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# A multi-strand approach to promoting equalities and human rights in policy making

*Alison Parken*

New European Union policy is to be subject to equality impact assessment for all strands of inequality and multiple discrimination (European Commission, 2006). This article discusses research that tested a gender mainstreaming model for its ability to reveal intersectional inequalities. The resulting collaborative multi-strand model situates intersectional enquiry at a structural level, enables the integration of equalities and human rights approaches and supports prioritisation without reductively homogenising 'strand' specific inequalities. This is a step towards intersectional working. Gaining satisfactory intersectional evidence will require improved quantitative data collection, the revaluing of qualitative data, and collaborative working between 'equality makers and policy makers'.

## Introduction

In 2007, research designed to develop an integrated model to promote equalities and human rights was completed in Wales.<sup>1</sup> A demonstration project was undertaken by staff working for organisations that advocated for the six equality 'strands' covered by the 2000 European Commission Equality Directive, together with advocates for the Welsh language (which following the 1993 Welsh Language Act is treated as an equality strand) and human rights.<sup>2</sup> Together, they formed an Equality Evidence Panel for the research.

The principles and tools of gender mainstreaming as articulated by Rees (2005) were explored for their applicability to other equality strands. While this issue has been raised by a number of theorists (see Rees, 2005; Walby, 2005; Eveline et al, 2009), this research broke new ground by empirically testing whether the tools were capable of revealing the other dimensions of inequality, or would need adaptation. Working collaboratively, the Equality Evidence Panel also tested whether the tools could yield evidence of intersectional inequalities.

Using an action research methodology, the group was guided to explore the often distinct origins and outcomes of inequality and equality techniques between 'equality strands'. The research also considered how public authorities might address conflicts between strands, and, whether in seeking to address intersectional inequalities we are dealing with multiple identities, material disadvantage through social and economic divisions, or both. These concepts are explored below.

This article discusses the research process and findings, and the *multi-strand* method as developed thus far. The findings provide a method that can, through collaborative working, enable public authorities to proactively promote equalities and human rights through policy making, while being able to prioritise. The method retains

Key words: mainstreaming or promoting equality • cross-strand working • intersectionality

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heterogeneous solutions by strand, even where inequalities are similar, so that distinct inequalities are not collapsed and treated as if they are all the same.

## The legislative context

The UK legislative landscape for equalities has become increasingly complex and divergent and, with the addition of 'new' equality strands in recent years, arguably competitive. A 'six-strand' approach has emerged following the European Equality Directive 2000/78/EC. However, we await parity in respect of equal treatment legislation for goods facilities and services. Disability, gender, race and ethnicity, religion and belief, and sexual orientation are covered but not age.

In addition, there are statutory duties placed on government institutions and public service providers requiring them to promote equality on grounds of race, disability and gender.<sup>3</sup> The new statutory single commission for equality and human rights, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), is responsible for enabling and overseeing this work. However, each duty has a distinct vision of equality and compliance requirements. Thus, the UK government legislative programme for 2009 contains proposals for a simplifying Bill that will provide:

... a single equality duty which will require public bodies to consider the diverse needs and requirements of their workforce, and the communities they serve, when developing employment policies and planning services. (Office of the Leader of the House of Commons, 2008: 43)

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) views the use of public sector duties requiring the promotion of equality through policy making, as the next stage of development of equality legislation at the European level (Cardinale, 2007).

### *Devolved government in the UK*

Devolution in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland has created new political spaces in which to embed equality within policy planning processes and governance structures (Chaney and Fevre, 2002; Chaney and Rees, 2004). The Scottish Executive has chosen to interpret its powers as providing a basis for mainstreaming equality, while the Northern Ireland Assembly has a duty to promote equality on nine specified grounds. Besides the 'six strands', provision must be made for gypsy/traveller communities, 'between persons with dependants and persons without', and on grounds of political belief.

Before individual duties to promote equality existed at the UK level, the 1998 Government of Wales Act (s.48 and s.120) required the National Assembly of Wales to ensure that its 'functions and duties are exercised with due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people'. This is a unique statutory equality duty, amounting to mainstreaming equality for all (Chaney and Fevre, 2002).

Responsibility rests with Welsh ministers, who are required to report annually how 'effective they were in promoting equality of opportunity' (2006 Government of Wales Act, s.77).

### *Human rights*

The 1998 Human Rights Act provides a direct means to challenge discrimination on further grounds of language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, in association with 'national minority, property, birth, or other status, insofar as an area of human rights is activated' (see DCA, 2006). Protocol 12 of the European Convention on Human Rights extends this 'equality guarantee' (Fredman, 2001) on a non-exhaustive grounds basis, to the actions and obligations of public authorities. Although the UK has not ratified Protocol 12, the 2006 Equality Act allows the EHRC to draw on 'other human rights' (2006 Equality Act, s.9(4)) for the promotion of equality, diversity and good relations. The UK government has encouraged public authorities, through use of tools and standards, to embed the principles of human rights (respect, equality, fairness, dignity and autonomy) in public service design and delivery (Ministry of Justice, 2008).

### *Equality and policy making*

Embedding equality in policy making has been problematic. Equality Impact Assessments have become retrospective checking mechanisms rather than stimulating policy that promotes equality (Rees, 2005). They have become process-driven rather than outcome focused and there is said to be 'Equality Impact Assessment fatigue' among public service staff' (Chaney and Rees, 2004). Further, there is a tendency for processes to treat strands as if they are all the same in order to simplify 'checking' processes. There is no agreed method that might promote a cohesive approach across equalities and human rights.

## **The need for a method to mainstream equality and human rights across the strands**

The Equalities Review, which preceded the establishment of the EHRC, suggested the need for an integrated method by proposing an 'Equality Scorecard' to assess inequalities across areas of life such as health, education, participation and security (Equalities Review, 2007: 18). It envisaged that:

... promoting greater equality and tackling entrenched inequalities will be embedded in the way that public institutions carry out their business. There will be an active pursuit of their public duty and a dynamic, systematic and evidence-based approach to taking action. (Equalities Review, 2007: 11)

It did not, however, articulate a method.

The National Assembly of Wales' Standing Committee for Equality of Opportunity also identified the need for an integrated method to promote equality for all in its *Mainstreaming equalities review* (NAW, 2004).

However, there are a number of contextual and political complexities that must be addressed within any such method, for example, the legislative disparity already described earlier, the different understandings among strands about how inequalities arise and how they should be addressed, and a limited history of applying human rights principles to public services design. In addition, the proposal for a single

commission provoked anxiety about individual strands 'losing out', and perceived conflicts between equality and human rights approaches.<sup>4</sup>

In stakeholder meetings, in the development phases preceding the set-up of the EHRC, considerable enthusiasm was evident for 'cross-strand' or intersectional working (terms were used interchangeably) but also concern that this might lead to complex messages that weakened lobbying impact with government. Pressure to simplify could lead to suppression of evidence that might follow from capturing the nuances of the interrelationship of disadvantage or discrimination with regard to, say, gender, sexual orientation and ethnicity in a particular situation (if it were possible to garner such evidence from existing datasets). Similar concerns have been noted at European Union level by Verloo (2006) who suggests that they threaten to undermine 'political intersectionality', where equality advocates for different strands work together on a policy intervention that results in a cross-cutting benefit. This kind of work has been welcomed by equality lobbyists, as it is recognised that people do not fall neatly into one 'strand'.

However, a significant complication for mainstreaming equality and human rights is the lack of an agreed definition for intersectionality. Is it, as Yuval-Davies (2006) asks, an epistemology, methodology or policy-making tool? Although academics, policy makers and regulatory bodies have begun to consider the need for an intersectional approach and made suggestions as to the elements required (Rees, 1998, 2005; Zappone, 2001; Parken, 2003; Verloo, 2006; Yuval-Davies, 2006), no method had been tested until this research.

### *What do we mean by cross-strand and intersectional inequalities?*

Recent examples of cross-strand working can be found in the Equality of Opportunity Commission's (Wales) *Pregnancy discrimination general formal investigation* (2004), which qualitatively considered the experience of disabled, lesbian and minority ethnic mothers, Age Concern Cymru's project for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered older people, and the Disability Rights Commission's *General formal investigation into health inequalities* (DRC, 2006).

However, these are examples of an 'additive model', much critiqued for obscuring the distinct underlying processes for creating inequalities across the strands (Yuval Davies, 2006, following Crenshaw 1989, 1993). Such work begins from the perspective of one strand to which others are added, with the aim of identifying 'compound discriminations' (Yuval Davies, 2006). This is the understanding given in the Equalities Review (2007: 64), which described intersectionality as meaning the 'additional, disadvantaging characteristics' of some individuals. This description reveals the dominant understanding of intersectionality as relating to personal characteristics or multiple identity factors. On this basis, the Equalities Review dismissed intersectionality by referring to the lampooning of the 'fabled black, disabled, lesbian' and stating that 'this is not a simple phenomenon and only true in a few special cases' (2007: 64).

Defining intersectionality in this way forestalls investigation of the differing economic, social, cultural or discursive origins and outcomes of inequality by strand; and sidesteps the question of whether 'harms' are based in discrimination, in structural mechanisms reproducing social and economic divisions or through

interaction of both levels (see especially Verloo, 2006). In short, the material elements of inequalities disappear.

Closing off enquiry in this way leaves potential remedy at the 'recognition' end of the recognition versus redistribution binary that Fraser (1997) has provided to help shape our thinking. Further, it lays the ground for the creation of a hierarchy of oppression where those who can count two or more 'despised identities' (Fraser, 1997: 19), or multiple discriminations, can argue for priority.

Additionally, a paradigm of 'triple oppressions' homogenises the diversity of experience within strands, suggesting that there is one way to be a woman, black, gay, disabled etc, and leaves the powerful within that group to define that experience (Yuval-Davies, 2006). An example would be gay politics in the UK, where under the Managing Diversity approach to equalities, the category of sexual orientation has negated a gender focus for lesbians. Media industries, for example, often associate 'gayness' with being somehow 'innately' trend-aware and creative (Parken, 2003). However, it is gay men not lesbians who are employed, or who advance, on the basis of these assumed ascriptions (Parken, 2003).

Elsewhere, in an analysis of gender and sexuality in relation to the operation of labour markets and workplaces, I have suggested the use of the term *hetero-gender* to capture the connected structuring of two seemingly separate but rather intermeshed forms of reproducing inequalities (Parken, 2003). Use of the term, I suggest, provides an intersectional 'lens', which would reveal, for example, the structural inequalities experienced by lesbian women who, outside of the breadwinner/homemaker economic unit, may struggle to attain financial independence in a labour market structured by a heterosexual 'gender contract' (Pateman, 1988; Dunne, 1997). This contributes to an employment context in which 'women's jobs' attract only 'component wages', which are insufficient to maintain a financially independent household (Siltanen, 1994). This heterosexual underpinning of the gender dualism is not recognised by current models of gender mainstreaming.

The use of the term *hetero-gender* also gives an intersectional 'lens' through which to view the occupational 'chill factors' that lesbians may face in the requirement to 'do gender' (West and Zimmerman, 1987), as a performance of hetero-gender in work interactions (Parken, 2003), where gender forms an unwritten part of the employment contract (Gheradi, 1995; see also Leidner, 1991; Skidmore, 1999; Adkins, 2000).

This conception of intersectionality exceeds an 'additive model' and provides for analysis of the relationships between macro and micro structures and processes. In the example given, the analysis repositions sexual orientation within Fraser's (1997) model. Perception of sexual orientation is changed from 'recognition' as remedy, to requiring both recognition and redistributive remedies as it becomes a 'bivalent mode' of inequality along with race and gender. That is, they require being both valorised as ways of being but also essentially 'put out of business' (Fraser, 1997) in the ways that they are reproduced through power relations. Might it do the same for the other strands?

However, such a conception of intersectionality does not ease the burden of defining potentially infinite combinations of inequalities reproduced in the interactions of age, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity or other 'statuses'. Arguing for a structural approach to intersectionality, Yuval-Davies (2006)

points to the need to be able to prioritise; that is, to be able to identify which social differences are important in specific policy locations.

Yuval-Davies (2006: 199), drawing on Harding's epistemic schema (Harding, 1997: 385), argues for prioritisation by distinguishing those locations where power between and across social divisions creates meaningful disadvantage and those where there are 'mere differences'. Thus, Yuval-Davies (2006: 200) leads us away from 'conflating positioning, identities, and values' and instead guides us to a form of intersectional investigation that seeks links between relevant power positionings and socioeconomic axes. This is made possible by acknowledging that although social divisions are not reducible to each other, they are also not:

... randomly scattered.... Often people who are positioned in a specific location along one axis tend to concentrate in a specific location of another one (e.g. the majority of Black people in contemporary western countries would be found among the lower socio- economic classes and women would tend to be poorer than men). (Yuval-Davies, 2006: 200)

Informed by these analyses, the research set out to investigate whether, when and how, individual *and* structural inequalities are prevalent for each strand and how they interact in particular locations, and whether a method for doing this could be produced.

## Research methodology

The research design brought together representatives of all equalities strands and human rights to form an Equality Evidence Panel to work on a demonstration project. This was designed to test the principles and tools of gender mainstreaming as described by Professor Teresa Rees for the European Commission (1998, 2005), and a model devised for translating this into practice that has been used to train government officials in Europe (Rees and Parken, 2003) for its applicability to all equality strands and human rights. The stages of the gender mainstreaming method are:

- (1) *gender experts and policy analysts identify and map the policy field* – investigating strategy, policy and service delivery mechanisms, data, research and consultation;
- (2) *visioning* – how transformative redesign can promote equality – consultation;
- (3) *testing* – that desired outcomes will flow from recommendations – engagement;
- (4) *evaluation* – measures and monitoring, consultation;
- (5) *review* – evolving improvements, research/consultation.

Through this process we hoped to discover:

- the applicability of, or adaptations required to, the mainstreaming method to each strand and human rights;
- differing perspectives on, and approaches to, promoting equality currently in operation in the existing commissions and in the voluntary sector organisations that champion equality for 'new strands';

- the extent to which the method and/or joint working could enable the identification of cross-strand or intersectional inequalities.

In the legislative and lobbying context outlined, the gender mainstreaming model itself assists with addressing conflict as it incorporates collaborative working, reflexivity and engagement throughout. We adopted a feminist epistemology rooted in 'standpoint theory' (Stanley and Wise, 1990; Harding, 1993). This involved valuing the tacit knowledges of those who have experienced or who can 'stand in the shoes' of those who may experience inequalities. Crucially, it required the Evidence Panel to be reflexive throughout (Harding, 1991, 1993) about their tacit, personal, professional or organisational knowledges, and how these impacted on their analysis, and on other strands.

Training was provided to introduce panel members to these ways of working. Central to the requirement for 'strong objectivity' (Harding, 1991, 1993) was a workshop on anti-oppressive practice. Here we discussed why we had become interested in equalities work, and how we might value, and evaluate, tacit and organisational knowledges. Significantly, we discussed how tacit knowledge must not restrict enquiry or be used to compete in a hierarchy of oppressions. The panel were asked to keep reflexive diaries, recording their experience of the meetings, findings and outcomes, and were subsequently interviewed about these.

The panel were also guided to agree ground rules for working together. These included active listening, ensuring that all would be heard so that there was no competition for time by strand and that they would treat each other with dignity and respect. They committed themselves to collaborative working, with the aim of reaching consensus but, significantly, that they would also challenge each other, in order to tease out potential conflicts.

An action researcher participated throughout, observing, prompting and questioning the panel in evidence gathering and analysis sessions, so that we might identify tensions or competition between the equality strands, and between equality and human rights approaches. She also undertook the reflexive interviews.

My role was Evidence Panel Chair. In this capacity I supported the Evidence Panel through training, facilitation of meetings, analysis of data and authoring project reports with the action researcher. The job of the Evidence Panel was to follow the gender mainstreaming method, research strand-based data, analyse jointly the syntheses of information gathered, and take verbal and written submissions from key stakeholders from the statutory and voluntary sectors.

### *Recruiting representation*

Representatives for disability, ethnicity and gender were recruited from the separate equality commissions. Representatives for age, sexual orientation, and religion or belief, who at the time had no statutory representation, were recruited from the voluntary sector organisations that had been serving their interests. This allowed us to observe any sector differences in approaches to equality and human rights advocacy. The Welsh Language representative came from the Welsh Language Board (a non-departmental public body), and the human rights advocate was from the



government team responsible for setting up the EHRC. To facilitate the participation of the voluntary sector we paid a small fee to cover some of their time.<sup>5</sup>

There was considerable learning from the recruitment process itself. First, there were gaps. There were no organisations lobbying for social class or transgender equality, or for religion or belief on an equality basis, in Wales. Cytun (Churches Together in Wales) advocated for the faith strand. This is a small organisation that champions equality within the various Christian churches with links to the Inter-faith Forum. We agreed to account for 'no faith' within the panel and made contacts with a UK organisation for transgender. We also learned that the inclusion of the Children's Commission prevented us from analysing age as only relevant to older people.

Second, as the initial idea for the project had been championed through the voluntary sector, there was some resistance from the statutory commissions. They were less willing to devote staff time, hence the panel met only eight times in total, for periods of three to four hours, over a six-month period.

This truncated the process so that we could not undertake the consultative elements of the gender mainstreaming model in the demonstration project. It also meant that I, together with the action researcher, had to compensate by providing more analysis and synthesis of research. In the event, this worked well, as it allowed the researcher to observe how the panel coped with the accumulating evidence as it was presented to them. It also demonstrated the need to bring together academic, policy and practitioner knowledges in the learning processes of the model.

## Findings – using a multi-strand mainstreaming model

### *Choosing the policy field*

The following review of the findings from the demonstration project is limited to the evidence gathering and visioning elements. As discussed, time allocation prevented us from carrying out the consultation stages that feature in the visioning and road-testing stages.<sup>6</sup>

The first stage of the gender mainstreaming method is to choose a *policy field* to investigate. In the demonstration project, a multi-strand 'equality lens' was applied to this choice and the subsequent interrogation of how the policy frame is constructed, and therefore what is included and excluded.

Investigating a policy field can avoid competition for priority on already established strand issues. It also re-establishes impact assessments at the start of the policy process, the place they were intended to be within the gender mainstreaming method. Thus, they are an instrument for proactively promoting equality through evidence gathering and visioning change (Rees, 1998, 2005), rather than 'checking' newly proposed policy for inadvertent discrimination.

Presented with a synthesis of Welsh Assembly Government strategies and policies commissioned for the research (Chaney, 2006), the panel quickly came to consensus. They chose to focus on social care and, in particular, the situation of unpaid carers. They gave as their reason the potential for evidence gathered to influence policy as social care is a fully devolved area of governance in Wales. Wales' approximately

340,000 unpaid carers (2001 Census of Population) provide 80% of care in Wales, estimated to contribute £3.5 billion annually to the economy (WAG, 2006).

### *Mapping the policy field*

Panel members were asked to collect and collate information by strand on social care and bring their findings to the panel for discussion. This allowed us to increase our awareness of inequalities and evaluate how the availability and type of research evidence varied by strand. To supplement this information, the panel were provided with summaries of key policy documents relating to carers in Wales (WAG, 2003, 2006), and with 2001 Census of Population data on carers in Wales, by strand. This was commissioned and analysed for the mapping phases.

Figure 1 depicts the accumulation of evidence by equality strand, differences between strands in the availability of data, and how the evidence demonstrates distinctions between promoting equality by strand and the human rights approach.

### *Data hierarchies*

Unsurprisingly, the statutory commissions had access to research and data on social care but so too did Age Concern Cymru (Age Concern, 2004, 2006). However, the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) did not have research resources in this policy field. There was little or no existing research for sexual orientation, religion or belief or the Welsh language on carers or respite care services in Wales. This highlights a difficulty for intersectional working, namely that legislative hierarchies can be exacerbated by data hierarchies. Several of the new strands lack investment in research capacity. The danger is that in Equality Impact Assessment processes that rely on existing data, no data can be perceived as there being no inequality issue. In these circumstances, tacit knowledges are valuable to inform research questions for commissioning new empirical research.

Some intersectional information was revealed. For example, the age strand information touched on gender, disability information carried some connections to age, and issues particular to young carers from minority ethnic groups were highlighted via tacit knowledge.

### *Approaches to equality*

Next the panel considered the language and systems of the policy frame. To analyse each strand's approach to equality, we added managing diversity and human rights to Rees' (1998) typology of the evolution of European Commission gender equality policy, from equal treatment to positive action to gender mainstreaming. All approaches can be, and are, used contemporaneously (Rees, 1998) but often without cognisance of the differing understandings of equality they represent and therefore what different outcomes may follow from their use.

Figure 2 shows that the disability, gender and age strands (both ends of the life cycle) were keen to identify group-based inequalities based on structural economic or social systems, particularly the ways that the welfare and employment systems combined

**Figure 1: Mapping the policy field: multi-strand and human rights evidence synopsis – social care/unpaid carers**

Action/strand	Race	Gender	Disability	Age	Religion and belief	Sexual orientation	Human rights	Welsh language
Existing strand-specific research on social care/ carers	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Tacit/ organisational knowledges	Rebuttal of service provider view that minority ethnic groups 'look after their own' – leading to lack of service 'targeting'	Assumption of women's unpaid caring roles. Value of unpaid care to the economy/lack of flexible working – carer's poverty and impact on health	Disabled people made vulnerable by untargeted service provision eg if care provider/ respite carer arrived reliably early enough each day, disabled person may be able to participate in education/ employment	Majority of unpaid care provided by older people – contribution not recognised  Young carers – does their existence mean carer services are inadequate?	Religious organisations that are social care providers for local authorities. Had little understanding of equalities/ human rights perspectives in service delivery	Assumption that unpaid care would be provided by families. No mention of lesbian, gay and bisexual people or the value to them of friendship networks	Evidence of recent legal cases –abuses in care homes, and lack of use of the public service standards in respect of dignity, autonomy and respect	Lack of provision of social care/ respite care in the medium of the Welsh language, leading to reliance on families for care

to contribute to carers' poverty by restricting access to a mix of welfare benefits, and welfare benefits combined with paid working. These strands tended towards a mainstreaming equality approach.

Sexual orientation, religion and belief, ethnicity and the Welsh language advocates tended towards redress through equal treatment or anti-discrimination measures based on recognising individuals within service delivery. None of the strands were employing positive action measures.

Age, sexual orientation and Welsh language strands were also using managing diversity tools in terms of revaluing (perceived to be) cultural differences. However, such an approach was particularly resisted by the representative of the CRE who argued that the celebration of cultural differences through multiculturalism had led public service providers to perceive that members of minority ethnic groups 'looked after their own', with the result that they had not focused on removing barriers to service delivery.

## Multi-strand and intersectional evidence

Figure 2 also shows that the analysis of policy language revealed unexamined assumptions in the policy frame that could create inequalities. Older and disabled people were characterised as the recipients of care, obscuring their considerable contribution to unpaid caring. Policy language was considered to be heterosexist and translation issues were identified as barriers to accessing a Carer's Assessment for minority ethnic and Welsh language service users. The term 'young carer' was questioned as operating as a 'job title', making ordinary, extraordinary experience.

The Unified Assessment Process used to establish care service provision was found to be the trigger to a Carer's Assessment, which in turn determined eligibility for Carer's Allowance. This system was found to create inequalities for all strands but for different reasons. Those giving evidence to the panel suggested that assessors were quicker to see a need for social care provision and respite care where working-age men were caring for women but not vice versa. There was also agreement that the process was undignified for carers in that their needs were only assessed in relation to the level of support needed for the 'cared for'; a Carer's Assessment and Carer's Allowance being triggered only when the 'cared for' was in receipt of Disability Living Allowance.

The needs of young carers were found to be 'hidden' by the system. Children's and adult's social services operated separately, with Carer's Assessments being conducted by the adult team. The only mechanism for assessing young carers' needs was to trigger a full 'child in need' investigation. These are usually reserved for potential child protection cases. Parents, receiving care from their children, feared and resisted such a process.

Using the multi-strand lens, intersectional data (initially not available) were gained through commissioning new multivariate data runs from the 2001 Census of Population (see Figure 2). This showed that women, disabled and older people were more likely to care for 30+ hours per week, meaning that gender, disability and age, as single strands and in combination, led to a greater propensity to become, and remain, an unpaid carer. The economic consequences of this were found to be

**Figure 2: Analysis of language and systems in the policy frame and intersectional data**

Data/strand	Ethnicity	Gender	Disability	Age	Religion	Sexual orientation	Human rights	Welsh language
Policy frame/ language	Children/ 'strangers' from the 'community' asked to provide translation during personal interviews for carers/cared for. Leading to fear of using services	Policies suggest gender balance in unpaid care – masks loss of employment for much higher number of women of working age who care for 30 plus hours a week	Positioned as care recipients, not as carers	Positioned as care recipients, not as carers at both ends of age spectrum. The term 'young carer' acts as a normalising job title. Would it exist if there were sufficient care services?	No mention of religion in relation to service use or 'matching' respite carers	Heterosexist language.. No mention of religion in relation to service use or 'matching' respite carers	Breach of dignity for carer to be defined by bodily 'functions of cared for' in order to gain Carer's Allowance Note how language removes autonomy of carers	No mention of Welsh language in relation to service use or 'matching' bilingual respite carers
Welfare/service provision – Unified Assessment Process	No administrative data by ethnicity. General caution about interaction with social services and see above	Does not allow for reasonable combinations of paid work and unpaid work. Carer's Allowance maintains poverty	Carer status defined by bodily functions/ capabilities of the person 'cared for.' Potential breach of human rights	System not meeting needs. Carer's Allowance lost on attainment of state pension. Young Carer's Assessment for respite care – triggers full 'child in need' review – feared by parents	No data	No data. Tacit knowledge suggests fear of homophobia in interaction from service providers	Inconsistent with the principles of dignity and autonomy in service delivery – Carer's Allowance available if cared for on Disability Living Allowance	Older Welsh language speakers may, with age, lose second language – English  Forms not consistently available in Welsh

Figure 2: continued

Data/strand	Ethnicity	Gender	Disability	Age	Religion	Sexual orientation	Human rights	Welsh language
<b>Cause/remedy by strand</b>	Lack of recognition – individuals: equal treatment	Structural – gender mainstreaming/ equal treatment	Structural – social model of disability/human rights	Structural – equal treatment/ managing diversity/human rights	Lack of recognition – individuals: equal treatment/human rights	Lack of recognition –individuals: equal treatment/ managing diversity	Individual rights for service users. Group rights for carers	Lack of recognition –individuals: equal treatment/ managing diversity
Data on unpaid carers from reanalysis of Population Census	7,000 of Wales' minority ethnic population are carers, roughly same proportion as overall population. But numbers are too small for meaningful interrogation by gender, age, disability	As number of hours of unpaid care per week increase, so does the gender disparity. Two thirds of those of working age providing 50+ hours per week of care were women	15.3% of those providing 50+ hours per week of care are economically inactive for reasons of being permanently sick or disabled. No Census breakdown of their gender or age was readily available	18% of carers in Wales are aged 65 or over . Approximately half are men and half are women. Men's unpaid care work peaks at age 75+	No meaningful data. 99% of Wales' population define themselves as Christian	No data collected in Census	Data not applicable	Data on Welsh_ language carers not cross-tabulated

Notes: The Unified Assessment Process – undertaken by adult social services departments of local authorities to assess social care needs for the disabled/sick person, and depending on their care needs (hours of care required care/lifting/ capabilities) – can trigger a Carer's Assessment to provide respite care for the carer. Carer's Allowance is a state benefit of approximately £45 per week.

exacerbated by employment and social security welfare rules that restrict how paid and unpaid work can be combined.

However, lack of data for Welsh language speakers, minority ethnic groups and the new strands, restricted identified issues to those of the individual, and were connected to lack of cultural recognition. The new strands do not have a historical base of data to draw on or history of asking structural questions in relation to equality. Indeed, the advocate for religion asked several religious organisations providing social care about how they embedded equality and human rights in their services, and found that the questions were not understood. For sexual orientation, there were no data at all in the large datasets (Census of Population, Family Resource Survey, Department for Work and Pensions Carer's Allowance Data) and no mention of lesbian, gay and bisexual people in the policy documents.

We concluded from this that not only are improvements required to data collection in large datasets but that qualitative data are needed to reach intersectional understandings in specific situations. We discussed as an example, an ethnographic study of masculinities in a secondary school by Mac an Ghail (1994), where his observations of white boys calling Pakistani boys 'poofs', revealed a web of sexism and racism. The white boys were seen to be 'doing masculinity' by being anti-schooling. They played this out by berating Pakistani boys, who were culturally stereotyped as 'hard working', as being like girls.

However, the synthesis did lead the Welsh Language advocate to consider exploring whether Welsh speakers' reliance on family carers for care might restrict economic participation, and the ethnicity advocate began to question the evidence given to the panel and in *Fulfilled lives: Supportive communities* (WAG, 2006), the social care workforce strategy, which stated that the low-paid social care workforce would increasingly rely on migrant workers, but did not query the future equality implications of this. Thus, discussion of data began to shift recognition issues to also requiring redistributive remedy (see Fraser, 1997).

### *Visioning: multi-strand/intersectional solutions*

Political intersectionality was achieved in the 'visioning' stage of the mainstreaming method where advocates called for the removal of social welfare rules that constrain combining unpaid care and employment (see Figure 3). However, even within common solutions such as welfare reform (so that Carer's Allowance is not an income replacement benefit but additional to other benefits or earnings), the type of reform needed for individual strands was sometimes, but not always, the same.

With respect to language, inequalities were also created distinctly by strand, requiring different redress in relation to age, ethnicity, sexual orientation and Welsh language. That this was made clear by the data should instil confidence with policy makers that it is possible to treat specific issues differently without fear of accusations of discrimination.

However, the panel began to feel overwhelmed by so much multi-strand data (Figure 3), and consequently unable to prioritise. Anxiety arose about presenting findings to government on group/structural inequalities (poverty of carers, lack of opportunity to maintain attachment to the labour market for women, disabled and older carers), and injustices created by the system (ie lack of young carer assessments because the process run by adult social services is inappropriate).

Such findings should inform targeting and prioritisation for the employment programmes designed to encourage carers into work. They demonstrate how social and economic justice outcomes could be achieved if Individualised Budgets could be used to pay family carers, and could stimulate debate about whether ‘young carers’ would exist if there was adequate public service provision. These are just the sort transformative proposals that should flow from evidence on structural inequalities gathered by using a mainstreaming method. However, there was considerable concern among the panel members about being seen as not pragmatic by government officials, leading to loss of influence in the longer term. This illustrates how transformative aims can be constrained. Significantly, this unease led the Panel to use the multi-strand data to illuminate potential human rights abuses (see Figure 3). This brought about intersectionality between equality and human rights approaches at both individual and group based structural levels of analysis. The evidence gathered, demonstrated a lack of dignity, autonomy and respects for service users, and can be said to have ‘brought alive’ human rights standards.

Panel members also began to consider whether the duties and obligations of the 1998 Human Rights Act could underpin a requirement for change in the identified structural inequalities through legal enforcement. Could it be shown that government was not acting compatibly because inequalities in the assessment processes and service provision were restricting access to education, training, employment and participation in social life? They drew on the theme of ‘Carers’ Rights as Human Rights’.

Multi-strand ‘visioning’ was made possible by synthesising and analysing evidence under *language and systems*; it led to multi-strand routes to change and did not collapse strand-specific inequalities. It also facilitated prioritisation, and supplied evidence to bring a human rights lens to bear on inequalities.

### *Adapting the gender mainstreaming model for multi-strand working*

It has become clear that the methodology used for setting up the research is an essential component for implementing the method itself. A first finding is, therefore, is that Equality Evidence Panels, carefully established in the ways described, can facilitate mainstreaming equality and human rights evidence gathering. More detail on recruitment and training protocols to facilitate multi-strand working can be found in a short report produced for the Welsh Assembly Government (Parken and Young, 2008).

Starting our enquiry by beginning with the policy field was also successful. It gave all strands parity in the evidence-gathering processes despite legislative hierarchy. It applied a multi-strand lens to the language and systems of service delivery. This reduced the potential for competition and allowed evidence to identify priority actions (in this demonstration project, the poverty, both economic and social, of carers by gender, disability and age in combination).

The method enabled the Evidence Panel to resist homogenising the strands. Cognisance of distinct and overlapping inequalities, as reproduced by institutional systems policies and practices was maintained, and some intersectional solutions derived. The method was able to account for data hierarchies between strands. Lack of data was not interpreted as signalling an absence of inequality but rather



**Figure 3: Visioning: multi-strand/intersectional solutions**

Task/strand	Ethnicity	Gender	Disability	Age	Sexual orientation	Human rights	Welsh language
Visioning	Language/reflexive service provision	Address reliance of economy on unpaid care of women  Welfare reform to allow benefits in combination with paid work (more than 16 hours paid work per week)  Increased flexible working opportunities	Welfare benefits reform, use of Direct Payments and Individualised Budgets to pay for unpaid carers, even if they are family  Increased flexible working opportunities for disabled people and their carers	Welfare benefits reform: provide Carer's Allowance in addition to pension – not as income replacement benefit  Increased flexible working opportunities for older people	Language/reflexive service provision	Carers' rights as human rights – investigate case on basis of restricted access to participation in economic and social life	Language/reflexive service provision

that other types of evidence were required. Significantly, it successfully integrated equalities and human rights approaches.

In reflexive diaries and follow-up interviews, panel members revealed that learning about the other strands was what they had gained most from their involvement. The model reduced potential conflict and competition. It is important, therefore, that the multi-strand mainstreaming method retains 'single strand voices' so that tacit and organisational knowledges are captured. However, these voices need to be heard within the facilitated circumstances of the method to encourage collaboration, reflexivity and multi-strand learning leading to intersectional insights.

Finally, we were unable to prompt competition within the Evidence Panel, although in the reflexive interviews several panel members revealed that they had employed tactics such as speaking first when presenting evidence, or talking slowly and quietly, or looking for 'the killer piece of research' to bring their strand to the fore. That consensus reigned, was in part due to the method but also to the commitment of the panel to finding solutions relevant to the whole person.

## Conclusion

This research suggests that we are midway between a single strand and intersectional approach – a place of multi-strand working. The multi-strand mainstreaming method brings a multi-strand lens to investigating inequalities and resists collapsing distinct inequalities to 'one size fits all' solutions. It retains a heterogeneous focus on the origins of both inequalities and redress. It manages the complexity of many strands in the evidence-gathering and analysis phases, which facilitates prioritisation for policy makers.

Discovering intersectional inequalities at a structural level is currently undermined by fear of complexity and perceived resistance from policy makers. Data inadequacies further limit this approach to promoting equality. Much basic data on carers had not been collected, or where there was data they had not been subject to multivariate analysis. What is not collected, collated or analysed can also lead to inequalities.

Better understanding of the value of qualitative research to policy making is needed. These methods allow us to hear the voices of those experiencing intersectional inequalities, capturing the nuances of complex circumstances. They can facilitate data gathering where there are sensitivities (which can vary by strand) as well as potentially promoting dignity and respect in the research process.

The multi-strand mainstreaming method requires data, time, resources and capacity to participate. Therefore, its effective use requires political engagement – not only administrative involvement. Producing policy that promotes equality must involve politicians who can act to make systemic change, as well as bringing together 'equality makers and policy makers' to work on evidence-gathering and visioning processes, collaboratively.

Finally, the model requires further testing in other policy fields, and further debate is needed on what it means to promote equality on single strand, multi-strand or intersectional bases.

## Notes

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<sup>2</sup> For brevity, use of the term equality ‘strands’ should infer the inclusion of the Welsh language throughout.

<sup>3</sup> The 2000 Race Relations (Amendment) Act, the 2005 Disability Discrimination (Amendment) Act and the 2006 Equality Act.

<sup>4</sup> Expressed in EHRC stakeholder forums and pre set-up consultation forums such as the Wales Equality Reference Group, the Equality and Human Rights Coalition in Wales, the Equality and Diversity Forum in England and the Equality Coordinating Group in Scotland.

<sup>5</sup> The panel comprised representatives from the Commission for Racial Equality, Disability Rights Commission, Equal Opportunities Commissions (for ethnicity, disability and gender respectively), and from the voluntary sector Age Concern Cymru, Stonewall Cymru for sexual orientation, Chwarae Teg for gender and Cytun (Churches Together in Wales) for religion and belief. They were joined from the statutory sector by the Welsh Language Board, the Children’s Commission and for human rights, a member of the EHRC transition team.

<sup>6</sup> The project report, which details consultation processes (including citizen juries, deliberative democracy, and participative budgeting), testing and evaluating interventions (by means of equality indicators) and embedding the process in the policy cycle, is available from the Welsh Assembly Government, Equality and Human Rights Division (Parken and Young, 2007).

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### **Data sources for the demonstration project**

Annual Population Survey (Wales) 2005

Census of Population (2001) Office for National Statistics, running of newly disaggregated data managed by Statistics Wales

Family Resources Survey (2003–04) Informal carers by main source and weekly income, gender and hours of unpaid care, Department for Work and Pensions

Local Government Data Unit – administrative data:

Hours of homecare by provider

Carer's Allowance by local authority

Children's services provided by local authority

Adult social services provided by local authority.

Welsh Health Survey 2003/04 (2006) Health of Carers Bulletin, Statistics Wales

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