

# INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION 2005

## New Directions in Research on Racism and Ethnicity

### The role of service users in research

- ✚ **You have to want to include users in your research exercises.** The rhetoric of inclusion slides easily enough off the tongue but the reality requires commitment, forethought, preparation, application and quality assurance.
- ✚ **You have to get past the guards.** Whether you represent a research agency, an academic institution, a social services department, or any other bureaucracy contact with service-delivery agencies almost always means contact with professionals. Some professionals are eager to engage service users in research with the proper safeguards but rather more are nervous about what might be revealed to the outside world. In either case, your engagement with service users will almost always be mediated by professionals who may or may not share your research aims, and may be suspicious of your motives.
- ✚ **You have to communicate with users.** This may mean interpreters which inevitably increases costs and complexity. Where the professional offers to be, or indeed insists on being, the interpreter obvious conflicts arise.
- ✚ **You have to recognise the power of service users.** A service user, especially when working with older people, may be a professional active or retired. Service users in black and ethnic minority communities are increasingly unwilling to be passive subjects or worse still objects of research. There is an economy of research. The researchers are getting something out of the process; the agencies will want something; what are the users getting out of it?
- ✚ **You have to encourage agencies to engage with their own service users.** In our case this meant enabling agencies to develop feedback mechanisms of varying degrees of complexity to ensure that they themselves knew what those using their services wanted.