Social research for a multiethnic population: Do the ethical and scientific guidelines provided by Learned Societies affiliated to the UK Academy of Social Sciences address this challenge?

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Background

The UK is a multi-ethnic society and the 'ethnic diversity'[1] of the UK population is likely to increase in future years (Nazroo, 2006; Vertovec, 2007). Ethnicity is one of the major social divisions in modern societies (Anthias, 2001) and ethnic identities have important implications for people's lives. Notwithstanding significant heterogeneity, minority ethnic groups fare worse than the majority White-British population across a wide range of welfare indicators (Modood et al. 1997; Mason, 2003; Platt, 2007). Furthermore, evidence suggests that social policy and practice interventions can have differential effects by ethnicity (Oakley, 2006) and frequently fail to meet the needs of minority ethnic populations (see for example Craig et al.'s (2007) evaluation of the national SureStart programme for children under four and their families, Gillborn's (2005) commentary on recent educational policy and Atkin and Chattoo (2007) on social services).

Social scientists, via the generation and dissemination of research evidence, play an important role in shaping societal attitudes and behaviours, raising issues for public debate, and informing the formulation of social policy and practice. As such, social science research has the potential to ameliorate, or indeed perpetuate, poor welfare outcomes for minority ethnic individuals and groups (Garland et al., 2005), regardless of the explicit intentions of social scientists themselves.

The need for a research evidence base that reflects the ethnic diversity of the UK population is formally acknowledged in the Department of Health's Research Governance Framework for health and social care (DH, 2005)[2]:

'Research, and those pursuing it, should respect the diversity of human society and conditions and the multi-cultural nature of society, Whenever relevant, it should take

account of age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, race, culture and religion in its design,
undertaking and reporting. The body of research evidence available to policy makers should
reflect the diversity of the population' (Para 2.2.7)

Other government Departments have not developed similarly explicit general principles, but show increasing commitment to strengthening the evidence base relating to minority ethnicities, for instance via specific programmes of research (e.g. Department for Work and Pensions, no date) and initiatives to ensure 'ethnic monitoring' (e.g. Department for Education and Skills, 2002).

Increased recognition of the importance of generating evidence that reflects ethnic diversity is prompted by two factors. First, the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 places legal duties upon UK public authorities to eliminate discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity (RR(A)A, 2000). Second, there is now widespread expectation that social policy and practice developments will be evidence-based (Davies, et al. 2000; Thomas and Pring, 2004; Defra, 2006; Davies, 2004). It is therefore increasingly acknowledged that meeting the RR(A)A duties requires a body of evidence that is relevant to the multi-ethnic population. In addition to public bodies, some professional organisations, notably those concerned with biomedical research such as the Royal College of Psychiatrists (2002), as well as voluntary funders of social science research, including the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF, no date), express their commitment to consider ethnic diversity within the work they support.

As Oakley (2006) argues, attention to ethnic diversity in social research matters both on the grounds of science and ethics. The exclusion of minority ethnicities limits the generalisability or external validity of findings since samples are not representative of the target populations to which they are intended to apply, and the *possibility* of discovering differential experiences and outcomes by ethnicity is precluded.[3] From an ethical perspective, it can be argued that individuals have an equal right to participate in research that may inform public policy, and to shape research endeavours more generally (Garland et al. 2005; Oakley, 2006).

However, despite this increased awareness, much funded UK social policy relevant research focuses on the majority 'White-British' and fails to consider ethnicity as a variable of analysis. Oakley (2006) describes in detail the processes that act to exclude minority ethnic people from health intervention evaluation, and cites evidence of similar problems across a range of social policy domains.

Further, describing and understanding ethnic diversity, and associated disadvantage, is far from straightforward. In practice, the ethical and scientific arguments around whether and how to incorporate ethnicity into policy-relevant social research are complex and contentious.

Associated variously with a diverse set of elements relating to family heritage, aspects of physical appearance, religion, language, cultural practices and shared history, ethnic 'groups' are increasingly recognised as being difficult to delineate, fluid and often multiple, and having neither fixed boundaries nor clearly identifiable membership characteristics (Aspinall, 1997; Bradby, 2003; Karlsen and Nazroo, 2006). Untheorized or insensitive inclusion of data on ethnic groups can lead to negative consequences including: the creation/perpetuation of damaging stereotypes; exaggeration of differences between 'groups'; and the production of culturalist explanations that ignore socioeconomic and political factors (Hall 1997; Sinha et al.,2007). In addition, there are important scientific issues to be addressed in relation to: the setting of research priorities and the identification of research questions; sampling/recruitment; measurement/operationalisation; conducting fieldwork; analysis; as well as reporting and representing the findings of research. Furthermore, significant practical and cost issues may also arise.

In the absence of explicit legal requirements for social policy-relevant research to reflect and be relevant to the UK's multiethnic population[4], decisions as to whether, and how, research pays attention to ethnic diversity lie predominantly with individual researchers, the commissioners and funders of research. It is therefore of interest to explore whether UK social scientists have begun to engage with and tackle these complex issues. To what extent do social scientists have access to advice and direction on when and how they should

incorporate attention to ethnic diversity within their research work? The present paper begins to address this important area.

The specific aim of the current investigation was to examine the extent to which ethnic diversity is explicitly or implicitly considered within the research ethics and scientific standard guidance provided by UK social science Learned Societies to their members. A supplementary aim was to identify factors that might influence Learned Societies and their members' more active consideration of when and how to incorporate attention to ethnic diversity within their research.

We recognise that in practice researchers draw on many sources to guide their work and that the extent of influence of Societal guidance will vary between Learned Societies. Nevertheless, guidance documents do represent public statements on the part of Learned Societies and as such provide a useful window onto the current state of articulated principles and good practice in relation to conducting social research.

This investigation forms part of a larger project funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. A series of review and consultation exercises are being used to consolidate expert opinion and explore the feasibility and desirability of guidance to support commissioners of research, investigators, applicants and peer reviewers consider when and how ethnic diversity should be included in social policy-relevant research projects. Further details of the project can be found at http://research.shu.ac.uk/ethics-ethnicity/index.html .

Methods

We surveyed the 32[5] Learned Societies listed as members of the UK Academy of Social Sciences (AcSS)[6] in April 2008 (http://www.acss.org.uk/about6.htm) to explore the guidance provided to members on research ethics, scientific standards and ethnic diversity. Our approach involved examining each Society's website to collect background information on the Society's age, size and key foci, and to identify any documents or activities of relevance to research ethics, scientific standards and/or ethnic diversity. Every page of each Society's website was subjected to hand- and text-searching, the latter using a range of terms related to research ethics and scientific standards (ethic*, guid*, code, conduct) as

well as terms associated with ethnic diversity (ethnic*, divers*, equal*, cultur*, relig*, rac*). Requests for relevant information that was not available online were also emailed to each Society's Chair and/or key administrator.

The idiosyncratic layout of the websites, and the various ways in which policy documents were titled, meant that no one approach could be blindly applied to all Societies and this stage of the search was conducted carefully to avoid overlooking relevant material.

In all cases we were either able to access relevant documents (some of which were in development at the time of the study), or else confirm the absence of any such relevant documentation for the Society in question.

Further, since our initial website reviews suggested a large number of documents other than explicit codes of conduct or guidance on ethical and/or scientific standards that were relevant to our focus, we revisited the LS websites and accessed any supplementary documents that engaged with issues of ethics, scientific standards and/or ethnic diversity in research.

We cannot be certain that this search strategy was totally exhaustive and it did result in larger numbers of documents for some Societies than others since some had posted a significant volume of relevant commentary and related documents on their websites. Nevertheless, we are confident that we managed to access all relevant Society policy documents that explicitly offer guidance to researchers on research ethics and/or scientific standards and that would be readily accessible to Society members.

Documents and other written material identified from online searches and email correspondence were subjected to interpretive documentary analysis, as described by Abbott et al. (2004). This analytical approach helped to identify different layers of explicit and implicit meaning, and was sensitive to both 'silent' and 'unspoken' issues – those that were not mentioned and those that were implicit/integral to each LS's ideology and policy concerns. In practice this involved an initial careful reading of the material to generate preliminary, exploratory themes. These were then used to develop a draft coding template

containing distinct 'arenas' of interest, each with a number of related sub-sections. The coding template was subsequently piloted on a small sub-sample of the material before being finalised and transferred onto an Excel spreadsheet for ease of data organisation. The coding template was then used to guide the systematic extraction and analysis of data from each of the documents in turn so that excerpts from the documents, interpretive commentary and contextual information were entered into the relevant sections of the template for each LS.

Our intention here was to identify factors that appear to shape LS's activities in relation to ethical and scientific standards and their application to the study of ethnic diversity, and that might need to be taken into consideration in any initiatives to support Societies, and the social science research community more generally, in this regard.

Ethical clearance was provided by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health and Wellbeing, Sheffield Hallam University.

Findings

The Societies that formed the basis for this review are extremely diverse, varying in size, from less than a hundred (the Society for the Study of Organisation in Healthcare, SHOC) to around 45,000 members (the British Psychological Association, BPS) and age, from the mature Royal Geographical Society (RGS) established in 1830 to much younger organisations set up in the 1990s and 2000s (e.g. the UK Evaluation Society and the Media, Communications and Cultural Studies Association, MeCCSA). Membership characteristics are also diverse and the Societies vary in terms of whether or not they have a regulatory role in relation to the conduct of their members (or certain categories of member). Nevertheless, almost all the Societies promote research activity and many engage in the commissioning and funding of research as well as the dissemination of research findings via conferences, workshops and associated journals.

The availability of guidance on research ethics and scientific standards

Table 1 lists the material obtained for each of the 32 Societies. This included: codes of ethical or professional conduct; recommendations for good professional practice; codes,

guidelines or principles of research ethics; Society constitutions; statements from Society Chairs or Chairs of ethics committees; as well as discussion papers and commentaries on research ethics or scientific standards.

Less than half of the Societies (n=13; 41%) had documents that explicitly addressed research ethics and/or scientific standards, while four others (13%) had documents relating to professional conduct that included some mention of research standards. The remaining Societies (n=15; 47%) did not have any documentation providing guidance to their members on these issues.

In response to emails sent to Society Chairs and/or administrators, a range of explanations were offered for the absence of Society-specific guidance, including: the small size of the Society meant there was no capacity to develop such guidance; the multidisciplinary nature of the Society made it difficult to produce guidance suitable for all; the Society saw no need to produce such guidance because it did not award research funding; the Society was configured as a forum for debate rather than a regulatory body; and it was felt that producing such guidance might be viewed as calling into question the integrity of individual Society members. Five of these Societies said that they expected their members to follow the ethical guidelines and professional standards of their host institutions and some made this explicit in relevant materials. Other Societies referred their members to guidance produced by other bodies, such as the Social Research Association (SRA) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). However, even among Societies that lacked guidance documents, there was evidence that research ethics and scientific standards were prominent issues for discussion. This was evident in the recent activities of many Societies which included related meetings, workshops and training events for students, as well as commentaries on recent developments in research ethics.

Key principles of available guidance

Flexible versus prescriptive guidance

A common theme in relevant Society activities, as well as in several of the guidance documents reviewed, was the desirability of ethical guidance offering flexible prompts to

discussion and debate rather than prescriptive codes to be followed without reflection. As such, there was a common desire to avoid an 'audit culture' and 'compliance mentality' whilst encouraging professional integrity, responsibility and dialogue. These concerns were particularly well-articulated in documents from the Social Work Education Committee (SWEC; Butler, 2002), the Social Research Association (SRA, 2003), the British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL, 2006) and the Association of Social Anthropologists (ASA, 1999), but they were echoed in several of the other Societies' documents, for example:

'The intention has been to facilitate discussion about ethics rather than draw up legislation' (BAAL, 2006, p16)

'These [guidelines] too are not cut in stone' (BERA, 2004, p2) [they are] *'a basis for deliberation and perhaps resolution or compromise'* (p4)

Related to the perceived desirability of flexible guidance was a concern that overly prescriptive guidance might stifle research, particularly innovative methodological approaches.

Generic versus specific guidance
There was also a commonly felt tension between generic versus discipline-specific ethical standards. For instance, a representative of the Media, Communications and Cultural Studies Association (MeCCSA) felt that there was currently *'genuine debate about whether our community is best served by the more generic statements which exist or whether we need some kind of statement to supplement them'* (MeCCSA, personal communication). Indeed, members of the ASA argue that ethics should be firmly grounded within the values and methods base of a single discipline (Butler, 2002), and express concern that generic ethical codes can become *'legalistic, adjudicative and restrictive'* (Harper and Corsin Jimenez, 2005).

The perceived inapplicability of research standards across disciplinary arenas was particularly evident in comments about the inappropriate application of biomedical research standards to social science research. This was true even among those Societies

with close links to the UK Department of Health (DH). For instance, the British Psychological Society's (BPS) document dealing with good practice for research within the UK National Health Service (NHS) felt that research ethics approval procedures were: unduly time-consuming; reflected a poor understanding of psychological research; and produced delays in research and associated training (BPS, 2005).

Responsibilities to different constituencies

A further 'key principle' evident in much of the available guidance reviewed, was a recognition that research often involves conflict between competing ethical and scientific principles. As such, these documents felt that researchers must be aware of, and carefully negotiate, their obligations to a range of different constituencies, including: the sponsors and commissioners of research; academic and professional colleagues; research participants; and wider society (e.g. ASA, 1999, p1; BAAL, 2006, p2; British Sociological Association [BSA], 2002, p1).

Research ethics and scientific standards with a bearing on ethnic diversity

Overall, the documents reviewed contained little explicit reference to ethnic diversity (or related concepts such as 'race', culture and religion) in social science research, either from a research ethics or scientific standards point of view. However, our documentary analysis did identify various issues and considerations raised in the documents that have a bearing on whether and how social scientists should incorporate attention to such diversity within their research. We organise these findings below as they relate to the four constituencies identified above. We then highlight a number of general points that related to scientific standards more broadly.

Responsibilities to sponsors and commissioners

The sponsors and commissioners of research clearly have a powerful role in shaping the type of research that is undertaken by UK social scientists. Government departments in particular commission large volumes of social research that has the potential to significantly influence policy and practice. Several of the Society documents reviewed remind researchers of their obligations towards their sponsors/commissioners but also alert their

readers to the need to balance these obligations against those towards other interest groups.

[Anthropologists] 'should attempt to ensure that sponsors, funders and employers appreciate the obligations that they have not only to them, but also to research participants and to professional colleagues' (ASA, 1999, p5)

Importantly, several documents reminded researchers of the need to ensure that sponsors/commissioners are aware of the ethical and professional standards that researchers are required to maintain, and the importance of not assenting to conditions that jeopardise these principles.

'Researchers must avoid agreeing to any sponsor's conditions that could lead to serious contravention of any aspect of these guidelines or that undermine the integrity of the research' (BERA, 2004, p10).

Though none of the statements made explicit reference to issues of ethnic diversity, some can be seen to have relevance to this focus. The ASA (1999, p2) and the BAAL (2006, p4) caution researchers against pursuing contract research where the interests of the participants cannot be fully guaranteed. Dominelli and Holloway (2008) suggest that social work researchers, in their efforts to steer a course between competing interests of multiple stakeholders, should employ the principle of *'seeing one's primary accountability as being to the least powerful stakeholder.. This principle centres on the interests of those with the least voice'* (p10). The BSA (2004) alerts researchers to the fact that certain funding sources may be contentious in particular political, social or cultural contexts. The BSA (2004), the BAAL (2006), the British Society of Criminology, the BSC (BSC, 2006) and the Social Policy Association (SPA, 2008) all highlight the importance of research being adequately funded, though the documents do not specifically highlight any cost implications of ensuring inclusion of minority populations (such as working across languages). The Social Services Research Group (SSRG,1997) does, however, make clear reference to the need to be aware of, and to plan for the budgetary implications of ensuring equal opportunities guidelines are adhered to in publicity and dissemination of research findings.

Responsibilities to colleagues and the profession

Many of the Society documents reviewed, whether ethical guidelines or codes of professional conduct, pay attention to relationships between research colleagues and also to researchers' responsibilities towards their profession. Some of the points raised relate to issues of scientific standards and integrity mentioned below. However, a number of issues are also raised that have pertinence to our interest in researching ethnic diversity. Firstly, several documents include explicit statements referring to the Society's commitment to inclusion and diversity and the promotion of equal opportunities within their work.

'*The RGS-IBG is committed to social inclusion, diversity and equal opportunities throughout the geographical professions'* (RGS, 2006, p1)

[Members should] '*Promote equal opportunity in all aspects of their professional work and actively seek to avoid discriminatory behaviour. This includes a moral obligation to challenge stereotypes and negative attitudes based on prejudice'* (BSC, 2006, para 3.iv)

It has been argued that the under-representation of, and lack of career opportunities for, minority ethnic researchers within UK higher education institutions is a factor that undermines the quantity and quality of research into ethnic diversity (Gunaratnam, 2003), as well as being an issue of concern in its own right. However, while a number of the Society documents remind researchers of their responsibilities towards junior and less secure members of their profession (e.g. BERA, 2004), the marginalisation of minority ethnic researchers was rarely explicitly mentioned. That said, the BAAL (2006, p9) alerts researchers to the fact that some staff employed on research projects may be particularly vulnerable, and highlights interpreters and translators in this regard - '*attention should be paid to the career development of all such staff participating in a project*' (2006, p9). The SSRG (1997) reminds researchers of the need to follow equal opportunities principles in relation to recruiting staff to research projects and suggests that advertising should reach minority groups. The ASA (1999) makes reference to working cross-nationally and the disparities in resources that might be available, a point that could be extrapolated to working with community-based organisations representing the needs of minority ethnic

groups in the UK. In addition, a few of the Societies have groups or committees that have an explicit remit to support minority ethnic researchers (for instance, the MeCCSA, the BSA).

Responsibilities to research participants

Most of the documents (though not all) devote considerable attention to alerting researchers to principles and standards related to ethical treatment of research participants. A number of issues are raised that have relevance to our focus on ethnic diversity.

Several documents reviewed include clear statements relating to the need to facilitate participation by individuals from diverse groups at the implementation stage of research projects. For instance, the SSRG Resource Pack, which is intended to provide guidance on how to operationalise the DH's governance framework, asserts that '*Particular care is needed on the part of researchers to ensure that research methods do not unintentionally discriminate. After taking any explicit sampling criteria into account, all reasonable steps should be taken to ensure that particular groups of people targeted in a study are not excluded from participation.' (*SSRG, 2005, p43).

The SRA (2003) guidance raises several specific points in relation to enabling participation including: the importance of making provision for minority ethnic languages where needed and the additional costs this may incur; and the need to consider the ethnic background of interviewers/researchers.

'*Social researchers have a responsibility to ensure inclusion in research projects of relevant individuals or groups who might otherwise be excluded for reasons of communication, disability, comprehension or expense'* (SRA, 2003, p37)

The SSRG Resource Pack (2005) includes a similarly explicit statement about enabling the participation of people from minority backgrounds:

'*A research study in which people from ethnic minority groups will form part of the sample should be able to establish the preferred language of those in the sample and ensure that appropriate steps are taken to enable non-English speakers to take part. This might include*

translated versions of letters, consent forms and postal questionnaires or ensuring that an interpreter is available for interviews' (SSRG, 2005, p35)

Anticipation and avoidance of harm to participants is considered within much of the ethical guidance reviewed (though with varying degrees of detail). A number of documents highlight the need for social researchers to be alert to the power differentials that exist between researchers and participants (Association of Family Therapists, 2000; ASA, 1999; BSA, 2002 ; SPA, 2008).

'Particular care needs to be taken with those who have less power to negotiate their rights' (BAAL, 2006, p4)

Several of the guidance documents refer to the heightened risk of harm when working with 'vulnerable' participants, for instance the RGS refers to 'vulnerable groups and at risk populations' (2006, p2), but are not explicit as to who should be included within this category. In some cases, Society documents offer a description of 'vulnerable' groups, but there was variation in the characteristics felt to confer vulnerability. While children and people with learning disabilities are identified in a number of the documents, this is not true of minority ethnic individuals or individuals without English language skills. Butler, for the SWEC, identifies 'social disadvantage' as a factor that might confer vulnerability (2002, p245) and the SPA (2008) identifies *those who are vulnerable by virtue of incapacity, social status or powerlessness'* (p3). Interestingly, the ASA (2006) raises for debate whether research involving 'ethnic or cultural groups' should automatically be considered to carry non-negligible risk as currently stipulated in the ESRC's ethical framework (ESRC, 2005), and suggests that this be the subject of closer scrutiny by ethics panels and researchers.

While not necessarily labelling minority ethnic individuals as 'vulnerable', a number of the guidance documents did, nevertheless, alert researchers to the need to consider ethnicity and cross-cultural working when designing their study procedures. The SRA (2003, p26) cautions against overriding 'social and cultural values' in the pursuit of information, and the SSRG (2005) notes that communication across languages heightens the risk of participant harm and that sensitivities regarding research methods and topics are likely to vary by

ethnicity (p31). The BERA (2006, p6) mentions the need to consider 'race and religion' in terms of maintaining an 'ethic of respect' for research participants. The BPS (2000) highlights the fact that in a 'multicultural and multi-ethnic society' eliminating threats to wellbeing, health, values or dignity of participants may not be straightforward:

'Investigators may not have sufficient knowledge of the implications of any investigation for the participants. It should be borne in mind that the best judge of whether an investigation will cause offence may be members of the population from which the participants in the research are to be drawn' (BPS, 2000, para 2.1)

Similarly, the BAAL (2006) indicates that researchers should be sensitive to the potential differential impact of their work on diverse groups and the British Society of Gerontology (BSG, 2008) explicitly draws attention to the need for researchers to *'adopt non-oppressive strategies free of prejudice and discrimination'* in all their inter-personal interactions with research participants (p5).

'Researchers have a responsibility to be sensitive to cultural, religious, gender, age and other differences: when trying to assess the potential impact of their work, they may need to seek guidance from members of the informants' own communities.' (BAAL, 2006, p4)

Informed consent procedure is another issue of central concern to most ethical guidance for social science researchers, though disciplinary perspectives differ. Again, several of the documents reviewed draw attention to the need for caution in relation to 'vulnerable groups'. The BSA (2002), the BSC (2006), the SPA (2008) and the SWEC (Butler, 2002) remind researchers that information about the research must be given in terms that are meaningful to participants but are not explicit about complexities that may arise in communicating across languages or cultural contexts; while the BSG (2008) states that information should be 'translated as necessary' (p2) and the SSRG (2005) identifies potential for higher risk where participants do not have English as a first language (p35). The SRA (2003) alerts researchers to the possibility that the type and amount of information considered relevant and important may vary between participants. The ASA (Harper and Corsin Jimenez, 2006) questions the focus on individual, written informed consent and

suggests that this may not be appropriate in all cultural contexts. The BAAL (2006) suggests that researchers should be alert to possible socio-cultural factors that could affect consent procedures and participation:

'When informants differ from the researcher in the social groups they belong to, it is worth seeking guidance on social, cultural, religious and other practices which might affect relationships and the willingness to participate.' (BAAL, 2006 p4)

A further set of issues that are raised in relation to research participants by several of the guidance documents relate to notions of anonymity, privacy, and confidentiality. The ASA (1999) suggests that cross-cultural variation in notions of privacy and confidentiality *'presents anthropologists with particularly difficult problems given the cultural and legal variations between societies'* (p4), and cautions researchers not to '*infringe uninvited*' upon the '*private space*' of individuals or groups as locally defined. The SRA (2003), the BPS (2000) and the BSG (2008) guidelines make similar recommendations to researchers to avoid unreasonable intrusion and to take account of cultural variation.

Finally, in relation to research participants, several documents highlight researchers' responsibilities to provide feedback to participants, as well as to acknowledge participant contributions (e.g. BERA, 2004; BSC, 2006; BAAL, 2006; BSA, 2002; BSG, 2008; SPA, 2008). Some guidance specifically draws attention to the need to consider translations into appropriate languages and the use of accessible formats, all of which will require adequate resources (e.g. BAAL, 2006; SSRG, 1997b). The ASA (1999) also raises the issue of 'fair return' (p4) for the assistance and services provided by others in the completion of a study and specifically mentions the role of translators.

Despite variation in the level of detail provided, a degree of consensus was seen across the guidance documents in terms of alerting researchers to their responsibilities towards 'vulnerable' participants and the potential for inadvertent harm if adequate caution is not exercised in working across cultures or with minority ethnic participants. That said, there is significant variation in the models of participant-researcher relationship that are promoted, reflecting diversity in methodological foundations. Some Society documents, particularly

those of the ASA and the SWEC, endorse a participant-led approach which is believed to reduce the dangers of ethnocentrism and exclusion of minority groups and interests.

'As far as is possible anthropologists should try and involve the people being studied in the planning and execution of research projects' (ASA, 1999, p5)

[Researchers must not tolerate discrimination based on ethnicity, national origin, religion and] *'must seek to ensure that their work excludes any unacknowledged bias. Where appropriate, social work/care researchers should seek to predicate their work on the perspective and lived experiences of the research subjects'* (Butler, 2002, p245)

Similarly, in its document relating to research within the NHS, the BPS (2005) promotes the involvement of research subjects as does the SPA (2008).

'Psychologists should be encouraged to involve users at every stage of the research process from establishing priorities through to the dissemination of relevant findings and clinical implications' (BPS, 2005, p9)

Other documents encourage 'objectivity' and caution against over-involvement with research participants and the research environment since this can lead to 'a loss of perspective' (SSRG, 2005, p38), while still others were silent on the form that these relationships should take. The BAAL (2006) document identifies participatory forms of research as one particular approach among many and suggests that this is not always appropriate and should not be confused with the *'traditional independence'* of academic research (p6). The document draws researchers' attention to the need to reflect on this dimension of their work, rather than take it for granted.

Responsibilities to wider society

Many, though not all, documents reviewed identify social science enquiry as a social good and social researchers as having obligations to society at large (e.g. SRA, 2003; ASA, 1999; BSA, 2002; SPA, 2008; Royal Statistical Society, n.d.). Of particular interest here was whether any of the guidance documents make explicit reference to the importance of the

evidence base generated by their research activities as a whole reflecting the ethnic diversity of the population. The statements that come closest to suggesting that social science researchers should be concerned with how the body of knowledge generated serves the interests of the wider society and ethnic 'groups' or populations within it, come from the Social Services Research Group (SSRG) documents.

The SSRG's equal opportunities policy sets out its broad aim as:

'To ensure that every SSRG member, user, job applicant, employee or any person working with, or in contact with, the organisation receives fair treatment irrespective of their age, colour, disability, gender, ethnic origin, marital status, nationality, race, religion, sexual orientation, responsibility for dependents, political affiliation or membership of a trade union.'

And then goes on to state as a supplementary aim:

'To ensure that the contribution of research, information, planning and evaluation work in social care and health is sensitive to this issue.' (SSRG, 2003, online)

Elsewhere, the SSRG raises the issue of prioritising research that addresses issues of ethnic diversity:

'The SSRG may wish on occasion to promote positive action research initiatives which look specifically at issues/concerns expressed by minority or other groups, particularly where it is recognised that this is a neglected area of work. This research must not in any way become marginalised either in its planning, organisation or implementation stages' (SSRG, 1997a, para1.4)

In addition, the SRA, as well as the BAAL, the ASA and the SWEC documents contain relevant messages to researchers. The SRA (2003) document makes a number of statements that indicate a concern that research agendas and the scope of social science research as a whole should benefit society at large:

'Social researchers should use the possibilities open to them to extend the scope of social enquiry and communicate their findings, for the benefit of the widest possible community.' (SRA, 2003, p16)

'No group should be disadvantaged by routinely being excluded from consideration' (SRA, 2003, p14)

The SRA document also highlights potential problems where ethics committees focus on the legal aspects of particular studies rather than the 'benefits to society' of research, and the conflicts that can arise between obligations to participants and the interests of the majority who stand to gain from research findings.

Similarly, the BAAL, the ASA and the SRA documents draw attention to the possibility that research agendas may not serve the needs of certain sections of a society, and suggest that researchers should be aware of their own biases in selecting research questions to investigate.

'In principle, greater access to well-founded information should serve rather than threaten the interests of society... But, it is necessary to consider the effects of research on all groups within society, including those that are not directly involved.'(BAAL, 2006, p15)

[Anthropologists should] 'extend their scope of inquiry and communicate findings for the benefit of the widest possible community' 'consider the likely consequences for the wider society and groups within it as well as for members of the research population not directly involved in the study' (ASA, 1999, p9)

'The selection of topics for attention may reflect a systematic bias' (SRA, 2003, p18)

[Researchers should] *'reflect critically on the ways in which their values and beliefs influence their research approach'* (SPA, 2008, p2)

Interestingly, both the SSRG (2005) and the British Society of Criminology (BSC, 2006) raise the issue of over-researching particular groups of people, though only the BSC links this directly to issues of discrimination or misrepresentation of the experience of particular sections of society.

'[researchers have a duty to] promote equal opportunity in all aspects of their professional work and actively seek to avoid discriminatory behaviour. This includes a moral obligation to ..... be aware of the dangers of failing to reflect the experience of certain groups, or contributing to the over-researching of certain groups within the population.' (BSC, 2006, online)

Several of the SWEC documents suggest that bias and potential harm in research agendas should be addressed by the facilitation of close involvement of service users and communities, that is via dialogue with those whom research is intended to serve.

'... Researchers should seek to promote emancipatory research and work together with disempowered groups, individuals and communities to devise, articulate and to achieve research agendas that respect fundamental human rights and which aim towards social justice' (Butler, 2002, p245)

'Wider ethical issues, such as the rights to involvement and the value of 'giving voice' to marginalised groups are sometimes neglected' (SWEC, 2006, p13)

Here the SWEC documents, in common with the SSRG noted above, can be seen to suggest that researchers should prioritise research that focuses on issues of social inequality and that includes marginalised groups and communities.

In addition to issues of inclusion in, and influence over, research agendas, a related concern raised by several Societal guidelines was the way in which research findings are reported and their implications for how 'groups' within society are represented. Again this relates to a concern that social research should benefit, rather than harm, society and groups therein.

'It should be borne in mind that decisions made on the basis of research may have effects on individuals as members of a group even if individual research participants are protected by confidentiality and anonymity' (BSA, 2002, p4)

'Social enquiry is predicated on the belief that greater access to well-grounded information will serve rather than threaten the interests of society. Nonetheless, in planning all phases of an inquiry, from design to presentation of findings, social researchers should consider the likely consequences for society at large, groups and categories of persons within it, respondents or other subjects, and possible future research.' (SRA, 2003, p17)

The BSC (2006) identifies as part of the researcher's duty to promote equal opportunity in all aspects of work, a moral obligation to *'challenge stereotypes and negative attitudes based on prejudice'* and *'to avoid over-generalising on the basis of limited data'* (para 3.iv). The BSA has developed guidance for researchers in the use of non-racist language which is intended to *'prompt social scientists to consider carefully their choice of terminology'* since it is argued that *'words can reinforce beliefs and prejudice, but can also be used to challenge racism'* (BSA, n.d.). A number of the Society guidance documents identify the potential dangers that can ensue from misrepresentation and misuse of research findings and impress upon researchers the need to take responsibility for how their findings are disseminated and used and to pre-empt likely negative consequences (e.g. BAAL, 2006; ASA, 1999; SPA, 2008; SRA, 2003). In particular, several documents identified the potential for 'group' harm or stereotyping (SSRG, 2005, 2007b; SRA, 2003; BSC, 2006) and 'derogatory or damaging representations' (Butler, 2002, p247).

'Results should not be used to discriminate on the grounds of sex, ethnic origin or disability. Where positive discrimination or steps to ensure equal opportunity are part of the purpose of a study, these objectives should be openly stated and policy proposals should be discussed with the relevant group' (SSRG, 1997b, para 4.2)

In this regard, the ASA (1999) gives the explicit example of 'religious or ethnic minorities', and even suggests that researchers may need to consider withholding potentially damaging findings in certain circumstances. The ASA (1999) document further alerts researchers to the

possibility that it may be difficult to disguise 'ethnic groups, religious denominations or other communities' (p4) without compromising scholarly accuracy, so that anonymity may not be assured and potential harm may result.

'Group interests may be harmed by certain findings' 'In certain political contexts, some groups, for example religious or ethnic minorities, may be particularly vulnerable and it may be necessary to withhold data from publication or even to refrain from studying them at all' (ASA, 1999, p2)

A related and potentially conflictual point, raised by several documents is the need to ensure that research findings are widely accessible so that research has its widest impact. Some documents alerted researchers to the need to give attention to producing research findings in accessible language and formats, or *'language that is judged appropriate to the audience'* (BERA, 2004, p 12) and to take responsibility for the wide dissemination of their work (BAAL, 2006).

Scientific standards: methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation
As noted in the introduction to this paper, concerns regarding whether and how social researchers engage with issues of ethnic diversity relate not only to ethical dimensions, but also to the scientific approaches and methods employed. Poor research, it can be argued, is worse than no research at all.   Further, maintaining high scientific quality is generally recognised as an integral part of good ethical standards.

However, the documents reviewed were noticeably silent on the specifics of good research practice whether in terms of data generation, analysis, interpretation or presentation. This absence of specific guidance is perhaps understandable given the variety of research methods and tools that social science researchers employ, particularly within the more multidisciplinary Societies. Nevertheless, silence on the question of scientific standards and practices is potentially problematic. Since different disciplines are grounded in divergent epistemologies and employ varied research approaches, notions of scientific quality are

subjective, implying that judgements on whether particular approaches are ethical will also be open to dispute and individual interpretation.

What does this mean in terms of scientific guidance in the area of researching ethnic diversity? Recent literature has drawn attention to the many complex scientific issues that arise across the research cycle (Nazroo, 2006; Ellison and Jones, 2002; Ellison, 2005). However, the documents reviewed for this study contain little that would assist social scientists in making decisions regarding *when* and *how* to give attention to ethnic diversity in their work. Nevertheless, some general statements could be seen to have some relevance and potential for expansion.

Firstly, many Society documents state that researchers should not undertake research for which they are inadequately skilled and experienced; should be aware of and explicit about the limits to their knowledge and expertise (e.g. AFT, 2000; ASA, 1999; BAAL, 2006; BERA, 2004; BSA, 2002; BSC, 2006; Butler, 2002; RGS, 2006), and should seek to maintain and enhance competence (e.g. AFT, 2000; SPA, 2008, among others). Further, the SSRG (2005) explicitly states that there is greater potential for harm (and that a study should therefore receive greater scrutiny) where the researchers have not previously worked with the group under investigation (though there is no explicit mention of working across cultures or with minority ethnic groups). The BAAL (2006) indicates that researchers should be sensitive to the potential differential impact of their work on diverse groups and the need to equip themselves adequately for such work. Secondly, several documents make reference to the importance of employing appropriate methods of analysis and interpretation. The SSRG (1997b) Code of Good Practice states that *'analysis needs to be planned as an integral part of the research from the outset. Data which cannot be analysed are useless'* (para 2.4) and further that *'appropriate statistical measures should be applied to the data ... so that the personal interpretation of the researcher or other interested parties does not have undue influence on research findings'* (para 3.1). Though there is no explicit mention of analyses by ethnicity, these points are pertinent since there are significant concerns that data gathered across ethnic 'groups' is often unsuitable for analysis due to inadequate sample sizes or differential sampling schemes (Aspinall, 2006) and that quantitative comparative analyses by ethnicity may not be performed appropriately.

Discussion

Current state of research ethics and scientific standards guidance relating to ethnic diversity in social research

Overall, ethnic diversity is given little explicit attention in the guidance documents reviewed. This limited specific reference to ethnic diversity appears intentional in some cases. For instance, the SRA guidelines (2003) explicitly claim that '*the vocabulary, content and style of the guidelines have been considered from the perspectives of multiculturality and gender equality*' (p8), and then go on to employ largely generic language, making only two specific references to 'ethnic' group or background. However, in other documents, the lack of explicit reference to ethnic diversity seems more likely to have resulted from oversight. Further, where a Society's documentation showed awareness and gave attention to ethnic diversity in relation to some issues, there was no evidence of systematic attention throughout. This inconsistency was found both within single documents and across documents produced by the same Society (where more than one relevant document was available for review). Regardless of the degree of intentionality, the absence of explicit references to ethnic diversity and minority ethnic groups begs the question as to whether the existing guidance statements will effectively alert researchers to the need to consider these issues. Indeed, many of the statements are so generic as to leave much to the interpretation of the reader. In contrast to the Royal College of Psychiatrists (RCoP), which, as mentioned in our introduction, has been very explicit regarding its concern to address issues of ethnic diversity, none of the AcSS Learned Society documents reviewed included comparable statements of intent. The following excerpt from the RcOP's Race Equality Scheme clearly identifies its intention to embed attention to ethnic diversity across all research activity:

'Ensuring that all research directed or influenced by the College takes appropriate account of race and culture -The College research committee will be asked to develop a research strategy relating to the inclusion of Black and minority ethnic communities in research. Specific guidance will be developed for members when designing and reviewing research

proposals and the College will actively seek to engage relevant bodies to pursue research in areas relevant to racial equality and discrimination.' (RCP, 2002)

In particular, our review found little in current documentation that guides researchers as to *when* social research should include attention to ethnic diversity. We identified relevant statements in several documents relating to three linked themes: (1) research should benefit wider society; (2) research should not overlook sub-groups within society; and (3) researchers should consider the potential (differential) consequences of their work and its findings for different 'groups'. However, such generic statements seem unlikely to prompt researchers to consider carefully whether their work should include attention to ethnic diversity, or indeed to reflect on the existing body of knowledge and whether it adequately represents, and effectively serves the needs of, our multiethnic population. As Oakley (2006) notes in relation to evaluation research, conventional approaches systematically ignore the experiences of minority ethnic people, and it is unlikely that currently available guidance from these Learned Societies will do much to challenge this.

In addition, Society documents offer little in the way of guidance to researchers on *how* they should address the complex scientific issues that arise when researching ethnic diversity. While it may justifiably be considered beyond the scope of Society guidance on ethics and professional conduct to provide detailed instruction on how to carry out research studies, nevertheless, issues of scientific and ethical standards closely inter-relate. Attention to maintaining high scientific standards is central to researchers' obligations to all four sets of stakeholders identified above. As stated by the BPS (2007) and the SRA (2003), it can be argued in general terms that a study that is poorly conceived, designed or executed is by its very nature unethical, since its findings are likely to be misleading or even harmful and it will result in wasted resources. Indeed, many of the documents we reviewed (both explicit ethical guidance and codes of professional conduct) included general statements that reminded researchers of their need to ensure 'quality in research', to follow 'recognised good practice' and so on. However, the lack of explicit attention to issues and complexities in researching ethnicity again suggests that current Society documentation will have little effect on current poor practice. At the least, it would seem important for ethical guidance

to explicitly alert researchers to some of the potential complexities and to point them in the direction of additional support.

However, having noted these limitations, we were able to identify a number of useful and pertinent points. Table 2 collates these statements across the various documents reviewed. In some cases we have made an explicit reference to ethnicity where this was not originally the case, but nevertheless was felt to be consistent with the intention of the statements. For instance, principles D.1 and D.6 in Table 2 draw on the statements found in the SRA, the BSA, the BAAL and the ASA documents that refer to 'groups within society' in general terms but make explicit the need to consider 'ethnic groups'. In this way, the collection of statements is both an aggregation and extrapolation from the documents reviewed and is presented as a first attempt at devising a set of principles to guide social scientists in their decisions as to when and how to include attention to ethnicity in their research. We recognise that this is far from exhaustive, that some statements may be contentious, and that some principles may at times conflict with others. It is offered as an illustration of how existing Society documentation can be drawn upon in fashioning a useful starting point for dialogue and development.

Towards clearer and more comprehensive guidance on ethnic diversity in social science research: challenges and opportunities
The above review suggests both challenges and opportunities for developing guidance to support research that appropriately and sensitively considers ethnicity so that social science research as a whole might better serve the needs of the UK's multiethnic population.

First, the issue of disciplinary specificities and the extent to which ethical and scientific guidance can be relevant and useful across divergent disciplines was an important theme. It is clear that there is considerable concern in some quarters that standards imposed from outside can seriously stifle research inquiry and that unified codes can not adequately express the concerns of disparate disciplines.

'Codes of ethics ... need to be contextualised and situated. They are not for always and for everywhere. [Never can be] morally or ethically neutral' [and they] 'inevitably articulate the

occupational/professional, ideological and moral aspirations of their creators' (Butler, 2002, p240)

However, other Societies, notably the SRA and BERA, have sought to produce guidance that is sufficiently generic as to be applicable and useful across its diverse membership.   The SRA's (2003) approach to producing guidance for diverse social scientists seems sensible. First, it recognises that the variety of contexts, disciplinary perspectives and moral precepts precludes imposing *'a rigid set of rules to which social researchers everywhere should be expected to adhere'* (p10) and instead offers a code that is *'informative and descriptive rather than authoritarian and rigidly prescriptive'* (p10). Second, it aims for wide applicability so that the *'provisions are fairly broadly drawn'* (p11). It would, however, be important to ensure that provisions were not drawn so broadly as to fail to prompt researchers to specifically consider ethnicity.

In addition, it is important to recognise that Societies vary in terms of whether or not they have an explicit regulatory role in relation to (some or all of) their members and therefore the extent to which codes of conduct/ethical practice represent binding rules or rather flexible prompts. The introduction of new guidance would clearly require more caution and advance consultation in the former case. There is also likely to be variation in the extent of influence that guidance documents have across Societies, so that in some Societies members' research practices may be more heavily influenced by the ethical requirements of other bodies, such as the ESRC or government departments commissioning research. Clearly, any attempt to change research practice in relation to issues of ethnic diversity will require engagement across the social science community more broadly than the Learned Societies alone.

A further factor that seems relevant to the success of developing and introducing clearer guidance relates to the extent to which Societies and their members view ethnic diversity as relevant to their central concerns. The degree of focus on influencing public or social policy varies between the Societies, as does the extent of focus on inequality and social (in)justice. For instance, various SWEC documents indicate a central concern that social work research should not only focus on issues of inequality but also contribute towards tackling such

injustice, and the SWEC identifies 'migration', 'community cohesion and social inclusion' as among the 'major contemporary social and economic challenges' that it seeks to address (SWEC, 2006, p1).

In contrast, many other Societies appear to engage much less closely with issues of social (and specifically ethnic) inequality. However, many of these Societies nevertheless do aspire to influencing social policy (e.g. AFT, 2000). In addition, even among disciplines that see their task as one of accurate description rather than the provision of prescriptions, the importance of considering ethnic diversity can be argued on scientific grounds. Issues of ethnic diversity clearly permeate UK society in multiple ways besides those that relate to the formulation of social policy and the provision of public services. It can be argued therefore that social science research which seeks to describe and understand the social world in general, rather than inform public policy, nevertheless plays an important role in creating our 'knowledge' about ethnic diversity, shaping public opinion and defining the 'problems' and 'experiences' of marginalised groups. Some Societies with less clear social policy foci do appear to acknowledge this, as illustrated, for example, in MeCCSA's race network. Thus, though some Societies and their members may see ethnicity and related inequality as falling outside of their focus of inquiry, there are arguments for encouraging them nevertheless to consider the usefulness of guidance on this issue.

Finally, a number of general themes evident in the guidance reviewed appear to be positive in terms of moving towards clearer and more comprehensive guidance in relation to ethnic diversity. Firstly, several documents give explicit attention to the ethical implications of research for wider society and 'groups' within rather than exclusively focusing on research participants. Notwithstanding the importance of protecting participants, this wider perspective is crucial if the implications of research for minority ethnic populations are to be fully appreciated and benefits distributed more fairly. A further positive theme is that of researchers having a responsibility to defend their own principles of ethical and high quality research practice, particularly in the face of pressure from funders or employers. This approach encourages researchers to seek to influence sponsors and opens up the possibility of researchers pushing for greater attention to ethnic diversity and more realistic funding of such research endeavours. Related to this is the useful notion that individual researchers

must be aware of, and bear responsibility for, the cumulative behaviour of their profession and the consequences of their actions for society at large (SRA, 2003, p15).

In addition, many documents cast ethical practice as evolving and dynamic so that ethical codes must be subject to constant and ongoing critical scrutiny and development by those who employ them in their research work. This can be seen as positive in that it opens the door for researchers to reconsider the adequacy of existing guidance for prompting critical reflection on whether their research agendas and research designs appropriately and effectively address the needs of our multiethnic population.

In conclusion, our review highlights the limited and inconsistent explicit consideration of ethnic diversity in social research in the guidance documents of the Learned Societies examined, but does indicate some useful departure points. The possibility of developing a framework of principles to guide social scientists across a range of disciplines and substantive foci does seem realistic and we invite the Learned Societies to consider the principles set out in Table 2 as a starting point for debate and dialogue. The aim of such a guidance framework would be to prompt social scientists to consider when and how their research should pay attention to ethnic diversity so that an absence of such attention would reflect careful deliberation rather than ignorance or unchallenged structures of persistent exclusion.

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Notes:

1. Though it has been argued that the joint term 'race/ethnicity' may best encapsulate the diversity of human experience while retaining a focus on understanding discrimination and prejudice (Oppenheimer, 2001; Gunaratnam, 2003), we opt, for simplicity, to use of the simpler term 'ethnic diversity' throughout this paper. This terminology should not, however, obscure the hierarchical nature of ethnic categorisation or the racialised experience of minoritised ethnic groups (Anthias, 2001).

2. The DH governance framework clearly refers to diversity in a wider sense than just ethnic diversity and we recognise that there are other important axes of difference and inequality that demand attention both by social scientists and social policy. Nevertheless, for the purposes of the present paper we restrict our focus to ethnic diversity.

3. It is important to note the ethical concerns associated with research that focuses undue attention on discovering 'difference' between ethnic 'groups' and that an uncritical promotion of increased research into ethnic diversity could serve to further stereotype and marginalise minoritised groups.

4. In contrast, in the U.S., the Health Revitalization Act of 1993 requires that women and members of minority groups be included in all research projects funded by the National Institutes of Health and that a "clear and compelling reason" be given for inadequate representation of these populations, though the impact of this legislation has been subject to debate (Corbie-Smith *et al.,* 2003).

5. This figure includes the Public Administration Committee, the Social Policy Committee and the Social Work Education Committee, the three committees that comprise the Joint Universities Council, which is listed as just one LS on the AcSS website.

6. While the AcSS provided a useful sampling frame, we recognise that some Societies falling outside this Academy might also warrant separate investigation, notably the Royal Economic Society.

Table 1: Documents accessed and reviewed for each Learned Society listed as an affiliate of the UK Academy of Social Sciences

Name of Society	Documents consulted
Association for Family Therapy (AFT)	• Code of Ethics and Practice (2000) - document claims to relate to those doing research, but appears to be primarily practice focused (family therapy).
Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth (ASA)	• Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice (1999) • Gledhill, J. (2007) A statement of ethics from the Chair of the ASA. [online document] • Harper I. and Corsin Jimenez, A. (2005) 'Towards an interactive professional ethics' Anthropology Today 21(6): 10-12 • Harper I. and Corsin Jimenez, A. (2005) Developing anthropological ethics in the ASA [online document] • Harper I. and Corsin Jimenez, A. (2006) Open discussion on ethics in anthropology, Minutes. [online document] • Garner, A. (2007) Ethical dilemmas in professional practice in anthropology [online document]
Association for Tourism in Higher Education (ATHE)	• No relevant information available on website. No response to emails.
British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL)	• Recommendations on Good Practice in Applied Linguistics (1994, 2006) - includes clear research focus.
British Association for American Studies (BAAS)	• No relevant information available on website. Email from Chair confirms no research ethics guidance exists and members are expected to follow the guidance of their home institutions.
British Association for International and Comparative Education (BAICE)	• No relevant information available on website. Email from Chair confirms no research ethics guidance exists and members are expected to follow the guidance of their home institutions.
British Academy of Management (BAM)	• Ethics Guidelines (2008) - includes research focus.

Name of Society	Documents consulted
British Association for Slavonic and east European Studies (BASEES)	• No relevant information available on website. Email from Chair confirms no research ethics guidance exists and members are expected to follow the guidance of their home institutions.
British Educational Research Association (BERA)	• Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2004)
British Psychological Society (BPS)	• Code of Ethics and Conduct (2006) - practice focused • Ethical Principles for Conducting Research with Human Participants (2000) • Guidelines for Minimum Standards of Ethical Approval in Psychological Research (2004) • Good Practice Guidelines for the Conduct of Psychological Research within the NHS (2005) • Report of the Working Party on Conducting Research on the Internet (2007) • Our plan for equality and diversity (2008)
British Sociological Association (BSA)	• Statement of Ethical Practice for the British Sociological Association (2002, 2004) - research focused. • Equal Opportunities Policy (n.d.) • Language and the BSA: ethnicity and race (n.d.)
British Society of Criminology (BSC)	• Code of Ethics for Researchers in the Field of Criminology (2006)
British Society of Gerontology (BSG)	• Guidelines on Ethical Research with Human Participants (2008)
Economic History Society (EHS)	• No relevant information available on website. Email confirms no research ethics guidance exists.
Feminist and Women's Studies Association (FWSA)	• No relevant information available on website. Email from Chair confirms no research ethics guidance exists.
Gender and education association (GEA)	• No relevant information available on website. Email from Chair confirms no research ethics guidance exists and no particular set of guidelines promoted by the society.
Housing Studies Association (HSA)	• No relevant information available on website. Email from committee member confirms no research ethics guidance exists and members are expected to follow the guidance of their home institutions.

Name of Society	Documents consulted
Joint Universities Council (JUC)	• None. JUC is the sum of its parts. See three committees below
Public Administration Committee (PAC)	• No relevant information available on website. Email from committee member confirms no research ethics guidance exists.
Social Policy Committee (SPC)	• No relevant information available on website. Email from committee member indicates that individual researchers are directed towards the guidance of the Social Policy Association.
Social Work Education Committee (SWEC)	• Butler, I. (2002) A Code of Ethics for Social Work and Social Care Research. British Journal of Social Work, 32: 239-248.) • Social Work Research Strategy in Higher Education (2006) • Dominelli, L. and Holloway, M. (2008) 'Ethics and Governance in Social Work Research in the UK' British Journal of Social Work [advance access].
Media, Communications and cultural studies association (MECCSA)	• No relevant information available on website. Email from Chair confirms no research ethics guidance exists but a current topic for discussion within the society.
Political Studies Association (PSA)	• Guidelines for Good Professional Conduct (2006) - includes research focus.
Royal Geographical Society (RGS)	• Research Ethics and a Code of Practice (2006) • Fellows' Code of Conduct (2000)
Regional Studies Association (RSA)	• No relevant information available on website. Email from committee member confirms no research ethics guidance exists and members are expected to take individual responsibility for ethical practice.
Royal Statistical Society (RSS)	• Code of Conduct (1993) - includes research focus. • RSS Mission Statement (n.d.) • Further information sought from the Social Statistics Section - email from Chair confirms no explicit research ethics guidance.
Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI)	• Code of Professional Conduct (2007) - practice focused rather than research.
Social Policy Association (SPA)	• Social Policy Association Guidelines on Research Ethics (Draft) (2008)

Name of Society	Documents consulted
Social Research Association (SRA)	• Ethical Guidelines (2003) • Current developments in social science research ethics: minutes of a seminar (2004) [online document]
Social Services Research Group (SSRG)	• Code of Good Practice for Research, Evaluation, Monitoring and Review Studies in Social, Housing and Health Studies (1997) • Guidelines for Collaborative Research (1997) • Research Governance Framework Resource Pack (2005) • Equal Opportunities Policy (2003)
Society for Study in Organising Healthcare (SHOC)	• No relevant information available on website. Email from committee member confirms no research ethics guidance exists.
University Association for Contemporary European Studies (UACES)	• No relevant information available on website. Email from Chair confirms no research ethics guidance exists and members are expected to follow the guidance of their home institutions.
UK Evaluation Society (UKES)	• Guidelines for Good Practice in Evaluation (2003)

Table 2: Research ethics and scientific standards relating to ethnic diversity in social science research: collective principles (for debate) compiled and extrapolated across the Learned Society guidance documents

[A]Responsibilities towards commissioners & sponsors

A.1 Researchers should attempt to ensure that sponsors, funders and employers appreciate their obligations towards the multiethnic society at large and to minority ethnic participants within any particular study and the implications this may have for how they discharge their duties.

A.2 Researchers should avoid agreeing to sponsors' conditions that jeopardise any of the principles set out here in relation to researching ethnic diversity.

A.3 In particular, researchers should ensure that sponsors appreciate the additional costs that may be involved in carrying out a study in a way that is sensitive and appropriate to the needs of minority ethnic participants.

A.4 Researchers should be aware that certain funding sources may be contentious in relation to the needs and interests of minority ethnic groups.

[B] Responsibilities towards the discipline & colleagues

B.1 Researchers should be aware of and promote equal opportunities in all aspects of their work.

B.2 Researchers should be alert to the vulnerable position that colleagues of minority ethnic background may face, particularly those that are employed as contract researchers, and they should seek ways to support their career development.

B.3 Researchers should be aware of the disparities in resources that may exist when partnering with community-based organisations representing minority ethnic communities and seek ways to ensure their effective participation and long-term benefits of collaboration.

[C] Responsibilities towards research participants

C.1 Researchers should take particular care to ensure that their research methods do not unintentionally discriminate on the basis of ethnicity (and related factors including cultural preferences, social disadvantage, language and religion)

C.2 Researchers should recognise their responsibility, and put in place appropriate procedures, to ensure inclusion in research projects of minority ethnic individuals or groups who might otherwise be excluded for reasons of language, culture, expense and so on.

C.3 Researchers should be aware of power differentials between themselves and the participants in their research projects and should be alert to the *possible* vulnerability that minority ethnic people may face (for instance by virtue of social disadvantage; limited English language competency; past racist abuse; mistrust of institutions and so on).

C.4 Researchers should be aware of possible differences between ethnic groups in the impact of their research on participants and should not override social and cultural values in the pursuit of knowledge.

C.5 Where participants differ from the researcher in terms of their ethnic background, researchers should seek guidance on the social, cultural, religious and other practices that *might* affect relationships and the impact of the research on participants.

C.6 Researchers should take steps to adequately assess the potential for harm and offence that their research approach and methods may have for diverse ethnic groups and individuals; and make necessary modifications to minimise risk.

C.7 Researchers should adopt non-oppressive strategies that are free of any form of prejudice or discrimination in all their dealings with minority ethnic research participants.

C.8 Researchers should be alert to the potential for communication across languages and cultures to introduce misunderstanding and ensure that appropriate procedures and resources

are in place to allow effective and free communication with all minority ethnic participants.

C.9 Researchers should take particular care in gaining informed consent from minority ethnic participants in order to ensure that the information considered relevant by the participant has been made available in a form that is meaningful.

C.10 Researchers should be alert to possible cultural variation in notions of public and private space and take steps to ensure that they do not infringe univited upon the private space of individuals or groups.

C.11 Researchers should find ways to involve minority ethnic people being included in a study in the planning and execution of the research project.

[D] Responsibilities towards wider society

D.1 Research should benefit the widest possible community, including minority ethnic 'groups' within it.

D.2 Research agendas should be informed by diverse sections of the population, including the interests and concerns of people of minority ethnicities.

D.3 Researchers should reflect critically on how their values and beliefs shape their research approach and seek to minimise ethnocentric bias in the identification of research topics and questions.

D.4 Researchers should consider prioritising research that addresses issues of concern to minority ethnic 'groups', particularly where the topic is recognised as a neglected area.

D.5 Researchers should be aware of how the broader evidence base in their area reflects the experiences and needs of different ethnic groups and work to ensure that no group is disadvantaged by routinely being excluded from consideration or by being over-researched.

D.6 In planning all phases of an inquiry, from design to dissemination of findings, researchers should be aware of the likely consequences of their research for society at large and minority ethnic groups within it, including those that are not directly involved.

D.7 Researchers should prioritise research that aims to understand and address discrimination and disadvantage and seek to achieve research agendas that respect fundamental human rights and aim towards social justice.

D.8 Researchers should seek to promote emancipatory forms of enquiry that engage with minority ethnic communities in the articulation and implementation of research agendas.

D.9 Researchers should be alert to, and take actions to pre-empt, the possible misuse or misinterpretation of their research findings in ways that result in derogatory or damaging representations of minority ethnic people.

D.10 Researchers should consider whether the dissemination of certain findings may serve to further marginalise already marginalised minority ethnic groups, and be aware that in some circumstances it may be necessary to withhold data from publication.

D.11 Researchers should take responsibility for ensuring that their work is widely disseminated in appropriate forms and languages to ensure access and impact across minority ethnic groups, as well as other stakeholders.

D.12 Researchers should reflect critically on their use of language and terminology in the dissemination of findings to ensure that their work is accurately communicated and does not reinforce prejudice or racialised stereotypes.

[E] Ensuring high scientific standards:

E.1 Researchers should recognise the potential for harm when social inquiry involving minority ethnic participants, or seeking to address issues relating to ethnic diversity, is conducted by inadequately trained/inexperienced researchers.

E.2 Researchers should be open and honest about their competency in relation to researching ethnic diversity and should seek to upgrade their skills appropriately.

E.3 Researchers should recognise the potential for harm when social inquiry involving minority

ethnic participants, or seeking to address issues relating to ethnic diversity, is inadequately funded.

E.4 Researchers should ensure that any data pertaining to minority ethnic groups are gathered in a way that ensures samples adequate to sustain subsequent analyses.

E.5 Researchers should ensure that appropriate methods of analysis are employed and appropriate interpretations applied when handling data relating to minority ethnic groups; particularly where comparisons are drawn between ethnic groups.