

Institution: University of Derby
Unit of Assessment: 36
Title of case study: Religion or Belief, Discrimination and Equality Research
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>This case study focuses on the reach and significance of the impact achieved particularly by a body of research conducted from within the Centre for Society, Religion and Belief, and especially involving the work of Weller and Cheruvallil-Contractor. This has especially informed policy development in the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC); the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU); and the Department of Communities and Local Government. Finally, it has equipped broader users of research in public, private, voluntary and community, and religion or belief sector organisations to develop their policy development and practice in a more evidence-based way.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Research underpinning this case study's impact is exemplified by the following:</p> <p>1.] Research (April 2010-March 2011) commissioned by the ECU on "Religion and Belief in Higher Education: the Experiences of Staff and Students" of which Weller (Professor of Inter-Religious Relations at the University of Derby) was academic lead, working with Dr. Tristram Hooley (Reader in Career Development and Director) and Nicki Moore (Lecturer in Career Development) at the University's International Centre for Guidance Studies. Results were based on an electronic survey of staff (3077 respondents) and students (2935 respondents) in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland; seven institutional case studies across different kinds of institutions; consultation with stakeholder groups; and a review of relevant research and bibliographical evidence. This research was the first of its kind. It informed the development of the ECU's policy, practice and work with other stakeholders, including the Higher Education Statistical Agency's (HESA) consideration of categories for data collection on student and staff religion or belief – especially HESA's recommendation to include the category of "spiritual" not used in the decennial Census.</p> <p>2.] Research (January 2010-end April 2013) within the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)/Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Religion and Society research programme (2006-12) on "Religion and Belief, Discrimination and Equality in England and Wales: Theory, Policy and Practice, 2000-2010". Weller was Principal Investigator, with Dr. Sariya Cheruvallil-Contractor as postdoctoral researcher at the University; and co-investigators (Dr. Nazila Ghanea and Dr. Kingsley Purdam from Manchester and Oxford universities. Its longitudinal comparison updated results of previous research (1999-2001) led by Weller on "Religious Discrimination in England and Wales" commissioned by the Home Office which, during the 2000s, informed the introduction and development of relevant law and practice.</p> <p>The new project included interviews in Blackburn, Cardiff, Leicester, Newham (also locations in the 1999-2001 project) and Norwich with over 230 participants from the religion or belief, voluntary/community, public, private and legal sectors, and focus groups with 40 "non-religious" people (conducted, in 2011, by Contractor). A postal and electronic survey of a stratified sample of over 1700 national and local religious organisations across England and Wales yielded just under 500 responses (including from just over 200 organisations responding in 2001). Over 130 legal cases were reviewed, especially by Ghanea, while Weller reviewed other relevant research evidence over the past decade. A doctoral research study (2010-13, with Weller as Director of Studies) explored the relationship between religious freedom and sexual orientation in relation to Church-related adoption agencies.</p> <p>In September-November 2012, "Knowledge Exchange Workshops" were held in Derby, Oxford, Cardiff, Manchester and London. Weller presented the project's interim findings and input, and confirmation of, divergence from, or the identification of anything missing was sought from</p>

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practitioner experience in religion or belief, community and voluntary, public, private and legal sectors. Taking all this into account, with special reference to the introduction of law in this area, and the effect of broader policy and practice, the project's findings highlight areas of continuity and of change over the past decade.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1.] The ECU research project's key published output was the research report submitted in REF2 by P. Weller, T. Hooley, and N. Moore (2011), Religion and Belief in Higher Education: the Experiences of Staff and Students (London: Equality Challenge Unit): supporting and providing more detailed technical data on the planning and implementation of the project; summary data on the project survey outcomes; the review of relevant research and bibliographical evidence; and the content of stakeholder consultation as these all informed the project report can be supplied electronically in PDF format by the UoA, or downloaded from the project website at: <http://www.derby.ac.uk/ehs/research/religion-and-belief-in-HE/downloads>.

2.] The "Religion and Belief, Discrimination and Equality" project was one of 22 "Large Projects" (£358,727+£46,398 studentship) in the £12million AHRC/ESRC Religion and Society programme (http://www.religionandsociety.org.uk/research_findings/projects/overview), awarded for projects designed to enable "individual researchers to collaborate with, and bring benefits to, other individuals and organisations through the conduct of research." (<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/Funding-Opportunities/Pages/Large-Research-Grants---Religion-and-Society.aspx>). Because of the project's end date and a change in AHRC policy, the project was not required to submit a traditional end of project report to the AHRC. It did, however, produce and submit annual reports, including a final year report, to the Religion and Society programme. Electronic copies of these reports can be made available in Word format, while key information on project outcomes can be accessed from the Research Councils' Research Outcomes System at <https://researchoutcomes.rcuk.ac.uk/grants/AH.H016074.1/details>. The detailed findings of the project are published in the book submitted in REF2 by P. Weller, K. Purdam, N. Ghanea and S. Cheruvallil-Contractor (2013), Religion or Belief, Discrimination and Equality: Britain in Global Contexts (London, New Delhi, New York and Sydney: Bloomsbury). Of particular relevance to the impact of this research on policy-making is the research report P. Weller (2011), Religious Discrimination in Britain: A Review of Research Evidence, 2000-10 Research Report 73, (Manchester: EHRC, electronic publication only at: www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/research/research_report_73_religious_discrimination.pdf)

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

1.] The impact of the ECU research is rooted in the fact that it was commissioned by the ECU which works to further and support equality and diversity for staff and students in higher education across the UK, and in colleges in Scotland. From its inception, therefore, the research was fully engaged with and responsive to, the policy development needs of both the ECU itself and of the wider sector that it serves, especially in terms of evidence-based guidance to meet legal obligations and develop best practice in the light of the new requirements relating to religion or belief of the 2010 Equalities Act. 56 sector stakeholders engaged with the project's report at a launch seminar held in London on 11.7.11. Since publication on the ECU website, up until the 17th October 2013, there had been 1,351 unique views of the full report and 523 visits to the Executive Summary. In a statement on the launch of the report, the ECU stated it would be "*prioritising areas recommended within the report for future work*" A specific example of this was the project's research into the acceptability among higher education staff and students of religion or belief data monitoring questions; its inclusion in its own survey of the category option of "spiritual" and the ECU's consultative work with the Higher Education Statistical Agency that was informed by the research. The resulting impact of the research can be evidenced in the current form of the HESA staff and student record religion and belief data fields which include the UK National Censuses' data categories, but with the addition of the category of "spiritual" used by the project. This is

significant in that it goes beyond the categories used in the UK National Censuses, while through HESA standards the reach of its impact extends to the policy and practice of universities and higher education colleges throughout the UK.

2.] The “Religion and Belief, Discrimination and Equality” project includes impact on policy development and understanding through Weller’s (2011) commissioned report for the EHRC on Religious Discrimination in Britain: A Review of Research Evidence, 2000-2010 (Manchester: EHRC). Both this report and the wider project were cited (pp. 8-9) in The Impact of AHRC Research 2010/11 - the AHRC’s first annual Research Performance and Economic Impact report for the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills which, in its section on “Interaction with Policy Makers” states that: “A research team at the University of Derby, for example, is looking at religion, discrimination and equality. The project team informed a new report for the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)” and that “The project is also more widely engaged with practitioners, government bodies, religious groups and lawyers.” On Weller’s EHRC report, the AHRC report quotes Dr. David Perfect, Research Manager at the Commission who stated that it: “provides new evidence about the nature and extent of religious discrimination in Britain. The Equality and Human Rights Commission will be using the report to increase its understanding of this important issue and to help guide its future work on religion or belief more generally.” A key part of the project’s research process involved five Knowledge Exchange Workshops (Derby, 19.9.12; Oxford, 5.10.12; Manchester, 11.10.12; Cardiff, 25.10.12; and London 7.11.12) and involving 211 practitioners from organisations in the religion or belief (106); voluntary and community (45); public (40) sector; legal (12); private (8) sectors. At these workshops, the project’s interim summary findings were presented by Weller and discussed in plenary and breakout groups facilitated by Weller, Contractor; the project Co-Investigators and the project’s partner organisation, the Multi-Faith Centre at the University of Derby. On feedback sheets, participants identified up to 3 hopes/objectives for the workshops and whether these had been “surpassed”, “satisfied”, “not fully satisfied”, or “disappointed”. In total participants identified 263 hopes/objectives of which 23% were “surpassed” and 56% were “satisfied”, providing evidence that the workshops met many of the needs of a broad range of practitioners/research users, while also contributing further primary research data to the finalisation of the project’s results.

3.] As a result of a competitive application process, in which the University’s Centre for Society, Religion and Belief’s Centre’s research leader in this field cited his research on religion and belief, discrimination and equality, Weller was in 2010 appointed and served (until the Panel’s abolition by the present Coalition Government) as one of 13 members of the expert panel on Faith providing confidential advice to the Secretary of State, other Ministers and Civil Servants in the UK Government’s Department of Communities and Local Government on “*engagement with faith communities, and the impact of Communities and Local Government policy on faith communities.*”

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

Religion & Belief, Discrimination and Equality project: Sources for Evidence of Impact

1.] Evidence for the holding and nature of the project’s Knowledge Exchange Workshops can be accessed directly by the panel via the project’s website at: <http://www.derby.ac.uk/knowledge-exchange-workshops>.

2.] Evidence about the degree to which the stated hopes/objectives of practitioner participants in the Religion and Belief, Discrimination and Equality Knowledge Exchange Workshops were “satisfied” or “surpassed”; overall quantitative and qualitative summary data about the workshops; and also data by individual workshop, is held by the project in electronic files. These summaries are, in turn, based on scanned copies of original hard copy feedback sheets completed directly by participants. Electronic copies can, if required, be made available to the panel by the UoA.

3.] A PDF copy of the report on The Impact of AHRC Research 2010-11, in which the project and Weller’s report for the EHRC is cited as an example of impact, including in terms of “interaction

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with policy makers”, and in which the Research Manager for the EHRC is cited about the way in which the research has informed the work of the EHRC can, if required, be provided to the panel by the UoA or be accessed directly by the panel at: <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/News-and-Events/Publications/Documents/Impact-of-AHRC-Research-2010-2011.pdf>)

Religion or Belief in Higher Education project: Sources for Evidence of Impact

4.] Evidence of HESA’s inclusion, on the basis of recommendations from the Equality Challenge Unit (itself based on the use of this category in the project’s research) of the category of “spiritual” in religion or belief data fields/collection for higher education staff and of students, can be found, respectively at:

http://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php/component/option,com_studrec/task,show_file/Itemid,233/mnl,12025/href,a%5E_%5ERELBLF.html (staff)

http://www.hesa.ac.uk/component/option,com_studrec/task,show_file/Itemid,233/mnl,12051/href,a%5E_%5ERELBLF.html/ (students)

5.] A letter from the ECU is held by the UoA in electronic PDF format and, if required, can be supplied to the panel verifying that its recommendation to HESA on inclusion of the category of “spiritual” in the religion or belief data fields/collection for higher education staff and students was informed by the project’s work and use of this data field. The letter also confirms the number of stakeholder participants at the London launch of the project report and the number of times the electronic report and its executive summary have been accessed. **Contact details below.**

6.] Evidence of the launch event for the project report can be accessed directly from the ECU’s website at: <http://www.ecu.ac.uk/events/religion-and-belief-in-he-an-evidence-informed-way-forward/?searchterm=religion%20or%20belief>

7.] Evidence for how the report is stated to inform the policy, practice and work with the wider higher education of the Equality Challenge Unit in the area of religion or belief can be accessed directly from the ECU’s website at: <http://www.ecu.ac.uk/news/religion-and-belief-impacts-on-staff-and-student-experiences-of-higher-education/?searchterm=religion%20or%20belief>

Expert Panel on Faith Membership, Work and Impact: Evidence Sources for Impact

8.] The work of the panel was confidential, but evidence for the panel’s existence, focus and the nature of Weller’s impact based on his research and via the panel can be found in the University of Derby’s 6.1.2012 Press Release accessible by the panel at:

<http://www.derby.ac.uk/news/derby-expert-joins-new-national-faith-panel>

and a letter in PDF format held by the UoA and which, if required can be supplied to be the panel, from the current Head of Faith Communities Engagement, Integration Division Decentralisation and Big Society Directorate, Department for Communities and Local Government

Contact details below.