

Institution: University of Warwick

Unit of Assessment: Sociology

a. Context

Sociology at Warwick achieves impact through our commitment to excellent research and to a vision of public sociology relevant to policy-making communities and wider publics in a diverse range of cultural and geographical contexts. In particular, we excel in 5 main types of impact:

1. Public Policy Debate. We shape policy debate at regional, national and international levels. *The Centre for Rights, Equality and Diversity* (Ratcliffe - hosted by the unit and funded by the European Commission) has monitored xenophobia in Europe over a number of years. Its research shaped the UK Census questions on ethnicity, influenced public procurement policies at local, national and European levels and contributed to the drafting of the Equality Act (2010). Davies was involved in the Coalition government's agenda for employee ownership. He acted as a consultant to the Nuttall Review on this topic (established by the Deputy Prime Minister) that reported in 2012. Whiteside and Casey's research on demographic ageing and its policy implications informed policy discussion at the Department for Work and Pensions; the Lords Committee on Ageing and Public Service; the European Commission; the governments of Cyprus and the Republic of China (Taiwan). Wadia's research on Muslim women was taken up by the Gender Equalities Office, the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the Director of the Muslim Women's Network in her evidence to the UN Human Rights Forum. Such examples demonstrate the range of research impacts sustained by the unit on policy-making in a variety of areas and on a global scale.

2. Charities and NGOs. We work closely with a range of national and international charities and NGOs. Research in the *Centre for the Study of Women and Gender* has influenced debates about gender, ethnicity and political representation, how concerns about gender equality can best be integrated into the political arena, and how Muslim women engage with the political sphere (Wadia). This has informed women's NGOs, such as Southall Black Sisters (Thiara), and third sector organisations, such as Welsh Women's Aid and Refuge, that provide services to those who experience domestic abuse. Research in the *Centre for Comparative Labour Studies* has informed the activities of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and trade union organisations at national and European levels while research on food inequalities has influenced third sector and faith-based organisations as well as the Food Ethics Council on which Dowler sits.

3. Participative pedagogies. We have developed excellent training programmes and participative pedagogies in a range of domains. Jensen's work has changed publicity and information dissemination in zoos, museums and aquaria around the world, reshaping understandings of how public engagement can change individual behaviour to benefit global as well as local environments. Likewise, Lambert's work at the University's Reinvention Centre for Undergraduate Research, has developed innovative pedagogies in teaching and the creation of new learning spaces. Based on new educational philosophies, these have been introduced into local schools as well as the Universities of Lincoln and Birmingham City and have promoted the involvement of students in the learning process at all levels.

4. Shaping attitudes and values. The research cluster *Body, Science and Society* sustains a focus on public engagement with science and contributes to debates concerning the relationship between science and society. Fuller's work on this relationship and its association with the academy has been extensively exposed in the media in a wide variety of countries and languages across five continents, involving media broadcasts, printed articles and interviews. Williams's research on the politics of sleep and the hegemony of international pharmaceutical interests on drug use has had wide exposure in the popular media as has Throsby's research on body modification, informing public debate about sleep and pharmaceutical use, the 'obesity epidemic' and what constitutes a 'fit' sporting body.

5. Enhancing cultural understanding. We create cultural artefacts (exhibitions, web-based resources, films) to enhance cultural understanding. The Reinvention Centre (Lambert) created a film documentary, '[Sociologists Talking](#)', (shown at Warwick's Social Science Festival in 2008 and 2009) and an exhibition, '[The Idea of the University](#)' (the Mead Gallery, Warwick Arts Centre, 2010). A publicly available electronic resource, '[RottenBeat](#)', presents high quality analytical information on contemporary music scenes in the former USSR. A pamphlet (Blencowe) on participatory democracy targets practitioners of community work and participatory governance and has been distributed in print form and digitally (downloaded over 3,600 times since April 2012).

b. Approach to impact

The unit builds on the experience of colleagues in engaging different publics by maintaining and consolidating existing relationships with potential research beneficiaries (such as NGOs, local and national governments and the EU) and with influential media commentators. We encourage researchers to consider potential impact by providing funding for public engagement workshops at the design stage of a project. The unit's Research Support Committee (RSC) provides feedback on outline research bids, advising on how impact can be improved and potential beneficiaries become involved in research. It offers financial and administrative support for public engagement activities, thereby facilitating pathways to impact. Impact-related activities maintain a high profile on Sociology's Twitter account and key media commentators are briefed. This work is supported by the University's Research Support Services and Faculty Impact Officers; their representatives attend RSC meetings and are based in the unit for individual consultations one day per week.

Imaginative ways of achieving impact, such as making short films, staging exhibitions, and involving members of local communities in the creation of cultural artefacts, are encouraged. An example is a photographic exhibition (Herbert Museum, Coventry) which displays the work of young people from a Nuneaton-based NGO, Art Alert, having provided them with training in photographic and editing skills (Popov). The unit supports these innovative activities by funding training in skills such as film making, media engagement and public communication, supplemented by the University's provision of short courses. It also provides matched funding for public engagement workshops and offers administrative support for such events.

Colleagues engage with the policy process through advisory panel membership (Wadia is on the advisory board of Muslim Women's Network), by providing advice at select committee hearings (Whiteside on pensions for the House of Lords) and to government (Davies) and by accepting consultancies to offer advice and evaluate policies internationally (Casey, Dowler). Financial support is available for such activities through the RSC. The University has a partnership with the Industry and Parliament Trust, hosting policy events in London for parliamentarians to hear about current research. Colleagues give policy briefings on topics such as food security (Dowler) and address Parliamentary Outreach workshops (Wadia for Muslim women). Impact and engagement at the level of local policy and community organisations is a priority. Jones has won an ESRC award to investigate the impact of Home Office campaigns on immigration in partnership with national policy organisations such as the Runnymede Trust and the Scottish refugee council.

Funding for impact-related activities and training is administered by the RSC and is integral to our research support. The University's *Institute for Advanced Studies* (IAS) Impact and Public Engagement Awards fund research promotion. The unit hosts Honorary Fellows and Visiting IAS Fellows, both national and international, who participate in research discussions at an early stage and enhance potential impact through their own networks. The University's Communications Office and on-site broadcasting studio ensure that research findings reach the widest possible audience. In addition the *Knowledge Centre* (Warwick's web-based research digest) disseminates research findings and the *Global Research Priorities* programme (GRP), with which unit members are actively involved, supports the development of inter-disciplinary research with a global impact.

c. Strategy and plans

We shall enhance impact by developing further research collaboration with potential beneficiaries from the public, voluntary and private sectors (nationally and internationally) and by supporting innovative forms of public engagement. The unit's RSC will provide financial and administrative support for workshops with potential beneficiaries at an early stage of research development and for public engagement related to particular research projects. Funding will be ring fenced for these impact-related activities. We shall create the post of Impact Support Officer whose remit will include supporting impact-related events; creating/consolidating established institutional links with potential beneficiaries; expanding the unit's engagement with practitioners and wider publics and ensuring that research projects grow out of dialogue with potential beneficiaries. The Impact Support Officer will ensure that staff use University support for impact: the web-based Knowledge Centre, various funding opportunities and impact-related training in media engagement and public communication. S/he will work closely with the University's Communications Office to ensure the widest possible media coverage for the unit's research and will publicise impact activities through blogs, Facebook and Twitter. The unit's research Away Days include impact as a standing item to disseminate good practice; impact is discussed in annual staff review as a priority in research planning and is one of the main criteria considered in appointments and promotion.

Web-based resources allow a targeted transmission of research results engaging research beneficiaries at national and international levels. The unit promotes the creation of cultural artefacts (films, exhibitions) and electronic resources (RottenBeat) because they reach wider publics. Expertise in the *Centre for Interdisciplinary Methodologies* guarantees that interdisciplinary and innovative methodologies which facilitate impact are incorporated into the unit's strategy. The development of interdisciplinary and globally relevant research is promoted by the University through its Global Research Priority (GRP) programmes and new initiatives such as the Warwick Institute for the Science of Cities and the Resilient Cities Laboratory, which are both housed in the unit. Colleagues (eg. Dowler, Bhambra, Mah, Whiteside, Uprichard) are involved in various GRP initiatives to ensure that the unit's interdisciplinary research engages with globally relevant questions such as food security, governance, climate change and sustainable cities.

Through the work of Jensen, the unit is developing the role of evaluation research in enhancing public engagement practice and is creating new tools for cultural institutions to monitor the ways their publics respond to them. Collaborators include the Wellcome Trust, the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement and the Digital R & D Fund for the Arts. The findings of Jensen's survey on academic use of the infrastructural support for impact provided by the University (funded by Warwick's IAS) will contribute to the development of a methodology for impact assessment and evaluation and to the unit's future strategic development.

d. Relationship to case studies

The case studies demonstrate how sustained engagement with research users and excellent channels of communication with the media develop from researcher reputation and reflect academic commitment to research with impact potential. This commitment is significant as the case studies were established prior to the development of the unit's formal impact strategy.

The case study on domestic violence benefited from the long-established relationship between the researcher and colleagues with organisations external to the University, particularly trade unions in the education sector and women's NGOs concerned with violence against women. The research design reflected prior knowledge of issues that interested those publics. During the course of the research and on completion, 2 workshops and a conference were held with research user participation. This facilitated dialogue between researchers, women's NGOs and policy makers while ensuring a wide dissemination of findings. The unit supported these events through funding for the workshops and the dedication of support staff time to assist with their organisation and publicity. Findings were disseminated by the University's Communications Office.

The case study on household food security demonstrates the significance of personal reputation for communication of research findings to the policy-making community. Dowler is widely recognised as an expert in the field of food and nutrition, she sits on advisory bodies at the highest levels of policy formation and this, together with the policy networks to which she belongs, enhances the impact of her research. The unit supports Dowler's involvement in these activities and University support has been particularly significant. The University's Food GRP funded Dowler to engage with DEFRA in research and impact-related activities. An IAS fellowship allowed Dowler to bring Geoff Tansey (writer and analyst working on sustainable food systems) to the University for workshops and discussions, and the University facilitated the event hosted by the Industry and Parliament Trust on 'The Future of Household Food Security' at the House of Commons in October 2012 where Dowler presented her research.

The case study on post-socialist punk developed its impact from research that involved research participants from the outset, thanks to the skills of the researchers and their extensive international contacts. It emerged from an AHRC-funded project and was aided by unit support for international partnerships in developing its research and impact strategy. A visiting fellow, Robert Beckford, contributed to the development of visual dissemination methods. This project was innovative in its development of web-based resources in achieving impact and the unit has learned from this precedent in developing its impact strategy.

As indicated above, **the case study on conservation and public engagement** is being integrated into the unit's strategy for supporting impact. It has generated a series of workshops on public engagement and has produced an evaluation of existing support for impact and its effects. The findings of this research have been disseminated using the University's web-based Knowledge Centre and international media contacts. Its results have influenced the way the unit approaches impact and will continue to inform the support it provides.