

Diversity Monitoring

The collection of demographic data is an increasingly common practice across a broad range of organisations. However, most organisations – whether secular or faith based – fail to ask themselves the pivotal question: *Why?* Their lack of awareness is reflected in the methods adopted for extracting information, notably the widespread use of the ‘tick-box’ format commonly used in government census studies.

This research project seeks to develop more relevant, culturally sensitive, innovative methodologies for the collection of demographic data. Participants are invited to respond to a semi-structured survey, with questions designed to elicit open response to a range of diversity strands including age, gender identity, ethnic identity, national identity, religious or spiritual orientation and sexual orientation. Through the findings, the researchers hope to: (1) illuminate the range of language that people use to self-identify; (2) develop new models for data monitoring; and (3) develop processes to help organisations and communities to reflect on diversity and to develop deeper reflective awareness. Running alongside the research study is a broader project to deepen theological understandings of ‘diversity’ and ‘identity’ for 21st century faith communities and religious organisations.

The project emerged from a small pilot exercise based at the Methodist Church in Britain in 2012. It has developed into a multi-faceted research study that straddles a number of spheres: secular and faith; academic and practical. In 2015, the researchers began the first formal phase, drawing on the UK College of Mediators as its first secular cohort. 2016 will see the study replicated in a faith cohort comprising members of the Methodist Diaconal Order. In this way, the Susanna Wesley Foundation seeks to encourage dialogue and good practice between faith organisations and the secular workplace.

Outputs from this study will include academic journal articles (including one in press for “Mediation Theory and Practice”) and a range of practical learning resources.