

<p><b>Institution:</b> University of Cambridge</p>
<p><b>Unit of Assessment:</b> UoA18</p>
<p><b>Title of case study:</b> Workplace Industrial Relations</p>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words) Brown has carried out research on payment, workplace industrial relations, conflict resolution, and collective bargaining over forty years. He has had a close involvement with policy formulation and implementation in British industrial relations; this has continued since 2008. The attached testimonies confirm that his research since 1993 has had a direct influence on the design and continued implementation of the National Minimum Wage; on the work of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service; and on the administration of the Union Modernisation Fund. His research is the basis for a continuing advisory role with the Chinese government</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words) Brown was a founder member of the (then) Social Science Research Council's Industrial Relations Research Unit at Warwick University in 1970. He investigated workplace wage bargaining using ethnographic, econometric and survey methods. The British engineering industry, the main focus of this work, was then characterised by dysfunctional incentive schemes, frequent strikes, and intense bargaining over all aspects of work organisation. His research analysed these phenomena. He led the first large sample survey of British workplace industrial relations in 1977/78, from which came the official (now) ESRC/Acas/BIS-funded Workplace Employment Relations Survey (WERS), which has been conducted six times between 1980 and 2011, and in several rounds of which he has been in the design team. Brown joined the Faculty of Economics at the University of Cambridge in 1985, when he became the Montague Burton Professor of Industrial Relations.</p> <p>In the 1990s his work, funded by the (then) Department of Trade and Industry, turned to the individualisation of employment and the characteristics of the decline of collective bargaining. He led a team that compared the conduct and contractual basis of employment in organisations that had withdrawn support from trade unions, with industrially matched organisations that had not (Ref 1). He then led a larger, ESRC funded, project that used a combination of WERS 1998 survey analysis and more detailed case studies to investigate private sector employer response to tougher competition and the consequent changing role of trade unions at the workplace (Ref 2). He led an ESRC-funded sequel using targeted case studies to evaluate the process and outcomes of co-operative trade union strategies referred to at the time as 'workplace partnership' (e.g. Ref 3). The teams he led for these 1990s projects were all of Cambridge researchers.</p> <p>Brown's research returned to large-scale survey analysis with an ESRC-funded project, definitively analysing all the WERS Surveys from 1980 to 2004. He played a central role in organising and writing up the statistical analysis of these data, by over twenty researchers from different institutions, of the transformation of British industrial relations that had occurred over that time (Ref 5). His own co-authored chapters demonstrated, for the first time, the extent to which the collapse of collective bargaining in Britain, sector by sector, had been the consequence of the intensification of product market competition.</p> <p>It is generally recognised that the UK has internationally uniquely rich data on the changing nature of labour relations over the past several decades (c.f. e.g. <a href="http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-8543.2010.00843.x/abstract">http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-8543.2010.00843.x/abstract</a>). Brown's research has made a major contribution to this, not only in his involvement in establishing the statistically representative WERS survey, but in refreshing it and adding to it by systematic case studies. His research from the 1990s onwards was particularly important in describing, analysing, and quantifying a period of unprecedentedly rapid change in employment relations.</p> <p>Throughout this period, Brown has been an active industrial arbitrator and mediator with Acas and has published research on these processes (e.g. Ref 4). He was also a foundation member of the Low Pay Commission which established the UK's National Minimum Wage, and has published analyses of that process (e.g. Ref 6). In 2003 he was awarded a CBE for 'services to employment</p>

relations’.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. The Individualisation of the Employment Contract in Britain, 1998, (with S. Deakin, M. Hudson, C. Pratten and P. Ryan), Employment Relations Research Series No 4, London: Department of Trade and Industry, 98 pp. <http://www.bis.gov.uk/files/file11633.pdf>
2. ‘The employment contract: from collective procedures to individual rights’, (with S. Deakin, D. Nash and S. Oxenbridge), British Journal of Industrial Relations, 2000, 38:4 . <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/L212252030/outputs/read/d94297b4-44b0-4f6c-ad5c-e88fb5479286>
3. ‘Achieving a new equilibrium? The stability of co-operative employer-union relationships’, (with S. Oxenbridge), Industrial Relations Journal, 2004, 35(5), 388-402 <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1468-2338.2004.00322.x/abstract>
4. ‘Third party intervention reconsidered: an international perspective’, Journal of Industrial Relations, 46:4, Dec 2004, pp 448-458. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.0022-1856.2004.00151.x/abstract>
5. The Evolution of the Modern Workplace, (editor and co-author with A. Bryson, J. Forth and K. Whitfield), 2009, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp 369. [http://www.cambridge.org/gb/knowledge/isbn/item2326697/?site\\_locale=en\\_GB](http://www.cambridge.org/gb/knowledge/isbn/item2326697/?site_locale=en_GB)
6. ‘The process of fixing the British National Minimum Wage, 1997-2007’, British Journal of Industrial Relations, 2009, 47:2, 430 – 444. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-8543.2009.00722.x/abstract>

All outputs can be supplied by the University of Cambridge on request

### Grants

Relevant research grants since 1993 (for which Brown was the Principal Investigator unless otherwise stated):

- 1996-97 Department of Trade and Industry grant of £46k; ‘The Changing Nature of Employment Contracts’
- 1998-2001 ESRC grant of £119k; Programme: Future of Work; ‘The Individualisation of Employment Contracts in Britain’; Award No: L212 252030 (rated: outstanding)
- 2001-03 ESRC grant of £95k; Programme: Future of Work; ‘The Basis and Characteristics of Mutually Beneficial Employer/Trade Union Relations’; Award `No. L212-252049 (rated: good).
- 2006-08 ESRC grant of £148k on analysis of 25 years of WERS surveys; Award No RES-000-23-1603) (Principal Investigator: K. Whitfield of Cardiff University)
- 2010-11 ESRC grant £70k; Placement Fellowship of doctoral supervisee with Trades Union Congress; Award No. RES-173-27-0228

### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Brown has served as an independent expert on a number of public bodies.

1) The National Minimum Wage. Brown was appointed an independent member of the Low Pay Commission (LPC) when established in 1997 to set up the National Minimum Wage. He served until 2007 and the influence of his research on the LPC continues to the present. The first Chair of the LPC, and temporarily the Chair for 2008-2009, testifies (T1) that Brown ‘played an active part in the substantial task of defining the NMW and of conducting and commissioning the research whereby the Commission assessed its likely and actual impact on employment, pay and productivity.’ He refers specifically to Refs 1, 2, and 5. He writes that, on his return to the LPC in 2008, ‘it was evident that the integrity of the initial design of the NMW and its supporting institutions

## Impact case study (REF3b)

was intact. Our confidence in our advice to government continued to draw on the rich and constantly renewed British empirical research to which Professor Brown's work had made and continued to make an important contribution. ... Professor Brown's published research since 1993 has made a significant contribution to the continuing success of the British National Minimum Wage since 2008.'

The present Secretary of the LPC testifies that Brown's analysis (Ref 6)) 'has been a central part of the induction reading which we give to all Low Pay Commissioners, and to all new members of the Commission's Secretariat, and we will continue to use it in this way in the future' (T2). In 2011, the National Minimum Wage was judged to be 'the most successful policy of the past 30 years' in a poll of members of the Political Studies Association conducted with the Institute for Government (W1).

2) Arbitration and mediation. Brown has been a member of the Panel of Arbitrators of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas) since 1985 and the independent chair of the Fire Brigades National Joint Council body for mediating disputes that cannot be settled at brigade level since 1998. The Head of Strategy of Acas, testifies (T3) to Brown's research 'having a significant impact on policy thinking and practice'. She says, inter alia that it 'has provided invaluable commentary on the dynamics of the employment relations. This is critical to understanding the world in which Acas operates.' She writes of the value of his research on 'partnership working' (Ref 3). With regard to dispute resolution, she reports that 'his material is important in underpinning the training provided to new arbitrators' (e.g. Ref 4). She refers to Brown's leadership with Ref 5, which Acas, as a sponsor of WERS, 'particularly welcomed'.

3) Trade union development. In 2005, the government established the Union Modernisation Fund (UMF) to enable trade unions to improve their administration. A Supervisory Board was set up to administer this at arms length from government. Brown served on this until the UMF was wound up in 2010. The UMF was judged to have a substantial effect in changing trade unions. The Programme Manager of the UMF, testifies (T4) that 'Over the course of three funding rounds [Brown's] extensive academic research in this field played a significant part in the deliberations of the Board. In particular, Prof Brown's research on the changing role of trade unions in Britain and the increasing individualisation of employment enabled him to provide very useful insights into how trade unions might be supported through the UMF to adapt to their new circumstances'.

4) Labour contracts reform and conflict resolution in China. Brown has been invited to China six times since their Labour Contracts Act of 2008, partly to discuss the implications with government officials. He returned twice in 2010, at a time of rising industrial unrest, to address the All China Federation of Trade Unions and government researchers on dispute resolution procedures and on minimum wages. He co-organised two conferences, attended by officials, at Renmin University in 2011 and 2013 on labour reform in China. The head of the relevant Ministry's research institute testifies (T5) to discussions based on Ref 1, writing 'this has been helpful in helping us to advise the Chinese government on policy in the period following the introduction of our Labour Contracts Act'. In 2012 Brown was appointed an Honorary Professor of Renmin University and also a consultant to the principal government research project on collective bargaining reform. (722 words)

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

#### Individual Testimonies:

T1. Chair, Low Pay Commission, 1997-2002 and 2008-2009

T2. Secretary, Low Pay Commission (Victoria House, Southampton Row, London WC1B 4AD)

T3. Head of Strategy and former Head of Research and Evaluation, Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas)

T4. Former programme manager 2006 – 2011 for the Union Modernisation Fund in the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills

**Impact case study (REF3b)**

T5. Party Secretary, Vice President, Research Fellow and Head, China Academy of Labour and Social Security, advisory body to the Chinese Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security

**Webpage:**

W1. <http://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/our-work/better-policy-making/policy-successes>