

Institution: Oxford Brookes University		
Unit of Assessment: 17, Business and Management Studies		
Title of case study: Promoting equality and diversity policies and practices in employment in Higher Education and other key sectors of the UK economy		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2009 – 2019		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Professor Simonetta Manfredi Dr Karen Handley Dr Louise Grisoni Dr Kate Clayton-Hathway Dr Ulrike Fasbender	Professor of Equality and Diversity Management Reader Senior Research Fellow Research Fellow Senior Lecturer	[text removed for publication]
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 1 August 2013 to present		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N (though note case study for REF2014)		
1. Summary of the impact <p>Research undertaken at the Centre for Diversity Policy Research and Practice has demonstrably shaped employment policies and practices in Higher Education both at sector and at an institutional level. It has promoted better understanding of equality issues and ensured more effective compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty in the 2010 Equality Act, which requires the HE sector to place equality considerations at the core of their activities. The Centre was established in 2004 and brings together academics, professionals, representatives of civil society and policy makers to identify 'real world' situations where change is needed to achieve greater equality and inclusion and to frame research accordingly. The significant research expertise on equality issues developed by academics within the Centre has also been applied to other sectors, like the horse racing industry. Research investigating gender and diversity issues in this sector has resulted in evidence-based interventions to drive transformative change for the people working in horse racing.</p>		
2. Underpinning research <p>Research underpinning this impact case builds on scholarly work developed within the Centre over a period of 15 years. It focused on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Equality Policy in Research Careers: In 2009 the Equality Challenge Unit and Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) commissioned research, through a competitive tender, to investigate the implementation of the equality guidance issued by the Funding Councils for the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) 2008 to comply with equality legislation. This research was undertaken in 2009 by Manfredi (PI) and Professor Lucy Vickers (UoA18 Law), whose research proposal won this commission (GBP46,838). This research involved document reviews from 32 higher education institutions and interviews with senior staff, main and sub-panel members. Key findings from this research identified the need for: 1) Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to adopt more robust processes to facilitate self-disclosure of individual equality-related personal circumstances; 2) greater consistency in the equality guidance issued by different main and sub-panels, especially with regard to the treatment of early career researchers; and 3) greater precision in the criteria (i.e. pro-rata rules) to guide decisions relating to reduction of outputs submitted where staff had equality-related circumstances that justified such reduction. Furthermore, based on the evidence provided by this research, it was recommended that HEIs continue to be required to 		

undertake REF-related equality impact assessments (EIA) in spite of these no longer being a legal requirement. **(R1)**

- 2) **Gender and Higher Education Leadership:** Research funded by the former Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE) and Equality Challenge Unit (now both part of Advance-HE) in 2013 addressed the scarcity of empirical research focusing on success stories of women who have accessed senior leadership roles. This research (Manfredi PI with Grisoni, Handley, Cooke and Nestor, GBP30,000) focused on the career trajectories of male and female senior leaders in HE, both in academic and professional roles. This study offered new insights into how gender, in some cases intersecting with ethnicity, age or disability, influenced the career path of senior leaders, and highlighted factors that can either hinder or facilitate career progression. It also brought into focus the role of Executive Search Firms (ESFs) and their involvement in the selection and recruitment of senior leaders in HE, as an area that had received very little research scrutiny. It raised important questions about their influence on recruitment processes and whether they may be a contributing factor to the lack of diversity at this level. This led to LFHE, HEFCE and Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) awarding new funding in 2016 to Manfredi (PI) and Vickers (GBP20,000) to investigate these issues further and explore the interaction of ESFs with their HE clients from a gender equality perspective. Through an analysis of its empirical findings, the research identified “equality sensitive” stages in the recruitment process and offered recommendations to develop an accountability framework to ensure that due regard is given to equality considerations in the process. It drew from legal theory about reflexive regulations to provide HR practitioners with a better understanding of how the Public Sector Equality Duty, which is an example of this legislative approach, can be leveraged to mitigate bias and achieve better equality outcomes in recruitment processes involving ESFs. **(R2, R3, R4)**
- 3) **Women in Horse Racing:** The expertise developed in researching women’s career and their under-representation in leadership roles, led to an expansion of this work to other sectors. Manfredi (PI), with Clayton-Hathway and Fasbender, was successfully awarded funds from the British Horse Racing Foundation (GBP10,000) to conduct the first ever research into diversity in British horse racing. Key findings from this research highlighted that some powerful stereotypes remain in the industry, like the existence of an “old boys” network with practices that can exclude women, and a number of structural constraints that can impact negatively on women working in this industry. These included restricted access to opportunities to acquire social capital, poor work-life balance, negative attitudes to pregnancy and maternity, and lack of access to childcare. These research findings informed a series of recommendations to address gender and other diversity issues in this sport. **(R5, R6)**

3. References to the research

- R1.** Manfredi, S. and Vickers, L. (2009) *The impact of the process to promote equality and diversity in the Research Assessment Exercise 2008*. Equality Challenge Unit, London. Available at: <https://www.ecu.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/external/equality-and-diversity-in-the-research-assessment-exercise-2008.pdf> (peer reviewed and submitted to REF 2014)
- R2.** Manfredi, S., Cooke, F., Grisoni, L., Handley K. and Nestor, L. (2014) *Gender and Higher Education Leadership: Researching the Careers of Top Management Programme Alumni*. Research Report. London: Leadership Foundation for Higher Education and Equality Challenge ISBN 9781906627720
- R3.** Manfredi, S., Vickers, L. and Cousens, E. (2017) *Increasing the Diversity of Senior Leaders in Higher Education: The Role of Executive Search Firms*. Research Report. London: Leadership Foundation for Higher Education ISBN 9781906627980
- R4.** Manfredi, S., Clayton-Hathway, K. and Cousens, E. (2019) ‘Increasing Gender Diversity in Higher Education Leadership: The Role of Executive Search Firms’. *Social Sciences* 8(6) DOI: [10.3390/socsci8060168](https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci8060168)
- R5.** Clayton-Hathway, K. and Manfredi, S. (2017) *Women’s Representation and Diversity in the Horse Racing Industry*. Research Report. London: The Racing Foundation. (This output was not blind peer reviewed like the other outputs listed in this section were. It was reviewed by non-

academic stakeholders. [available on request]

R6. Clayton-Hathway, K. and Fasbender, U. 'Women as leaders and managers in sports: understanding key career enablers and constraints in the British horseracing industry' in Cooper C., Antoniou A-S., Gatrell C. (ed.), *Women, Business and Leadership: Gender and Organisations*, Edward Elgar Publishing (2019) ISBN: 9781786432704

4. Details of the impact

The findings from the body of research outlined above have led to the development of new standards and guidelines, and to the establishment of new sector-wide committees to achieve greater equality and inclusion in Higher Education and the horse racing industry in the UK and beyond. The changes instigated by the research have benefitted, and will continue to benefit, large numbers of individuals working in these sectors by removing barriers that can cause disadvantage and instead promote equality of opportunities.

Achieving greater inclusion in REF 2014 and 2021: Manfredi and Vickers' research (**R1**) has been instrumental in enabling the UK Funding Councils to develop clearer and more robust equality guidance. This has led to the adoption of better practices at HEIs to facilitate self-disclosure of equality-related staff circumstances and create institutional submissions with greater inclusivity.

Key findings and recommendations from the study shaped equality guidance for the Research Excellence Exercise (REF) 2014 and continue to have an impact in informing the equality guidance for REF 2021 (**E1**), removing inconsistency of treatment of Early Career Researchers (ECRs) by main panels and sub-panels through adopting a more precise set of criteria to guide decisions relating to reduction of outputs for staff with equality-related circumstances as specified in Annex L 'Reductions of staff circumstances' (pages 114-116) of the REF 2021 'Guidance on Submission' (2019/01), (**E2**). (The impact of this research on equality guidance for REF 2014 was evidenced in the Manfredi impact case study submitted in 2014). As recommended by the 2009 study (**R1**), REF 2021 equality guidance requires institutions to "establish safe and robust processes to facilitate self-disclosure" (**E2, p.40**) and to undertake equality impact assessments. The importance of appropriate institutional processes to facilitate self-disclosure was stressed by the Chair of the national Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel (EDAP) in her open letter to the UK HE sector, as she highlighted the need for institutions "to establish safe and supporting processes to enable individuals to declare voluntarily their individual circumstances" (**E3**).

Although it is too early to quantify the extent of the benefits to individual researchers of the revised equality guidance in the run up to REF 2021, there is evidence that the revisions to the REF 2014 equality guidance, based on Manfredi and Vickers' research, had significant impacts: the proportion of staff submitted with reduced numbers of research outputs due to equality-related circumstances rose from 12.2% in RAE 2008 to 29.2% in REF 2014 (N=16,361, including 10,099 ECRs) (**E4, p.6**). The EDAP report stated: *"This increase indicates that the new arrangements have enabled institutions to be more inclusive in their submissions, and that staff trusted the process and were provided with a safe environment in which to disclose their circumstances"*. Manfredi and Vickers' research (**R1**) has thus benefitted, and continues to benefit, not only individual careers but also the UK research base, by ensuring maximum benefit from all excellent research. According to Universities UK, HE employs 429,560 staff, 49% of whom are on academic contracts.

Setting new standards to achieve greater diversity in the governing boards of HEIs and in other sectors: The research examining the role of Executive Search Firms (ESFs) in the selection and recruitment for senior appointments in HE (**R2, R3, R4**) has resulted in the development of accountability frameworks that have ensured more effective compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty within the 2010 Equality Act, which requires the HE sector to place equality considerations at the core of their activities.

The research findings generated much public debate within the HE community (**E5**), and led its

fundings, Advance-HE (an organisation which supports strategic change and continuous improvement within HE), to seek Manfredi's expert contribution to develop a Diversity Principles Framework (E6) and a Board Recruitment Framework (E7). These frameworks focus on board level positions within HEIs where there is an aspirational target of 40% women's representation by 2020 (set by HEFCE's 2015 business plan), and have established new standards for improving transparency and accountability, providing clear guidelines to ensure that due regard is given to equality considerations throughout the recruitment process. At the launch of the Diversity Principles Framework in October 2018, Advance-HE noted that *"this framework has been produced based on the recommendations stated in the published study conducted by Professor Simonetta Manfredi in 2017 addressing the role of executive search firms in promoting diversity in Higher Education"* (E6). Evidence shows that the frameworks are encouraging ESFs that work with HEIs to take active steps to promote diversity. The feedback provided by the Director of SearchHigher, which specialises in HE, on the Diversity Principles Framework highlighted how this is also helping to promote other equalities in addition to gender: *"What has been very useful has been the clear responsibilities and actions required by both the higher education provider and the executive search firm. Taking this approach as a partnership with defined roles has really helped to improve accountability and promote gender diversity and we have sought to apply this same methodology in relation to race, sexuality, ability and other protected characteristics"* (E8).

HESA data for 2018/19 show that women's representation on universities' governing bodies has increased significantly to 41.9% from 32% in 2013. Although it is not possible to show direct causation between this research and these improvements, it is highly likely that the research has contributed to this progress.

Women in horse racing: The research on women's under-representation in senior roles in British horse racing (R5, R6) was defined by the Racing Foundation as a "catalyst for change" (E10) and resulted in the establishment of a national steering group to promote gender and other diversities by the British Horseracing Authority (BHA), as recommended by the research. The research was instrumental to the establishment of the first Diversity in Racing Steering Group, as stated in a press release by the BHA (E11) and reinforced in its first action plan (E12). This also led to the appointment of a Head of Inclusion and Diversity and drove a cultural shift by taking action to achieve a better gender balance in British Racing's governance to promote greater inclusion (E12, p.4). Nick Rust, BHA CEO, commented: *"this survey serves as a stark reminder that ...there is much more that British Racing needs to do"* (E9). They also stated that the research instigated wider consultation across the industry to decide what additional action needs to be taken, *"including the recommendations contained in this report"*. The developments instigated by the research findings have far-reaching implications as British horse racing employs 85,000 people and it is estimated that 40% of its spectators are women. Moreover, beyond the UK context, the research findings were shared with the Asian racing community by a representative of Women in Racing at the 2018 Asian Racing Conference in Seoul, South Korea (E13).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Achieving greater inclusion in REF 2014 and 2021

E1. REF 2014 Assessment framework and guidance on submissions (July 2011). Available at: <https://www.ref.ac.uk/2014/media/ref/content/pub/assessmentframeworkandguidanceonsubmissions/GOS%20including%20addendum.pdf> <https://www.ref.ac.uk/2014/equality/>

E2. REF 2021 Guidance on submissions (2019/01). Available at: <https://www.ref.ac.uk/publications/guidance-on-submissions-201901/>

E3. Chair of the REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel (EDAP), *Open letter to the UK Higher Education sector on equality and diversity in REF 2021*. January 2018. Available at: <https://www.ref.ac.uk/about/ed-open-letter-to-sector/>

E4. EDAP. (2015) *Equality and diversity in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework*. Final report, see page 6. Available at: <https://www.ref.ac.uk/2014/equality/edapreport/>

Setting new standards to achieve greater diversity in the governing boards of HEIs and in other sectors

E5. Examples of national media coverage: Times Higher Education, '*Diversity Warning on Universities' use of recruitment consultant*' (21/03/2017); HEFCE blog, '*Accountability for Diversity: too important to be left to executive search firms?*' (20/04/2017); Wonkhe, '*Searching for Gender Balance at the Top*' (04/06/2014)

E6. Advance-HE (2018) *Diversity Principles Framework. Guidance for executive search firms and higher education providers working together on board appointments*. Available at: https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2019-09/diversity_principles_framework.pdf (Professor Manfredi is a co-author of this report)

E7. Advance-HE (2018) *Board Recruitment Framework. Diversity principles for constructing further particulars for board vacancies*. Available at: https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2019-09/board_recruitment_framework_template_-_v1.pdf

E8. Email correspondence between Professor Manfredi and: a Senior Consultant at Perret Laver (Executive Search Firm); the Managing Director of SearchHigher; the Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at the University of Surrey

Women in horse racing

E9. Media coverage, including articles by BBC Sport '*Women in horse racing under-represented in most prominent areas, says study*' (17/05/2017), The Guardian '*Racing tips and news*' (17/05/2017), Channel NewsAsia *Horse Racing: Women face glass ceiling in racing, report shows* (17/05/2017) and specialist press (Horse & Hound, Racing Post and Horsetalk.co.nz)

E10. The Racing Foundation. *Review 2018*, reports that a number of training and education activities now focus on diversity and inclusion in racing as the direct result of Oxford Brookes University's 'Women's representation and diversity in the horseracing industry' study (see page 14)

E11. British Horseracing Authority, Announcement of the establishment of a Diversity in Racing Steering Group (31/07/2017). Available at: <https://www.britishhorseracing.com/regulation/participant-welfare/diversity-in-racing/>

E12. Diversity in Racing Steering Group. (2018) *A Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan for British Racing* (see page 4)

E13. Presentation by Women in Racing at the Asian Racing Conference in Seoul, South Korea, 31/07/2017 that contains extensive references to the research and how its recommendations have informed change.