



JOSEPH
ROWNTREE
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JRF Programme Paper
Poverty and ethnicity

**INITIAL EVALUATION OF
THE JRF POVERTY AND
ETHNICITY PROGRAMME**

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November 2014

This paper:

- provides an independent assessment of the Poverty and Ethnicity programme focus and outputs to date;
- looks at the relative strengths of different dissemination techniques;
- explores how the programme can maximise its influence and impact.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) commissioned this paper as part of its programme on poverty and ethnicity, which aims to increase understanding of the relationship between poverty and ethnicity and create a more effective approach to tackling poverty across all the different ethnic groups in the UK.

ISBN 9781909586574

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1. Introduction

Background

Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) commissioned Cambridge Policy Consultants to undertake an initial review of the JRF's Poverty and Ethnicity programme. JRF launched the programme in May 2011 to explore in greater detail the complex relationships between poverty and ethnicity. In particular, the research programme has highlighted the importance of intersectionality – the interaction of these factors on individual circumstances. The Poverty and Ethnicity (P&E) programme will ultimately have three phases:

- Phase 1: June 2011 to March 2013 – in-depth investigation of key themes;
- Phase 2: June 2013 to September 2014 – exploit new sources of quantitative data to provide a robust analysis of poverty and ethnicity;
- Phase 3: December 2014 to December 2015 – develop practical solutions from the evidence gathered in phases 1 and 2.

Phase 1 of the programme of research built on the six areas identified in developing the programme: education, work, caring, social networks, the role of places and inequality within ethnic groups. In addition to these, the JRF funded studies of poverty and ethnicity in Scotland, Wales and in Northern Ireland. The programme aims to increase understanding of the relationships between poverty and ethnicity and use this to develop more effective ways of tackling poverty across ethnic groups.

The initial scoping phase that preceded the formal programme involved consulting people across a wide range of sectors and places in order to identify key issues for the programme, understand the context and begin building networks and partnerships. The Programme Advisory Network consisted of around 40 people from across different fields to advise and support the programme.

The table below provides an overview of the Poverty and Ethnicity programme reports published to date. A total of ten research reports were published in the scoping phase along with a *Round-up* summary in May 2011. Seven reports were published in phase 1 with a further *Round-up* and local authority briefing paper due to be published in 2014.

Table 1: Overview of JRF Poverty and Ethnicity programme reports

| Title | Author(s) | Date |
|--|---|-------------|
| Scoping phase | | |
| Exploring experiences of poverty in Bradford | B Athwal, M Quiggin, D Phillips and M Harrison | 2011 |
| Experience of poverty and ethnicity in London | Karen Chouhan, S Speeden and U Qazi | 2011 |
| Social networks, poverty and ethnicity | A Gilchrist and P Kyprianou | 2011 |
| Community consultation on poverty and ethnicity | Philomena de Lima, R Arshad, A Bell and T Braunholtz-Speight | 2011 |
| A review of poverty and ethnicity in Scotland | Gina Netto, Filip Sosenko and Glen Bramley | Feb 11 |
| Poverty, ethnicity and place | Steve Garner and Gargi Bhattacharyya | May 11 |
| Poverty, ethnicity and caring | Donald Hirsch, Viet-Hai Phung and Esmeranda Manful | May 11 |
| The role of employer attitudes and behavior | Maria Hudson and Dragos Radu | May 11 |
| Poverty, ethnicity and education | Nii Djan Tackey, Helen Barnes and Priya Khambhaita | May 11 |
| Inequality within ethnic groups | Lucinda Platt | May 11 |
| Poverty and ethnicity: A review of evidence | Helen Barnard and Claire Turner | May 11 |
| Phase 1 | | |
| Poverty and ethnicity in Northern Ireland | Alison Wallace, Ruth McAreavey and Karl Atkin | Feb 13 |
| Poverty and ethnicity in Wales | Duncan Holtom, Ian Bottrill and Jack Watkins | Oct 13 |
| Making the links: Poverty, ethnicity and social networks | Angus McCabe, Alison Gilchrist, Kevin Harris, Asif Afridi and Paul Kyprianou | Sep 13 |
| In-work poverty, ethnicity and workplace cultures | Maria Hudson, Gina Netto, Filip Sosenko, Mike Noon, Philomena de Lima, Alison Gilchrist and Nicolina Kamenou-Aigbekaen, in partnership with CEMVO Scotland and Voice4Change England | Sep 13 |
| Poverty and Ethnicity: Balancing Caring and Earning for British Caribbean, Pakistani and Somali People | Omar Khan, Akile Ahmet and Christina Victor | May 14 |
| How place influences employment outcomes for ethnic minorities | Mumtaz Lalani, Hilary Metcalf, Leila Tufekci, Andrew Corley, Heather Rolfe and Anitha George | May 14 |
| The economic and social mobility of ethnic minority communities in Northern Ireland | Jenny Irwin, Ruth McAreavey and Niall Murphy | May 14 |

It is important to recognise that the programme is at a relatively early stage of the process. Some key outputs have been produced but these have involved qualitative research and literature reviews as the datasets required for the quantitative analysis did not become available until 2013. The next phase (phase 2) will focus on quantitative analysis to develop analysis around correlation and causation issues around:

- social networks;
- employment;
- occupational 'segregation';
- residential 'segregation';
- poverty persistence and the impact of the recession.

Aims of the evaluation

This initial evaluation provides a robust and independent assessment of the programme to date (i.e. scoping phase and phase 1) to inform the future networking and influencing activities of the programme. This consists of a detailed assessment of the research programme focus, the robustness and accessibility of the research outputs so far, and the relative strengths of different dissemination techniques to be set against the evolving policy context in the UK nations – how should the programme exploit its added value to maximise influence and impact?

Methodology

The evaluation methodology included:

- start-up meeting with JRF staff involved;
- review of background materials, including internal strategy documents, theory of change document and the programme research publications;
- 46 interviews with a wide range of stakeholders, including authors, advisory group members, national and local government officials and policy-makers, academics and representatives from the third sector; and
- analysis of online statistics and social media activity.

2. Key findings

Programme rationale

The P&E programme arose from JRF trustees' request to undertake more work specifically on the cross-cutting issues of poverty and ethnicity – building on previous JRF research. The P&E programme aims to significantly increase understanding of the relationship between poverty and ethnicity and to use this to create a more sophisticated, nuanced and effective approach to tackling poverty across different ethnic groups.

Over the three phases, there is an intention to develop targeted local approaches to addressing the connections between poverty and ethnicity, drawing together findings across projects and phases of the programme.

The P&E programme has benefited from an extended scoping phase of 12 months, during which evidence reviews were commissioned and a programme of community consultations and structured meetings with stakeholders were undertaken in order to prioritise key areas. This process identified the four topic areas and two geographic analyses (Wales and Northern Ireland, as Scotland had a study already underway).

A detailed theory of change was developed at the outset to support programme delivery. This internal document identified employment and labour markets and caring as key areas the programme would focus on. The document details outcomes expected from different audiences including employers, local authorities and other local actors, and care providers, policy-makers and commissioners. Each action was further segmented by anticipated receptiveness of audiences, where separate actions were designed for those who are already actively trying to address ethnicity based disadvantage, those interested in the issue but not active, and those who do not see the issues as being relevant.

A key risk in this approach was that the poverty and ethnicity agendas were both broad and complex areas. From the outset, the challenge was to draw out practical solutions and recommendations.

There is therefore a need to retain links to community and voluntary groups to stay 'grounded'. It was seen as important to develop targeted local approaches to addressing the connections between poverty and ethnicity and this is the reason behind phase 3 of the P&E programme.

Programme reach

Stakeholders have a strong view that there is a need to bring together the poverty and ethnicity agendas and the JRF research team are widely praised by stakeholders for doing this. This is seen as genuinely novel research and has been approached with a clear drive to achieve a more holistic understanding of these complex issues.

The shape and research issues raised by the P&E programme have been widely praised by stakeholders. The scoping papers, JRF summary and Lucinda Platt report provided a solid foundation for the P&E programme and were welcomed by many stakeholders and academics. This thorough grounding before launching phase 1 was felt to be very necessary because:

- The combination of poverty and ethnicity issues was almost a 'green field' in research terms. The need to give the research programme a focus and build a body of evidence was seen by many as essential and the management of the research programme is highly respected by stakeholders.
- At least in central government terms, there is a widespread view that policy-makers currently regard both agendas as suspect and the combination worse.
- Above all, the vast majority of respondents felt that no-one else was doing this important research.

"JRF have been left to do the heavy lifting here. There is very limited research in this field and so there is plenty to explore with finite resources."

Academic.

Very few evident gaps in the research agenda were identified by stakeholders. A number of respondents felt that the research could do more to highlight the circumstances of migrant communities, while others felt it was important to highlight the specific issues for women in ethnic groups. One suggested that it was a surprise that there was little on the role the criminal justice system played for some ethnic groups.

Most stakeholders reported that their involvement with P&E programme research could be very specific. Many had read one or two of the P&E reports in depth and some may have scanned the summaries, but very few had read all reports. This appears to be a function of the more limited time individuals have available – a number of stakeholders said that reports were on their reading list and that when they had time or more likely when they saw a (policy or practice) need, they would read them. This does need to be borne in mind when reflecting on some of

the findings below – they are often based on knowledge of one report, rather than the suite of evidence from Phase 1.

“I am aware that the research reports are on the JRF website so I can draw on them when I need to. It is hard to read broadly even though I know it would be a good thing. I simply have no time to do that nowadays.”

Academic.

Table 2: P&E report website download statistics

| | No. of views | No. of report downloads | No. of summary downloads |
|--|---------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| How place influences employment outcomes for ethnic minorities (May 2014) | 949 | 167 | 144 |
| The economic and social mobility of ethnic minority communities in Northern Ireland (May 2014) | 647 | 147 | 82 |
| Caring and earning among low-income Caribbean, Pakistani and Somali people (May 2014) | 525 | 95 | 85 |

Source: JRF Poverty and Ethnicity programme online statistics

Table 2 provides statistics on the number of report views and downloads on the JRF P&E programme online pages. Our previous review of JRF publications showed that about one third of JRF publications are downloaded more than 100 times (Child Poverty Programme Evaluation, 2010), suggesting that P&E programme reports compare very well, with solid interest across all three publications. It is important to note that these publications have been available for download only for a short period of time and it is likely that the number of views and downloads will increase during the lifetime of the programme.

It is also interesting that people have taken different messages from the reports – perhaps demonstrating the breadth of audience. For example, a number of stakeholders felt that the social network report was interesting because in their view it suggested ethnicity is less of a factor than social class, while others felt the same report clearly evidenced that social class is a factor but you will always have to address discrimination against ethnic minorities. Others found the social network analysis very helpful and interesting while others felt that they learned nothing new. Similarly, one local policy-maker/practitioner singled out the report on place and employment outcomes for ethnic minorities as a particularly useful piece of research, while a BME community stakeholder felt its recommendations were ‘light and not practical’.

The phase 1 research to date has added value in the opinion of the majority of stakeholders by:

- Providing a national analysis. Country-specific reports in both Wales and Northern Ireland were acknowledged by policy-makers and local actors as being significant and giving JRF (even further) credibility. In Scotland, this has been less of an impact, but nevertheless, the report is credited with providing a more detailed appreciation of the position of ethnic groups, in particular the circumstances of those living in more rural communities.
- Raising the complexity of intersectionality and going some way to unpicking the relationships between ethnicity and other dimensions of identity and poverty related outcomes.
- Some reports were praised for highlighting the issues that different ethnic groups have in common and which aspects are specific to individual groups.

Opinions on the extent to which the reports have been able to fully address intersectionality and the factors that lie behind variations in circumstances within groups are more mixed. We think there are a number of factors at play here, the main one being simply in the nature of qualitative research. While many stakeholders would acknowledge that the research was qualitative in nature, it did not prevent them from being critical that it did not provide sufficient detail.

The focus on qualitative research in the first phase of P&E had consequences for a significant minority of stakeholders. The lack of depth in the data meant it was sometimes difficult for report authors to make strong policy recommendations.

“The limited number of interviews was raised in the meeting and was something of an open goal for those who did not want to accept the findings.”

Policy-maker.

“Interesting but quite useless in terms of practical application.”

Policy-maker/ practitioner.

Platt’s initial review of evidence relating to poverty and ethnicity¹ highlighted two issues that were central to the P&E research programme:

- the issue of intersectionality (that a combination of factors impact on ethnic groups, often to differing degrees in influencing poverty outcomes); and
- that the variation in poverty within ethnic groups is often greater than that between ethnic groups.

Stakeholders most often reported that they had been given new insight on the issue of intersectionality and how different factors influenced the experience of poverty for different communities. However, fewer were able to shed more light

on the factors that differ within ethnic groups. This is a tall order for qualitative research and the number of interviews that were available.

“The research was too small. The report talks about the Indian community but only interviewed three Hindu people.”
Community organisation stakeholder.

“Individual pieces have not been as strong as they could be. Some touch on ethnicity and gender or religion, but it should be bigger than that, looking at different intersections in one’s identity. It is a hard concept and there is not much data.”
Academic/community organisation stakeholder.

There is no easy answer here, as more than one stakeholder pointed out, the lack of research in the field makes this inevitable.

“We recognised the limited research resource throughout and it did prevent us from being more definitive in our recommendations but that is the nature of qualitative research on this scale – we do feel we were able to identify the issues but not always present a detailed picture for each group.”
Research author.

A minority were disappointed that some reports did not make a greater effort to identify factors in common with other ethnic groups and then focus attention on issues that differ between groups. Others felt that some reports were more successful in drawing this distinction from a relatively small number of interviews. Ultimately, the relative contribution of different factors would require robust quantitative analysis.

Others stressed that the research was ‘cutting-edge’ and therefore simply raising these issues was important. The ability of the P&E programme to combine these qualitative findings with the forthcoming phase 2 quantitative analysis would add depth to these findings.

Equally, there were few suggestions as to what alternative approaches were open to JRF. One report was considered to have been too ambitious and spread the research resource too thin. The stakeholder felt that the research would have benefited from a simpler framework:

“...comparing and contrasting the circumstances for ethnic groups in a relatively rich place with equivalent groups in relatively disadvantaged location might have provided the basis for a focus on how differences in place impact on these groups.”
Academic.

Others felt that it was too much to expect researchers to distil effective solutions – that these needed to be tested with communities and policy-makers (as indeed is envisaged in phase 3 of the P&E programme).

“We are still in the foothills of understanding what should be done.”
Policy stakeholder.

Disseminating the findings

Most stakeholders said that they were aware of P&E research reports because they were either involved in an advisory group, attended a dissemination event or received an email circular or JRF newsletter. A small proportion said that they had received a Twitter alert – although this was a relatively small group, this communications channel has clearly grown.

Stakeholders were generally aware that the P&E programme was intending to publish further reports there was the sense of something of a hiatus in publications – stakeholders are generally aware that phase 2 quantitative research is underway but not all knew that social care and poverty and place reports had been published recently. Some reported that they would catch up on these reports the next time that they needed to pull together research – i.e. that they would consult the JRF website to check for more recent publications. Nevertheless, a number of stakeholders felt that JRF could do more to provide their audience with a future horizon – what’s next and when (within broad terms) these were expected to be published.

Some stakeholders highlighted the opportunity to draw connections with other areas of JRF research – aging society and caring, places, etc. In one sense, this is a further demand for greater interpretation from the audience. The visibility and links to the Future Labour Market programme is well made on the JRF website, drawing clear links between Future Labour Market and P&E reports, for example, *Rewarding work for low-paid workers* – how human resources and development practices could help tackle in-work poverty. However, many stakeholders were not aware of these links – most often they were aware of other JRF work streams and simply wondered if there were connections with the P&E research.

Stakeholders often suggested that research *Round-ups* and interpretation of the findings for specific audiences would be of most use to them. There are two issues here:

- there is a recognition that they do not have the time to do this themselves and they trust JRF to provide an evidence-based analysis with the added value of being able to link the research in P&E to the wider JRF research programme;

- a number of interviewees wanted to understand how the findings in P&E reports linked to other JRF work – caring, place, future labour markets, aging etc.

The forthcoming review of the P&E findings distilled for a local authority audience was mentioned here as being important. One stakeholder who had read an early draft of this report felt that it was just what was required to engage with a wider local authority audience.

Discussions with authors have highlighted the challenge in presenting complex findings, particularly as intersectionality could be seen as fragmentary. It is genuinely difficult to summarise these complex interactions in policy terms when they often vary across individual groups and the research does not have the scale to be definitive in all cases. Again, the launch of the quantitative research will provide an opportunity to reinforce and refine the qualitative findings and we think that some referencing of the qualitative findings will be useful (perhaps as another JRF *Round-up* rather than directly in the quantitative reports) to re-invest in the findings around the existing P&E reports.

Media training was seen as being very helpful by research authors but more in terms of considering the challenges to the key messages than how to present the results *per se*. The discipline of focusing on the key messages and the best approach to getting these across in a relatively short timeframe helped with the presentation of the results to a wider audience. Some authors were also keen to emphasise that discussions with their Advisory Group had been helpful and that, from the outset, it was a shared view that recommendations should be cost-effective if they were to get an audience.

Feedback from dissemination events organised by JRF was very positive. Stakeholders outside London were particularly impressed by JRF efforts in ensuring wide geographical dissemination (beyond London). JRF staff and academics involved in the research presented key findings to local policy-makers, practitioners, academics and community organisations in a number of regional events.

In Wales, the authors of the report were also contracted to undertake dissemination activities. The dissemination strategy for Wales involved national and local dimensions with the intention to build awareness of the study, engage with stakeholders in more depth and undertake more targeted work with a smaller number of stakeholders so that the key messages and recommendations could be discussed in more detail. The dissemination strategy had the following elements:

- a national launch event and press release;

- up to ten policy discussions and meetings with national and local stakeholders.

The authors attended media training and found this useful to help organise the presentation of the findings and recommendations and consider what type of questions/issues might be raised by their audiences and potential responses.

The launch event in Wales did have the Deputy Minister for Tackling Poverty, senior Welsh Government policy and Local authority stakeholders in attendance. The report raised a number of issues that were broadly recognised by attendees and reinforced the importance of family and community ties but also highlighted the issue of the white working class, which was considered as interesting and novel but also challenging to existing ethnic minority organisations in attendance.

The authors undertook some follow-up meetings with civil servants which were well-received and were reported as raising interesting issues but appear to have had limited impact. A couple of stakeholders felt this was because the report was qualitative and although the issues raised were recognised by practitioners, it was relatively easy for policy-makers to argue that the results were not sufficiently robust to warrant action. The report did highlight the need to more closely consider the combination of the equalities and poverty agenda in Wales, although that has not yet had an impact.

The authors also undertook a presentation to the Wales Race Forum in November 2013 which was well-received. Attendees made a number of points about the event:

- Firstly, the Forum only meets twice a year for between one to two hours and so the time available to present and discuss wide-ranging and complex findings was limited. That said, the fact that the research focused on Wales did ensure that they made some time available in their agenda
- Secondly, the attendees are fully aware of the issues in detail and so tend to look for solutions. The report was welcomed and the primary finding that the Welsh Government need to align the equalities and poverty agendas was fully endorsed and something many attendees had already been lobbying for.
- Some attendees did feel it placed too much emphasis on the situation in south Wales and insufficient attention on the issues in north Wales, but recognised that there was a limit to what could be achieved with the scale of research.

A challenge has been to engage more widely. A number of sessions were undertaken with local authorities in Anglesey, Blaenau Gwent, Ceredigion, Swansea and Cardiff. There have also been individual briefing sessions with

local organisations with an interest in ethnicity issues. The authors report that while these meetings were well-received, they did not generate any significant momentum. Issues were recognised but determining appropriate policy and practice changes was difficult in this format.

There appear to be a number of lessons for JRF arising from an author-led model in this instance:

- Although there is a greater level of resource available to undertake the dissemination, a potential downside is the limited depth and breadth of knowledge of other research involved in the programme, the phasing of the P&E programme and JRF's wider research activities.
- No matter what the level of resource, the research needs to be able to engage – this can often be down to timing and luck as much as the particular message. We think that while the dissemination did engage with stakeholders interested in ethnicity issues, it did not achieve similar success with those responsible for many of the policy levers that might underpin solutions – skills, education, enterprise and economic development etc. As a community cohesion co-ordinator pointed out “We do already have a fair understanding of these [ethnic] issues, new research on this is welcome but we need colleagues from skills and economic development at the meeting to discuss potential solutions.”

In terms of the forthcoming round of P&E reports, it will be important to build on the work already done in Wales and this might involve:

- early discussions with both community cohesion and poverty colleagues in Welsh government with the explicit intention to focus on potential solutions – there appears to be little debate about the range of problems;
- linking into local authority representatives of both agendas – there is a network of all 22 Community Cohesion Co-ordinators and anti-poverty teams. The former have the ethnic/race agenda at the local level but the latter may well have a better connection to the potential solutions;
- in terms of the Welsh agenda, both south Wales and north/rural Wales events should be considered.

Social media

Many stakeholders report that they do follow JRF on Twitter now. Compared to previous studies on JRF research programmes, Twitter is becoming a mainstream mechanism for keeping ahead of the report publications schedule. Those who did follow JRF felt that tweets were well-targeted and informative (although one organisation had missed the publication of the most recent P&E reports even though they follow JRF tweets).

JRF blogs were also well-regarded and stakeholders who followed these reported that they were a good source of further debate and understanding. In some cases, the use of blogs was seen as a good way in to the findings if you did not have time to read the reports.

Table 3 provides an analysis of JRF blog activity in May 2014, where two out of eight blogs published discussed findings from the P&E programme. Both blogs have achieved better than average activity figures. By mid-June, the racism blog has been viewed 1,322 times since its publication. This is quite a strong performance – the average time on website is 2 minutes 1 second and the blog has an average of 3 minutes 40 seconds, so the quality of visits compares well. On Twitter, the JRF tweet linking to the racism blog was re-tweeted 49 times. The blog was also tweeted by users, some of which were high profile stakeholders, including Unite the Union (28,000 followers), the British Association of Social Workers (11,000 followers) and the Community Relations Council in Northern Ireland (3,000 followers).

Table 3: JRF blog performance May 2014

| | Facebook likes | Tweets | LinkedIn shares | Blog comments |
|---|-----------------------|---------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| <i>How racism contributes to poverty in the UK</i> | 141 | 293 | 9 | 2 |
| When dementia happens, it happens to your whole family says 11-year-old Annie | 319 | 258 | 29 | 4 |
| <i>New report fails to highlight most important fact about poverty and ethnicity</i> | 15 | 133 | 1 | 2 |
| Three steps Scotland can take to close the attainment gap between rich and poor children | 12 | 81 | 4 | 5 |
| If we want greater prosperity, we need to think cities and think local | 4 | 73 | 11 | 1 |
| How does everyday, informal support work? | 6 | 63 | 0 | 8 |
| What's driving Scotland's increasing ethnic diversity? | 11 | 40 | 4 | 0 |
| How Scotland is setting the pace on climate justice | 70 | 37 | 0 | 0 |
| Average | 72 | 122 | 7 | 3 |

Source: JRF website and CPC analysis (June 2014)

The lack of time to find and read reports was mentioned as an issue across a significant proportion of stakeholders but in a small number of interviews it was clear that the use of Twitter to push out information on report launches etc., may have changed the basis of interaction with JRF – in a couple of cases there was the view that it was now JRF’s job to draw stakeholders’ attention to the reports and that the idea of going on the JRF website to look for them or explore what else might be available somehow required more resource. It should be stressed that this was a small number of interviewees and a greater number of respondents were likely to report that even if they had not yet read the reports, they knew where to go to access them as and when they required them.

An issue raised by a number of stakeholders was the very limited visibility of the programme in the mainstream media. Although some of the blogs on P&E have measured well against JRF ‘typical’ reach and social media activity, the programme findings have been missing from the national media headlines.

“The programme is missing and needs key messages, more crude headlines that people remember. It has not been able to do this so far. [The research programme] is very broad so [there is] no clear story.”

Research author.

Early impact and influence of the programme

Given the early stage of the P&E programme, there was only limited expectation that the programme will have influenced partners and policy so far. The programme has set three measures of success:

- Some organisations in some local areas actively using the research to try to make progress.
- Changing the nature of the debate around poverty and ethnicity.
- Changing approaches adopted by central and local government.

There is already evidence that the phase 1 research outputs have had a significant impact on the first of these – providing national evidence in the nations backed by thematic reports. At this stage, the report on workplace cultures is most often cited by stakeholders, followed by the social networks report (but other thematic reports were only relatively recently published).

A presentation by the authors of the workplace cultures report and the programme manager of the DWP Ethnic Minority Employment Stakeholder Group (EMESG) led to the Chair embedding key findings and recommendations into the existing Business in Community Programme Race for Opportunity

campaign, directed at employers and intended to promote the better use of ethnic talent in businesses through recruitment and progression pathways.

In Northern Ireland, the report publication and dissemination coincided with legislation on exploitation and this meant that the report found a ready audience in the administration. The report will also continue to have an influence over the next 12 months as the administration seeks to develop a Race Equality Strategy in the wake of the 'Pastorgate' debate.²

At the very local level, one practitioner explained how the research findings had helped them to better articulate intersectionality around poverty and ethnicity and argue for the case to continue to look at poverty across different ethnicities, because there are some ethnic-specific issues.

“People are not equally poor even if they live on the same street – I found the study looking at place and [employment] outcomes interesting, how your local environment can make a difference.”
Policy-maker.

There is something of an expectation that the quantitative research will help sharpen the messages and provide the robust analysis that central government research departments suggest would be necessary for them to engage more fully with the implications of the research.

A number of stakeholders felt that the final phase of the P&E programme will be equally important to draw together and summarise issues but also promote a broader debate. This, many suggested, should seek to draw out the factors that are similar in their impact on different ethnic groups in poverty on the one hand and then identify those factors which are different or specific to particular ethnic groups. In each case, stakeholders were clear that it will also be necessary to consider whether interventions should differ to support different groups. Their thoughts on how this might be best organised are set out in the next section.

Learning and way forward

What needs to be done?

A major part of our discussions with stakeholders was to explore how they think JRF can make best use of the P&E research findings in order to maximise their influence and impact on policy and practice. Although we were not able to predict the results of the quantitative research analysis, we asked respondents to consider the issues as if they were at the start of phase 3 of the programme – i.e. after the publication of the quantitative research findings. This allowed the discussion to focus more on the practicalities of influence and impact than re-

iterating views on the extent to which change can be driven on the back of qualitative research.

It should also be noted that the most popular solution was for the JRF research manager to have a close involvement in this process. As noted above, there was widespread recognition that this would provide ready access to detailed knowledge and interpretation. However, we asked respondents to think beyond this approach to get them to consider which partners and collaborators might be most appropriate.

A consistent message back from the stakeholders was that JRF have to move towards local dissemination sustained over a longer period in conjunction with partners to get their message across. There are both 'push' and 'pull' factors at play here:

Push:

- There is a general perception among stakeholders that central government departments currently have a limited interest in this agenda.
- One-off launch events can create profile but struggle to generate momentum.
- Some stakeholders have interpreted 'ethnicity' as 'ethnic minority' and perceive the programme to be primarily relevant to the equalities agenda rather than skills, economic development or social care.
- Limited resources at all levels (national, local and community) mean that special events can be difficult to attend.
- As a result, there is a strong preference for JRF and partners to use existing communities of practice networks and seek time on the agenda at their regular meeting in preference to setting up additional meetings specifically for such discussions.

Pull:

- There is a sense that practical action will be driven at a local level by local authorities and the voluntary and community sector – for example, what can local groups do to help address knowledge gaps and limited social networks? This is clearly in keeping with the original intention of the design of P&E phase 3.
- Research has highlighted a complex interaction of factors (intersectionality) but there is a need to 'road test' recommendations with communities and local actors. Some stakeholders have suggested that reports have too many recommendations and should establish which are most important.
- For some, this might involve identifying what is important for all ethnicities – what actions would help address issues common to a number of ethnic groups and what are the additional actions necessary to meet the particular issues facing certain groups?

- This has been reinforced by central government departments wanting to hear suggestions from local authorities and others on their suggested solutions (rather than put forward their own).
- Work with a coalition of the willing. A number of stakeholders felt that it was important to develop practical links with those who were interested. Another echoed this and suggested staying as practical as possible, working with schools, employers and places.

This is a question of balance. Even though we have found limited interest from many policy-makers in the phase 1 findings – ‘interesting but not yet anything to implement’ – there have been successful contacts at this level and the early impact of the P&E programme has occurred at the national level. The focus of future dissemination cannot be entirely local.

We asked stakeholders whether they prefer JRF to summarise and interpret research in this way. The vast majority were in favour. The reputation of JRF in general for robust and balanced reports is a factor here but there is also wide respect for the knowledge and understanding of the research manager. Those who had attended P&E events were consistent in their praise for the research manager’s overview of poverty issues and links to other JRF programmes.

The general view was that JRF authored *Round-ups* were able to step back from the research, be more succinct and draw on other JRF programme sources. A minority of interviewees who had been involved in Advisory Groups on the P&E programme felt that summaries would benefit from a structure that aimed to highlight what is common ground between groups and where differences persist. This, they felt, might overcome any innate tendency for the research messages to fragment across groups.

Who should be involved?

The Evidence Exchange project, carried out in partnership between JRF and Carnegie Trust, undertook a large-scale survey of policy-makers and practitioners across the UK exploring the demand for evidence sharing across the UK and the best mechanism for meeting this demand. The survey found that:

- Policy-makers and practitioners express a great deal of interest in learning more about social policy evidence from other parts of the UK (as well as further afield), as long as it is sifted for quality and relevance, is timely and of practical use.
- There is a significant gap between the trustworthiness of academic research (which is very high) and its accessibility, with many who responded unable to access academic evidence.

- The internet dominates searches for evidence but social media is catching up.

These findings would suggest that policy-makers and practitioners remain interested in sharing and discussing evidence but the devil may well be in the detail of 'relevance' and 'practical'.

There was something of an overt recognition from researchers (not just P&E authors) that the research process does not always leave them in the best position to draw cost-effective and implementable recommendations. This may require different skills and experience but be informed by the research findings. The challenge of engaging with senior policy-makers is generally seen as difficult, but open dialogue on the poverty and ethnicity agenda was considered to be particularly difficult by stakeholders.

We received a greater variety of responses from stakeholders when asked who they thought might be best placed to take forward the development of research findings into implementable actions and policy recommendations. One common theme suggested by stakeholders was for JRF not to be overly concerned about being representative in this process but rather to engage where local, regional or national actors are more willing to respond. Getting the development process to deliver strong recommendations on action was more important and these could then be generalised through wider discussions.

As a different range of potential partners were suggested, JRF might consider developing a mixed model and seek to draw lessons from the process as it is implemented. The range of potential partners included:

- Key local authorities could lead in certain areas – Bradford with its existing links to JRF might be an opportunity, and the Leeds model was cited by a number of stakeholders as another possible route.
- Individual employers or employer networks such as Business in the Community, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), CBI Scotland, etc.
- Local authority networks exist in the nations, but with an emphasis on working with community of practice groups – economic development officers, skills and education, and adult social care and others to promote the joint consideration of ethnicity and poverty issues. For example, in Wales it would make sense to engage with the network of local authority Community Cohesion Co-ordinators, but this must be balanced with colleagues with responsibility for economic policy and practice – anti-poverty, skills and economic development.
- One stakeholder felt that building on the research findings to help develop practical local solutions could be something universities might take forward as a number are considering how they interact with their local

- communities (not just those who might be interested in attending higher education).
- Others suggested that the public sector more generally should take a lead on these issues. The NHS, local authorities and housing sector employ diverse workforces – can be seen both as employers and service providers (care) within the P&E agenda.

Stakeholders had mixed opinions on the potential for JRF to work with voluntary and community organisations. Concerns were expressed about the ability of such organisations to adequately represent the diverse ethnicities alongside a view that many of these organisations have lost capacity through the austerity cuts and may not have the resources to fully support JRFs objectives. Another concern for some stakeholders from local authorities, third sector networks and policy-makers in nations were the difficulties in ensuring the ‘representativeness’ of organisations from individual ethnic groups and so a majority felt that poverty organisations would provide JRF with a better vehicle for supporting this process. That said, others pointed to successful partnerships with poverty and BME organisations and felt that both could play a role.

The dissemination programme through a programme of local workshops instituted for the JRF education aspirations research in Wales was highlighted by a number of stakeholders as an example where JRF can use local partners to deliver messages and encourage change at a local level. It was recognised that the community of practice would be broader in the case of the P&E programme but the key features were to work with the findings and recommendations as an agenda and roll the ideas and suggested actions from one workshop into the next. The longitudinal element was important to give the process time to develop actions.

Opinion was divided on whether JRF should to seek to influence party manifestos in the run up to the 2015 UK general election or the devolved administration elections in 2016 (or whatever arrangements will be in place in Scotland). There are those who believe that it will be important for JRF to engage with parties, but as many felt it was more important to get messages to local actors who might put actions in place – and expressed a concern that a few words in the manifesto is probably not worth the effort as they saw no guarantee of action post-election.

Above all, stakeholders were keen to see the P&E programme continue to push the boundaries of the combined poverty and ethnicity agenda. The forthcoming quantitative analysis is seen as an opportunity to re-invigorate the existing findings and some felt that it may help better engage national policy-makers, many of whom are considered to be in the thrall of ‘big data’.

3. Conclusions and recommendations

The P&E programme has been welcomed by the vast majority of stakeholders as vital research to deepen the understanding of potential routes to addressing long-standing issues affecting people in poverty across different ethnic groups. This is a major challenge given the limited combined research in this field, despite the large literature on poverty or ethnicity.

The initial scoping research and reviews and the early phase 1 reports were well-regarded by respondents:

- The research has been grounded in a solid understanding of the field and most respondents felt that there were few obvious gaps.
- Undertaking research in the nations was very well-received and has added to JRFs existing credibility.
- The country reports and the two thematic research reports that were published in 2013 have raised issues with stakeholders and influenced thinking and practice even at this stage.

However, the fact that these reports have been qualitative has caused some issues. Respondents accept the nature of these studies but do then tend to be critical of their inability to provide precise policy recommendations or establish a clear hierarchy of factors affecting different ethnic groups. These are issues that the studies were not designed to address but this does not stop stakeholders from highlighting them.

We cannot see any obvious way around this issue. Expectations can only be managed to some degree and if stakeholders are seeking clear evidence that will support cost-effective and implementable solutions and these are not apparent at this stage of the programme, they are likely to be more critical than might have been the case if the qualitative research ran in parallel to the quantitative (this could only have occurred if phase 1 was delayed to allow for access to the datasets). While this may have gained some benefits, we think that having a suite of qualitative issues available for the quantitative to build on and test will bring other advantages.

There is an issue looking forward to the publication of the results of phase 2 – while on the one hand this will address some of the concerns of the limited ‘depth’ in the qualitative work, it is not expected to necessarily deliver practical and implementable practice and policy recommendations. Phase 3 is intended to achieve the latter. We suggest that JRF think how this might be best presented so that stakeholders are aware of the full process for the P&E programme. The evidence from this review is that many would thoroughly recommend a deliberate

process that works with different partners to explore the best solutions, but this may not stop them looking for them in the phase 2 reports.

Stakeholders do recognise the challenge JRF faces in engaging and influencing mainstream government departments. One stakeholder suggested that politicians were receptive to proposals that were framed and costed. They suggested that austerity had lead national policy-makers to be more non-committal and often defensive – especially in areas that look ‘expensive or difficult’. Although local government were traditionally much more receptive and interested in developing solutions, austerity has taken a toll here too and not all feel that they have the resource to take on such issues.

This suggests that JRF should retain a balance in its dissemination work for phase 2 and 3 but take on board the key messages from stakeholders:

- Give the development process some time to evolve practice and policy recommendations.
- Work with a range of different partners to explore approaches to addressing poverty and ethnicity in different domains – employers, public sector services, local authorities and local enterprise partnerships.
- Build up from these cases through communities of practice where JRF or partners can present findings and potential solutions to those stakeholders who might consider that P&E is ‘just’ an equalities issue rather than skills and economic development or social care, etc.

Finally, it is worth noting that stakeholders are open to (re-)considering the issues from phase 1 findings alongside the launch of phase 2 results. The extent to which the issues identified in phase 1 have been established by the quantitative analysis in phase 2 will provide the P&E programme with a platform to launch an informed debate with partners on appropriate policy responses in phase 3.

Notes

1. See Platt, L. (2007) *Poverty and Ethnicity in the UK* and Platt, L. (2011) *Inequality within Ethnic Groups*.
2. Comments by Pastor McConnell relating to Islam in May 2014 raised a national debate on attitudes to race in Northern Ireland.

This paper was commissioned as part of the JRF programme on [poverty and ethnicity](#), which aims to increase understanding of the relationship between poverty and ethnicity and create a more effective approach to tackling poverty across all the different ethnic groups in the UK.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has funded this research paper as part of its programme of research and innovative development projects, which it hopes will be of value to policy-makers, practitioners and service users. The facts presented and views expressed in this paper are, however, those of the author and not necessarily those of JRF.

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ISBN: 9781909586574 (pdf)

Ref: 3051

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