

<b>Institution: University of Oxford</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 23 - Sociology</b>
<b>Title of case study: Strengthening government policy on community cohesion in England and Wales</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Increasing immigration, the rise of the British National Party, and the London bombings put social cohesion firmly on the policy agenda. James Laurence and Anthony Heath's research (2008) on the predictors of social cohesion provided the key empirical foundation for policies implemented by the Department for Communities and Local Government from 2008 onwards. These policies in turn impacted the practices of local authorities in a variety of domains, including the allocation of social housing and the funding of community projects. The research was also cited by a number of organizations beyond government in their policy documents, from the Equality and Human Rights Commission to consultancies such as Ipsos MORI.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>Anthony Heath is renowned for his quantitative analysis of survey data on British society. Leading a team of researchers (see below), Heath produced a substantial body of research on British identities funded by two ESRC grants (£129,537, 2001-4; £36,460, 2003-6, both rated outstanding) and by the Ministry of Justice (£20,000, 2007).</p> <p>The team's key research findings, outlined in the following sample of publications <b>[Section 3]</b>, were that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Although, there has been no major crisis of national identity and social cohesion, there has been a gradual long-term decline in national pride, probably due to generational change <b>[Section 3, R1]</b>;</li> <li>- Most ethnic minority groups show similar levels of attachment to Britain as does the white British majority group and do not therefore constitute a major threat to social cohesion <b>[R2]</b>;</li> <li>- Major ethnic penalties with respect to unemployment persist for all ethnic minority groups in Britain <b>[R5]</b>;</li> <li>- The social characteristics of an area, and in particular area levels of economic disadvantage, have powerful effects (using multilevel models for analysing contextual effects) on political behaviour <b>[R3]</b>.</li> </ul> <p>In 2008, this research led the Department for Communities and Local Government to commission Heath and his team to undertake an original analysis of factors affecting community social cohesion, and in particular to explore the impact of ethnic diversity and the growing minority population in some areas. Heath invited his then doctoral student, James Laurence, to collaborate on this report.</p> <p>Although built on the body of research listed above, this case study focuses on the impact of the Laurence and Heath report <b>[R4]</b>. This publication analyzed the 2005 Citizenship Survey for England and Wales, conducted by the Department for Communities and Local Government. The survey asked 14,000 respondents whether their local area 'is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together'. This survey was especially valuable for its 'ethnic boost' — 4,400 in addition to the representative sample of 9,600 — which enabled valid statistical inference</p>

## Impact case study (REF3b)

for minority populations. Multilevel modeling was then used to investigate the effects both of individual and of contextual community characteristics on this measure of social cohesion.

A particular focus of the research was to test Robert Putnam's finding, from the United States (2007), that ethnic diversity *undermined* community cohesion. This American finding had been widely publicized in British academic and policy circles. Most significantly, Laurence and Heath contradicted Putnam's conclusions, determining that ethnic diversity *enhanced* community cohesion, the opposite effect to that found in the United States. In contrast, Laurence and Heath found that one of the mechanisms linking diversity and cohesion is the presence of bridging relationships: inter-ethnic friendships increased social cohesion. They identified that social cohesion is reduced not by diversity but rather by economic disadvantage, at both the individual and community level. Other findings included the fact that social cohesion is also influenced by various subjective beliefs, is lower where people perceive the allocation of social housing is unfair, and where people fear crime, and that formal volunteering increases social cohesion.

Team involved in the research:

Anthony Heath (at Oxford since 1970, Professor of Sociology since 1999) led the team until his retirement in 2010. James Laurence was his doctoral student from 2006 to 2011. At the time of their collaborative research with Heath, Andersen was Senior Research Fellow at Oxford (2000-02), Roberts was Data Services Manager at Oxford's Nuffield College (2007-08), and Tilley (a former doctoral student of Heath's) was University Lecturer at Oxford (2005-07). Cheung (another former doctoral student of Heath's) was Senior Lecturer at the University of Birmingham (2004-07).

**3. References to the research**

**[R1]** James Tilley and Anthony Heath, 2007, 'The Decline of British National Pride', *British Journal of Sociology*. vol. 58, pp. 661-78;

- cited 32 times (Google Scholar); journal has impact factor of 1.6 (ISI)

**[R2]** Anthony Heath and Jane Roberts, 2008, *British Identity: Its Sources and Possible Implications for Civic Attitudes and Behaviour*, research report for Lord Goldsmith's Citizenship Review;

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/docs/british-identity.pdf>

cited 24 times (Google Scholar)

**[R3]** Robert Andersen and Anthony Heath, 2002, 'Class Matters: The Persisting Effects of Contextual Social Class on Individual Voting in Britain, 1964-97', *European Sociological Review*, vol. 18, pp. 125-38

- cited 55 times (Google Scholar); journal has impact factor of 1.9 (ISI)

**[R4]** James Laurence and Anthony Heath, 2008, *Predictors of Community Cohesion: Multi-Level Modelling of the 2005 Citizenship Survey*, Department for Communities and Local Government;

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/predictorscohesion>

- cited 52 times (Google Scholar), in journals like *Comparative Sociology* and *Urban Studies*, and in books like *The Age of Obama: The Changing Place of Minorities in British and American Society* (Manchester University Press), *Segregation and Mistrust: Diversity, Isolation, and Social Cohesion* (Cambridge University Press)

**[R5]** Anthony Heath and Sin Yi Cheung (Birmingham) (eds), 2007, *Unequal Chances: Ethnic Minorities in Western Labour Markets*, Oxford University Press

- cited 134 times (Google Scholar)

Research grants:

- ESRC National Identity and Constitutional Change in England (2001-2004), £129,537
- ESRC – Being British: National Identity in a Global Context (2003-2006), £36,460
- Ministry of Justice – Citizenship Review (Oct 2007-Dec 2007), £12,000

#### 4. Details of the impact

The 2001 riots in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley placed ethnic segregation and neighbourhood cohesion at the top of the domestic policy agenda. In response, the Labour Government commissioned the Cattle Report (2001), established an independent Commission for Integration and Cohesion (reporting in 2007), and asked Lord Goldsmith to review British citizenship (reporting in 2008).

Within this context, Laurence and Heath's report [R4] was recognized to be the most important piece of research underpinning the Government's policy on cohesion, as evidenced by the Department for Communities and Local Government's *Cohesion Delivery Framework: Overview*, which acknowledged 'a heavy reliance on Laurence and Heath's multi-level modelling of the 2005 Citizenship Survey [R4], as this is the most robust, nationally representative evidence we have on community cohesion in England' [Section 5: C1, p.23]. The Department's Director of Analysis and Innovation can confirm the importance of this research in shaping policy [C10].

One impact of the research is difficult to document but nonetheless worth emphasizing. The finding that ethnic diversity does *not* reduce social cohesion made it impossible for informed policy-makers to deflect blame on to immigration. This finding was cited by the then Secretary of State, Hazel Blears MP when debating with the American social scientist Robert Putnam (at the Conference 'Healthy, Wealthy and Wise', 23 June 2008) [C2, p.15].

The positive lessons from the research were embodied in a number of policy documents issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government:

- Justifying this policy emphasis within government, *The Economic Case for Cohesion Report* [C3, pp.4, 10] uses their research [R4] to argue that enhanced cohesion will have tangible economic benefits, including reduced crime levels and better health.
- In implementing policies to enhance cohesion, the Department issued a slew of documents for local authorities, funders of local projects, and community activists [C4, C5, C6]. These documents translated Laurence and Heath's research into practical guidance. For example:
  - Inter-ethnic friendships increase social cohesion: this finding led to the recommendation that agencies should fund local projects that build relationships among different groups, rather than projects catering to particular ethnic groups;
  - Perceived unfairness in the allocation of social housing reduces social cohesion: this finding led to the recommendation that local authorities refine allocation procedures (through 'choice-based lettings', for example), and also make strenuous efforts to dispel popular myths that certain groups (like asylum seekers) are privileged over others.

Beyond central and local government, multiple organizations have incorporated Laurence and Heath's research into their policies and practices. The newly formed Equality and Human Rights Commission commissioned a report on how to measure what they conceived as 'good relations' [C7]. The report drew heavily on Laurence and Heath's research [R4]. For instance, one especially influential finding was the strong negative effect of economic deprivation. The report argued that the Equality and Human Rights Commission should collect measurements going beyond its statutory equality groups, in order to recognize how economic deprivation undermined 'good relations' [C7, pp.18-20, 24].

Consultants also regularly draw on Laurence and Heath's research. It was extensively cited in a report for the South East England Development Agency by SQW [C8], a consultancy which

## Impact case study (REF3b)

advises public bodies on sustainable development, and in a report on local public services by Ipsos MORI's Social Research Institute [C9].

### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

The following sources are a representative sample of corroboration, confirming the central role that this research played in providing the empirical foundation for a number of policies developed around social cohesion between 2008 and 2010.

[C1] Department for Communities and Local Government, 2008a, *Cohesion Delivery Framework: Overview*

- Acknowledges 'heavy reliance on Laurence and Heath' across the Delivery Framework (p.23)

[C2] 'Healthy, Wealthy and Wise: The Challenge for the Northeast', conference held by the North East Social Capital Forum, 23 June 2008, Newcastle upon Tyne; report at [www.communityfoundation.org.uk/downloads/27](http://www.communityfoundation.org.uk/downloads/27)

- Laurence and Heath's research cited by Hazel Blears MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and by Darra Singh, who had headed of the Commission for Integration and Cohesion (p. 15 of the report)

[C3] Department for Communities and Local Government, 2009a, *The Economic Case for Cohesion Report*; <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/1303560.pdf>

- Draws on Laurence and Heath's research to suggest that greater cohesion will bring economic benefits, including lower crime and better health.

[C4] Department for Communities and Local Government, 2008b, *Cohesion Guidance for Funders Consultation: Impact Assessment*; <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/804446>

- Uses Laurence and Heath's finding that inter-ethnic friendships increase social cohesion, report argues that funding should be directed towards projects which build relationships rather than towards specific groups.

[C5] Department for Communities and Local Government, 2009b, *Guidance for Local Authorities on How to Mainstream Community Cohesion into Other Services*; <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/1303527.pdf>

- Deploys Laurence and Heath's findings to emphasize important roles for the police, the National Health Service, and the voluntary sector. Highlights how perceived unfairness in the allocation of social housing undermines cohesion.

[C6] Department for Communities and Local Government, 2009c, *Building Cohesive Communities: What Frontline Staff and Community Activists Need to Know*; <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/1357439.pdf>

[C7] Nick Johnson and John Tatam, 2009, *Good Relations: A Conceptual Analysis*, Equality and Human Rights Commission; [http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded\\_files/research/research\\_report\\_42\\_-\\_good\\_relations\\_a\\_conceptual\\_analysis.pdf](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/research/research_report_42_-_good_relations_a_conceptual_analysis.pdf)

- Influenced by Laurence and Heath's finding of the detrimental effect of economic disadvantage, recommends that the Equality and Human Rights Commission should incorporate deprivation in its measure of "good relations", though it falls outside the Commission's stated equality groups.

[C8] SQW Consulting, 2009, *Stopping the Spiral of Decline? Understanding the Importance of Social Networks in a Recession: A Case for Action*; [http://www.sqw.co.uk/file\\_download/193](http://www.sqw.co.uk/file_download/193)

- Cites Laurence and Heath's research ten times in arguing that community cohesion affects economic performance

[C9] Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute, 2009, *People, Perceptions, and Place*

- Draws on Laurence and Heath's findings in analyzing satisfaction with local area for the Comprehensive Area Assessment

[C10] Director, Analysis and Innovation at UK Department for Communities and Local Government

- will confirm the importance of this research in shaping policy in the Department for Communities and Local Government