

Impact case study (REF3b)

<p>Institution: University of Bradford</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: C22</p>
<p>Title of case study: Applying ethnicity research to reduce inequality in Western Australia</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>One of the main impacts of Bradford’s ethnicity research is its influence on how the Substantive Equality Unit (SEU) was set up and continues to operate within the Equal Opportunities Commission of Western Australia. The SEU was established to address the challenge of creating equal and inclusive services, and ensuring their delivery, by all the departments of the Western Australian government for a diverse population. Its central role in promoting equality in the region is on-going and long-term. The beneficiaries of this impact are the government and minorities in the region, particularly Aboriginals and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.</p> <p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The study of race, ethnicity, and the challenges of promoting civility and equality in multi-ethnic societies has been a focus of social science research at Bradford since the 1970s, leading to the establishment of the Ethnicity and Social Policy Research Unit in the 1990s led by Charles Husband (Professor 1992-2013). A significant feature of the Unit’s approach, which is now encompassed in the diversity and identity group within the Centre for Applied Social Research, is the way it relates theory and empirical research on race and ethnicity with a critical approach to social policy; the overall aim of which is a more equitable reshaping of civil society. The cumulative body of work by Husband is an exemplar of this research, resulting in extensive publications on ethnic relations that have explicit policy relevance locally, nationally, and internationally. His research has analysed the nature of ethnic relations in Britain and across Europe, arguing for a multicultural public sphere and forms of citizenship in which there is respect for cultural and ethnic difference, critiquing the drift in current political rhetoric and in certain social policies towards assimilationist models, the ideal of which is to absorb minorities into the dominant culture (1,4). This has meant that empirical work has been engaged in developing tools that will create greater appreciation of differences within agencies operating in the public sphere, thus improving both the quality and inclusiveness of services for minority groups. For example, through research funded by the English National Board of Nursing and Midwifery, tools were developed to improve transcultural understanding and communication in nursing education, thus having impacts on the way nursing services are delivered to diverse groups (2,3). Developments were also made in anti-discriminatory social work practice and in research on the way ethnicity is represented in mainstream and minority ethnic media (5). The approach of this research is interdisciplinary, developing a concern with the contextual framework of human rights and law in the shaping of policy in multi-ethnic societies (4).</p> <p>In the application of this research Husband has worked with NGOs, government departments, and individual activists with an ambition to improve inter-ethnic relations at the level of state institutions, professional practice, and interpersonal relations. Particularly, this has provided a strong evidential basis for developing a gradualist approach to creating change in routine professional practices within government agencies. Previous observation of over-zealous interventions provided evidence of the dangers of offending potential allies, while stiffening the resistance of entrenched enemies of change. This experience has been central in informing Husband’s role in Western Australia (WA). In the late 1980s Husband was invited to be a consultant with the Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission of WA, and then a Visiting Fellow at the University of Western Australia, resulting in a book (1) which was written in response to requests from colleagues in that University. The significance of the book is that it gives a wide-ranging account of ethnic diversity and of the challenge of addressing diversity, which, while reflecting on the British experience, contributed to his visibility in WA political circles as an expert in race relations. It also provided a transparent understanding of the policy approach that would eventually be developed through the Substantive Equality Unit (SEU). He subsequently had visiting lecturer status at Curtin University over a</p>

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number of years and was active in the debate around Australian multiculturalism. In the period 2004-5 Husband, supported by the Commissioner, the Hon. Yvonne Henderson, was given the lead in developing the Substantive Equality Policy across all the departments of the Government of WA and its organisational structure. Working with a small team, he had a key role in negotiating the political process of bringing the SEU into existence.

Thus the invitation to work with the Government of WA came as a result of the international profile of Bradford's research on race and ethnicity, and in particular of Husband's reputation within the academic and policy milieu as having expertise not only as an academic empirical researcher, but also importantly as having successfully engaged in developing policy responses to diversity in fields such as journalism, nursing, and social work; and who had worked with cognate professional bodies in the United Kingdom, Europe and Australia.

3. References to the research

1. Husband C. (1994) *'Race' and Nation: The British Experience*. Perth, Western Australia: Paradigm Books.
2. Husband C, Torry B. (2004) (eds.) *Transcultural Healthcare Practice: an Educational Resource for Nurses and Health Care Practitioners*. London: Royal College of Nurses.
3. Gerrish K, Husband C, MacKenzie J. (1996) *Nursing for a Multi-Ethnic Society*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
4. Husband C. (2003) Doing Good By Stealth Whilst Flirting With Racism: Some Contradictory Dynamics of British Multiculturalism. *Migraciones* 14: 145-179.
5. Husband C. (2002) Diasporic Identities and Diasporic Economies: the case of minority ethnic media, in Mariniello M, Piquard B. (eds.) *Diversity in the City*. Bilbao: University of Deusto: 153-168
6. Husband C. (2000) Recognizing Diversity and Developing Skills: the proper role of transcultural communication, in *European Journal of Social Work* 3(3): 225 – 234.

The following grants also indicate the quality of the research:

English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting, 1997-2001, £100,000, *Evaluating the Cognitive and Affective in Nurse Education and Practice*: Husband, McKenzie, Burkitt.

English Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting, 1998-2008, £274,000 *Educational Preparation of Transcultural Health Care Practice: The Development and Evaluation of Research Based Learning Materials to Promote Transcultural Competence in Nursing Education and Practice*, PI Husband, Mackenzie with Ms Karen Chouhan (De Montfort University), and Mr David Weaver (The 1990 Trust).

Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2004-2006, £53,222, *Giving a Voice to the Hidden Research Subject* (Demonstration project), PI Husband

4. Details of the impact

Although the Substantive Equality Unit (SEU) was set up in 2005, the Commissioner for Equal Opportunity in WA, Yvonne Henderson, attests in her written reference (a) that it “*continues to operate as a key element in the delivery of equitable services across the whole of the WA governmental operation*”. According to the 2011 census data, this state of Australia has a population of 2,239,170, 3.1% (69,664) of which are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, with languages spoken at home other than English including Mandarin (1.3%), Cantonese (0.8%), Vietnamese (0.7%), and Arabic (0.5%). Although the focus of the SEU is on ‘race’, intersecting characteristics such as gender, disability, age, and geographical location or isolation are equally important factors considered by it. The initial input by Husband was to develop an agreed theoretical framework for an understanding of the nature of the sources and forms of discrimination likely to be in operation; and to develop an agreed policy framework for addressing this in relation to the delivery of services by all departments of the Government. In this he drew on his academic studies of racism and discrimination in relation to media practice, social work services, nursing, and the wider politics of national policy development around ‘multiculturalism’. This translated into

sensitivity towards the particular expression of multiculturalism in the context of the distinctive history of Australian identity and politics.

A key issue was to agree upon the centrality of 'institutional racism', since this placed the focus on changing institutional behaviours, institutional practice, and managerial values rather than upon individual prejudice. In the context of Australia with its self-image as a successful multi-ethnic society characterised by its commitment to 'a fair go', this perspective was not entirely welcome. Thus an initial key activity was to carry through a programme of education for key policy makers and practitioners about the perspectives they held on the legitimacy of addressing state institutional practice. Given the emphasis in Husband's work on valuing difference, theoretically a major breakthrough was in gaining a shared understanding of what 'equal treatment' might mean, and in this regard the use of the phrase "*If you want to treat me equally you might have to be prepared to treat me differently*", was key. Practically, the development and use of 'Needs and Impact Assessment' tools as a vehicle for leveraging change was also crucial. The structure for the implementation of this new policy was deliberately designed to be gradualist and cumulative, and is clearly laid out in the Unit's documentation. This structure is still in place as an on-going, long-term framework of the SEU in its work to shape the policies of specific government departments and positively affect the quality and accessibility of their services for minorities.

For example, the 2011-2012 Annual Report notes that: "*Following on from its initial education stages engaging CEOs, Senior Officers and Implementing Officers from the 31 participating WA Government agencies (including the Commission), in its sixth year the Substantive Equality Unit is now expanding its reach to the wider WA public sector and community... Now there is greater understanding of Substantive Equality ... and of the one size does not fit all concepts for public sector policies and practices, the 31 participating departments are going beyond their assessments of existing policies and practices by undertaking a Substantive Equality pilot program which involves the assessment of new policies and initiatives. In addition to the pilot program and the expansion of its work to the community and wider public sector, the SEU continues its support work in education, research and monitoring with the 31 existing departments.*" (b).

The education programme was followed by the introduction of impact and needs assessments to influence current practice, the format of which can be found in the Substantive Equality Guide (2012) (c). An example of how these work in practice can be found in the 2011-12 Annual Report (b), which shows the SEU continuing its three-year impact study with the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages to further research the disproportionate number of Aboriginal Australians without a birth certificate. The aim is to quantify the problem and identify the obstacles this group faces in accessing the birth registration system: then to create culturally appropriate remedies in the birth registry process. Additionally, specific reports on interventions show how the impact and needs assessments continue to be a key starting point for reviewing current practice and making recommendations for systemic change. The report of the Disability Services Commission (2011) (d) – Substantive Equality Unit Project No 4, Positive Behaviour Teams – details the outcome of an examination of the teams within the State-wide Specialist Services Directorate of the Disability Services Commission. Through employing the established method of the SEU - interviewing service users from minority backgrounds, agencies who work with them, service workers and other concerned parties - this review provided an examination of the adequacy of current practice for meeting the needs of people of Aboriginal and CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse) backgrounds. The report identified seven areas with specific recommendations for change. The implementation of these recommendations will now become a mutual process of dialogue between the Disability Services Commission and SEU. At a different level, the more specific review of the usage of a public park – *Review of Customer Service at Whiteman Park*, Department of Planning (e) – revealed 'some gaps in the services provided to the parks customers from CALD backgrounds.' An identification of these 'gaps' resulted in the production of 11 recommendations for innovation. Because these recommendations were published in 2011-12 there is as yet no evidence as to how successfully they were delivered. However, each recommendation was attached to a named responsible officer with a stated time frame for completion of the innovation, to improve access and usage of the park for those from CALD backgrounds.

Current initiatives being developed by the SEU in partnership with other government departments include developing the provision of mobile breast screening unit to remote Aboriginal peoples; increasing the percentage of Aboriginal people holding drivers licences; and modifying the means of communication with Aboriginal and CALD clients.

The enduring strength of the Substantive Equality Policy lies not only in the specific initiatives of the SEU, but also in the way the equality policy is influencing the functions, policies and practices of individual government departments. For example, in the area of housing, a 2009 report of the SEU looked at the experiences of Aboriginal and CALD people in the private housing rental market and made 15 recommendations to improve their treatment in this sector. These recommendations included training and guidelines for industry operators, legislative regulation of tenancy databases, national consistency of legislation, and support for CALD and Aboriginal people to access and maintain a tenancy (f). A 2011 report on the outcomes of these recommendations showed that, while there was still a long way to go to achieving equality in the housing market, training for industry operators had been set up and operationalised; guidelines had been prepared in the form of a booklet drawing the attention of operators to the requirements on them in existing equality laws; and legislation currently being drafted to regulate tenancy databases takes into account the findings of the 2009 report (g). The report on outcomes concludes that, *“through the full and partial achievement of the recommendations and other initiatives, some of the barriers [for Aboriginal and CALD people in the housing market] identified in the original Report will gradually be removed.”* (g). Thus the SEU, the establishment and shaping of which Husband played such a key role in, continues to impact on the lives and opportunities of minority groups living in the province of WA, influencing government departments *“to make [their] services better tailored to meet the needs of all their clients”* (a). It is helping to improve social inclusion in the region by influencing policy and practice in order to increase the accessibility, take-up, and use of services by people from minority backgrounds.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- a. Commissioner for Equal Opportunities, Equal Opportunities Commission, Western Australia.
- b. Equal Opportunities Commissions: Annual Report 2011-2012 (in particular p2, 34 and 44) (<http://www.eoc.wa.gov.au/Publications/AnnualReports.aspx>)
- c. *Substantive Equality Guide: New and revised Policies and Services and Major Initiatives* SEU February 2012; (http://www.eoc.wa.gov.au/Libraries/Substantive_equality/New_and_revised_services-guide_FINAL-DRAFT.sflb.ashx)
- d. Positive Behaviour Framework: Substantive Equality – Project 4, Disability Services Commission, Positive Behaviour Teams. (http://www.eoc.wa.gov.au/Libraries/Substantive_equality/Disability-Services-Commission-Positive_Behaviour_Team_Substantive_Equality_NIAf.sflb.ashx)
- e. *Review of Customer Service at Whiteman Park – Substantive Equality Assessment 2011-2012* (http://www.eoc.wa.gov.au/Libraries/Substantive_equality/Substantive_Equality_at_Whiteman_Park_Report_2011-2012sm.sflb.ashx)
- f. *Accommodating Everyone: A Report of an Inquiry into Discrimination in the Private Rental Market in Western Australia* (2009). (http://www.eoc.wa.gov.au/Libraries/Complaints_and_investigations/Accommodating_Everyone_report_2009.sflb.ashx)
- g. Report of the Outcomes of the Recommendations of Accommodating Everyone. (http://www.eoc.wa.gov.au/Libraries/Complaints_and_investigations/Accommodating_Everyone_Report_of_Outcomes_-_March_2011.sflb.ashx)