

4th - 5th December: Goodenough College: Interdisciplinarity

Title: Ethnic diversity in UK social science and public policy research

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Workshop Scenarios

Scenario One

You work for a social policy research centre. You are approached by a health and social care consortium that includes local care trusts and social service organisations in a Northern city that has a higher than average black and ethnic minority (BME) population. However, this population is underrepresented in the take up of local voluntary services such as stop-smoking clinics, sport and leisure services, and pre-natal classes. They give you the brief of finding out what are the barriers to take up of such services by the BME population?

Scenario Two

You work for a social policy research centre. A small group of specialist TB healthcare professionals have approached you to partner them in a bid for research funding. They have produced a draft proposal following discussions with the leaders of a small community-based organisation. The research project is aimed at *'understanding why, despite free treatment being available, there remain significant barriers to the detection, treatment and prevention of TB among the Somali community in Sheffield'*. In the draft proposal, the healthcare professionals have cited literature that documents *'the extreme stigma and social isolation associated with TB which acts as a powerful deterrent to sufferers acknowledging illness'*, and have also identified *'cultural factors'* as an important area for investigation in the study. In particular, the study will aim to understand why TB is often diagnosed very late among Somalis and also why compliance with treatment regimes is poor among this group.

Scenario Three

You work for a social policy research centre. You have been contacted by a senior official at a local Primary Care Trust to give technical assistance to the design, implementation and analysis of a population-based survey. Your brief describes the *'worryingly high levels of obesity and inactivity'* among local South Asians and identifies *'the need for a greater understanding of the cultural factors that prevent healthier life-styles among this section of the population'*. The overall objective of the survey is *'to suggest ways in which South Asians can be encouraged to make better use of local sports and leisure facilities'*. The budget for the

survey is up to £30,000. The PCT is also prepared to commit the time of several experienced staff including a statistician, a database manager and an Urdu-speaking research assistant.

Scenario Four

You work for a social policy research centre. The governing committee of a community-based health and social development organisation has written to you with a request for assistance in developing a proposal to gain funding for a research study. In their letter, the committee identify the objective of the study as *'to show that Pakistani men are being discriminated against by local GPs in their attempts to gain sickness certification'*. The organisation is linked to a local mosque, has no full-time funded members of staff, and no staff with previous experience of conducting research. However, the committee has expressed the desire to be active partners in the research project and is confident that their community standing will ensure the willing participation of large numbers of local men in the study.

Instructions to small groups

Choose someone to take notes and report back to the main group at the end of the session.

1. Take five minutes to carefully read over your scenario. The scenarios are short but contain various significant pieces of information and are intended to be provocative.
2. Consider each of the following questions in turn. Allow everyone in the group time to read and think alone before discussing each question as a group. Make sure that the note-taker jots down the important points you raise.

Questions/issues to consider as a group

What assumptions do you detect in this remit that you would like to challenge, or at least investigate further?

What positive indications do you see in this remit that you would like to build on?

Have the ways in which ethnicity may be relevant to the topic been clearly thought through?

If not, have any factors / pathways of influence been identified at all?

What other potential factors / pathways of influence have been overlooked?

Have clear research objectives been identified?

If so, are they realistic? Are there ways in which you would like them to be developed or modified? Why?

If not, what research objectives would be appropriate?

Has a methodological strategy been identified?

If so, is it appropriate?

If not, what type of approach would you suggest? Why?

What key methodological questions/issues would need to be resolved?

What degree of community/user engagement do you think would be necessary to carry out this project successfully?

What model of engagement would you suggest?

What steps would you undertake in order to develop this community/user engagement?

What problems or issues do you foresee?

What types of skills, knowledge and attributes would you like to see in your research team in order to complete this project successfully?

3. Look over the notes that have been recorded and help the note-taker to prepare to present your group's ideas to the bigger group.