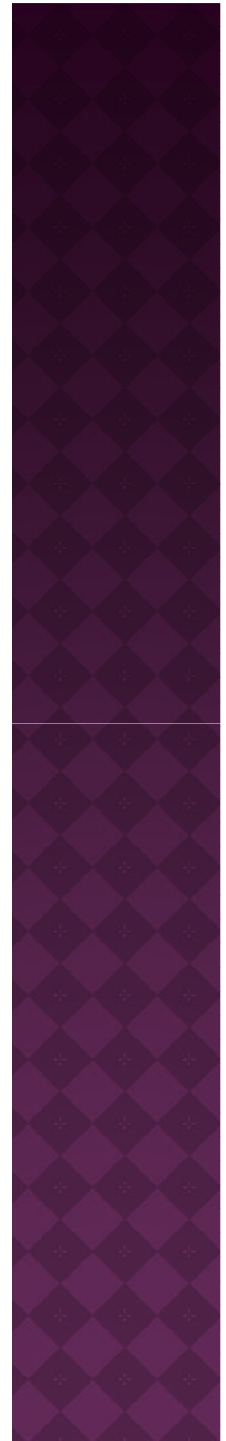
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GUIDANCE DEVELOPMENT

- **5 Journals:** Ethnicity & Health; Diversity in Health & Care; Anthropology in Action; Journal of Social Policy; Social Policy and Society.
 - ▶ one page guidance 'checklists' designed for use by authors and reviewers as a prompt to consider particular issues.
- **JRF internal review process**
 - ▶ 1,700 word document for use by researchers (supplement to existing guidance)
 - ▶ reviewed and finalised with JRF staff
 - ▶ made accessible to proposers responding to 2 calls (plus 2 calls identified as 'controls')

PROJECT COMPONENTS

Review work & Consultation



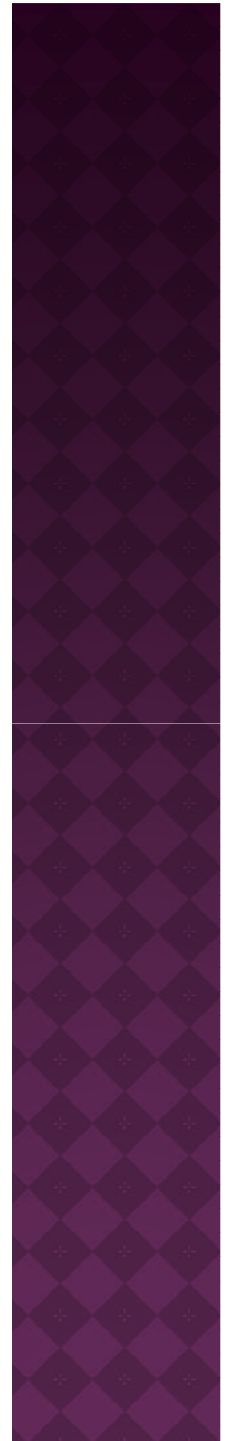
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PILOTING

1. Journals

- ▶ long process of negotiation
- ▶ not compulsory for authors or reviewers
- ▶ authors and reviewers invited to give feedback via online questionnaire
- ▶ very varied response levels

2. JRF internal system

- ▶ where proposers agreed, their proposals were reviewed by research team using a standard framework
- ▶ proposers also invited to give feedback by online questionnaire
- ▶ Around 50 responses to online questionnaire regarding how relevant/useful

FINDINGS - 1

GUIDANCE CONTENT?

RESPONSIBILITIES AND ETHICS

- ⦿ Relationships with commissioners and sponsors
- ⦿ Responsibilities to wider society
- ⦿ Responsibilities to minority groups and communities
- ⦿ Where does responsibility lie for ethical and scientific rigour in this area?

OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS - 1

- ◉ **Responsibilities to minority 'groups' and 'communities'**
 - ▶ avoidance of group harm
 - ▶ partnership working, cultural congruence, empowerment
 - ▶ right to inclusion in research endeavour
 - ▶ When, why and how should studies address ethnicity
 - when evaluating policies or interventions
 - when other axes of social hierarchy seem important
- ◉ **Where does responsibility lie for ethical and scientific rigour in this area?**
 - ▶ In 'contract research', researchers often take cue from commissioners regarding whether/how to address ethnicity.
 - ▶ Heavy reliance on internal peer review and researcher experience rather than codes or guidance documents.
 - ▶ Existing guidance pays little explicit attention to this.

OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS - 1

- ◉ **Relationships with commissioners and sponsors**
 - ▶ scrutinise research briefs
 - ▶ recognise politicised and controversial nature
 - ▶ seek to avoid short-term policy imperatives

- ◉ **Responsibilities to wider society**
 - ▶ reflect on 'topics'/'problems' considered worth researching
 - ▶ consider whether adequate attention is given to:
 - the concerns of minority ethnic individuals & 'groups'
 - structures and processes of racial exclusion
 - White ethnicities
 - relations between 'groups' and 'communities'

FINDINGS - 1

GUIDANCE CONTENT?

THEORISING ETHNICITY

- Common theme in published literature, principles advocated include:
 - ▶ explicate conceptual basis for exploring race/ethnicity
 - ▶ careful and consistent use of terms
 - ▶ recognise historical specificities
 - ▶ recognise and counter essentialist & culturalist tendencies
 - ▶ give adequate attention to revealing and understanding racism / racial exclusion
 - ▶ consider responsibility to challenge narrow and stigmatising constructions of racial/ethnic identities
- But, this was not an area particularly emphasised by applied researchers in our consultation.

FINDINGS - 1

GUIDANCE CONTENT?

DESIGN AND CONDUCT OF STUDIES.

Key areas identified:

- ◉ *Categorisation and labelling*
- ◉ *Sampling and recruitment*
- ◉ *Data generation and measurement tools*
- ◉ *Working across languages*
- ◉ *Care of study participants*
- ◉ *Analyses and interpretation: comparisons and causation*
- ◉ *Representation and dissemination of findings*

FINDINGS - 2

FEASIBILITY OF GUIDANCE

- ◉ Difficulty in producing succinct documents that (i) cover all the issues, (ii) accommodate differing disciplinary perspectives, (iii) are relevant to differing research contexts (e.g. international journals).
- ◉ Obstacles to implementation - concerns regarding (i) overburdening reviewers throughout the research cycle; (ii) privileging ethnicity.
- ◉ Impact? - JRF internal experience
 - ▶ 34/40 proposers who had consulted the guidance felt that the issues covered were relevant to their proposal
 - ▶ 24/40 said that they felt the guidance could enhance the quality of proposals submitted to JRF
 - ▶ But, review of proposals - uncertain impact on quality

FINDINGS - 3

FORM OF GUIDANCE

- ◉ Varied degrees of confidence - some too confident?
- ◉ Some significant capacity development needs.
- ◉ Summaries /'check-lists' may not shift practice.
- ◉ Desire for detailed guidance; key challenges:
 - increasing diversity
 - multiple axes of diversity in addition to ethnicity
 - categories & labelling
 - sampling
 - translation
 - working with community researchers and interpreters
 - research with 'invisible minorities' and new immigrants
 - cross-cultural researcher competence

FINDINGS - 4

INNOVATION NEEDS

- ⦿ Criteria for and against addressing ethnicity.
- ⦿ Synthesis and transferability of findings across contexts.
- ⦿ Sampling schemes.
- ⦿ Applied researching without ethnic categories.
- ⦿ Processes of racial discrimination and exclusion.
- ⦿ New migrant groups and 'invisible' minorities.
- ⦿ Multiple axes of difference and inequality.

CHALLENGES

- ◉ Available literature does not adequately guide/support social researchers:
 - ▶ more about pitfalls than clear examples of good practice
 - ▶ more about conceptual basis than how to operationalise
 - ▶ focus on fluidity and contingency of ethnic identity does not necessarily sit easily with stark inequalities that social researchers tasked with understanding
- ◉ Attention to ethnicity is not mainstreamed
 - ▶ not flagged up in LS documents,
 - ▶ ethics/ISR boards do not demand attention
 - ▶ little to convince new researchers to consider
 - ▶ decline in focus on racism

CHALLENGES

- Some important areas of disagreement
 - ▶ What is ethnicity? Concepts and theories.
 - ▶ Fixing ethnic categories versus exploring processes of ethnic identification, inclusion and exclusion?
 - ▶ What role should values play in research?
 - ▶ Research for knowledge generation versus research for social change?
- Barriers to ensuring consistent standards across the research cycle
 - ▶ Guiding principles insufficient to improve practice
 - ▶ Limited will to take responsibility for quality
 - ▶ Skills/experience gaps of research commissioners and reviewers

MOVING FORWARD

- ◉ How can we recognise differing contexts and disciplinary perspectives but at the same time encourage better practice?
- ◉ Who should take responsibility? How can we ensure the issues are taken seriously?
- ◉ How can we convince people that:
 - i) ethnicity remains a powerful determinant of social disadvantage and must be at the top of the research agenda
 - ii) though many of the conceptual and methodological issues arising apply to social research generally, the potential for harm is far greater when our focus is on ethnicity

MOVING FORWARD

- ◉ Growing interest in this area:

Department of Health 'Values and principles in researching ethnicity and health'

<http://www.etn.leeds.ac.uk/resources.htm>

ESRC Innovation Network (Angela Dale, University of Manchester):

<http://www.methods.manchester.ac.uk/events/ethnicityinnovation/index.shtml>

Our project website:

<http://research.shu.ac.uk/ethics-ethnicity/>