

Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: University of Southampton
Unit of Assessment: 21 Politics and International Studies
Title of case study: 21-01 Developing Policy and Practice Capacity for Nudging Behaviour Change in Citizens
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>The Centre for Citizenship, Globalisation and Governance (C2G2) at the University of Southampton is at the forefront of increasingly important policy and practice considerations about how to enhance civic behaviour using forms of intervention beyond legislation and taxation. Its research in this field has influenced the UK government's approach to the concept of the Big Society and has helped shape the broader debate on how nudging behaviour change can reshape public service delivery. Through media exposure and engagement in high-level interactions with policymakers, the researchers at Southampton have framed the thinking of governments at all levels, think-tanks and voluntary associations both in the UK and internationally.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The major underpinning research for this impact case study was an extensive programme of experimental research, <i>Rediscovering the Civic and Achieving Better Outcomes in Public Policy</i>, conducted by Gerry Stoker (Professor of Politics and Governance) and Graham Smith (Professor of Politics, 1999-2012) and from 2007 to 2010 with Peter John [G1]. It built on an earlier programme of research, funded by the Home Office, which grew out of discussions between Stoker and then Home Secretary David Blunkett [3.1].</p> <p>The 2007-2010 study received ESRC Venture funding, with additional funding from the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) and the North West Innovation Network (£850,000 in total). Both Stoker and Smith were at Southampton during the whole of the study. The programme considered different ideas to promote civic behaviour, including 'nudge' concepts (focusing on social cues and signals, introducing small incentives and harnessing peer pressure) and 'think' strategies (asking people to reflect on, discuss and deliberate over information provided). As a result, the research drew on research on both behavioural economics and democratic innovations. Experimental methods were applied to provide robust evaluations of different interventions used to increase a range of types of civic behaviour such as recycling, petitioning, voting and volunteering. More specifically, randomised controlled trials and qualitative design experiments demonstrated how different techniques work in practice and how that practice is made more effective. These field-based, large-scale experiments involved working in partnership with various organisations, including the NHS (e.g. Blood and Transplant), local authorities (e.g. Wiltshire County Council) and voluntary organisations (e.g. EMERGE). The programme of research was influential in the further exploitation of field and design experiments within political science [3.2] and public policy [3.3].</p> <p>The key findings were captured in a book, <i>Nudge, Nudge, Think, Think: Using Experiments to Change Civic Behaviour</i> (2011) [3.4], as well as outputs directed at policymakers in the UK [3.5] and internationally [3.6]. The research demonstrated the importance of both the type of message the citizen receives, such as canvassing or giving feedback, and the particular design of the institutional arrangement, which may allow for debate and the provision of default options.</p> <p>This work has led to related funded research. In collaboration with researchers at Birmingham University, Stoker has conducted a survey-based investigation into citizen engagement in co-production as part of the AHRC Connected Communities programme (2011-2012) [G2]. Smith is the PI on an interdisciplinary (social science/engineering) RCUK-funded project employing experimental research to investigate the impact of community interventions aiming to alter domestic energy use (2011-14), which has involved engagement with the Department of Energy and Climate Change [G3]. Stoker is also CI on an ESRC-funded research project using</p>

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experimental methods to analyse co-production which started in 2013 [G4]. Citizen contributions to public goods are regarded as increasingly important by researchers and policy-makers. This research uses the randomised controlled trials to test interventions that could encourage co-production and will be of direct benefit to practitioners and policy makers connected to public service. The work involves collaboration with university student volunteering services, the National Trust and a range of English parish councils.

3. References to the research

- 3.1** That research is reported in T. Brannan, P. John and G. Stoker (ed) Re-energising citizenship. Strategies for Civil Renewal, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, pp211
- 3.2** G. Stoker (2010) 'Exploring the promise of experimentation in political science: micro-foundational insights and policy relevance' Political Studies, Vol 58, No 2, March, 300-319
- 3.3** G. Stoker (2010) 'Translating experiments into policy' The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 628, March pp47-58
- 3.4** See John, P., S. Cotterill, A. Moseley, L. Richardson, G. Smith, G. Stoker & C. Wales. 2011. *Nudge, Nudge, Think Think: Experimenting with ways to change Civic Behavior*. London: Bloomsbury Academic. The book can be accessed through http://www.bloomsburyacademic.com/view/NudgeNudgeThinkThink_9781849662284/book-ba-9781849662284.xml
- 3.5** Gerry Stoker and Alice Moseley (2013) 'Motivation, Behaviour and the Microfoundations of Public Services' in S. Griffiths, H. Kippin and G. Stoker (eds) (2013) Public Services: A New Reform Agenda London: Bloomsbury Academic
- 3.6** Gerry Stoker Nudging citizens Towards the "Big Society"? (2011) Australia and New Zealand School of Government. Available at [http://www.anzso.gov.au/userfiles/files/News%20and%20events/SSA%20events/OccPaper_12_Stoker_BigSociety_final%20\(3\).pdf](http://www.anzso.gov.au/userfiles/files/News%20and%20events/SSA%20events/OccPaper_12_Stoker_BigSociety_final%20(3).pdf).

Grants

- G1.**ESRC: "Rediscovering the Civic and Achieving Better Outcomes in Public Policy" Smith and Stoker, CIs. Start date: 01 September 2007 End date: 30 June 2010 Funding: £665,085.21. (PI: Peter John)
- G2.**Stoker (CI) 'Activating the 'Big Society': Developing Evidence on the Underlying Conditions for Individual and Community Co-production' as part AHRC Connected Communities programme, Jan 2011-April 2012, £40,000 (PI: Tony Bovaird)
- G3.**Smith (PI) 'Community-based initiatives in energy savings', 2011-14, RCUK, £950,000.
- G4.**Stoker (CI) 'Citizen Contribution to Local Public Services: Field Experiments in Institutions Incorporating Social Information' ESRC, Jan 2013-June 2015, £495,864 (PI: Peter John)

4. Details of the impact

Nudge based strategies are an important and proliferating feature of policy agendas, nationally and internationally, across diverse policy areas, notably, environment, health and finance. Our research has supported both the appropriate use of such strategies and a critical awareness among policy makers of the dilemmas involved in such interventions. For example, Sue Goss, Principal of the Office for Public Management acknowledges '*the impact that Gerry's research Nudge, Nudge, Think, Think has had on the work that OPM has published on behaviour change*' noting '*his research into the best ways to persuade the public to change thinking and actions has been invaluable*' [5.1]. After his most recent appearance on the *Today* programme (3 May 2013) where

Stoker used this research to raise concerns about how future development of Nudge strategies would have to recognise the need to combine with other approaches and tackle ethical concerns about interventions, he was invited to meet with Owain Service, Deputy Director of the Behavioural Insights Team (UK Cabinet Office) to discuss how the BIT should best meet these challenges [5.2].

The 2009 *Political Quarterly* article 'Nudge, Nudge, Think, Think' was immediately picked up by the Chief Executive of the RSA, Matthew Taylor, who referred to it on his blog as a "brilliant paper". The monthly statistics for Taylor's blog are 13,000 views and 3,698 hits. The blog is widely influential with governments, think tanks and consultancies [5.3]. The importance of the research was recognised by the then Minister for Decentralisation, Greg Clark, who chose to make his first public speech on the Big Society at the launch of the final report of research findings for the *Rediscovering the Civic* project on 23 June 2010. In the accompanying press release he praised the research for "[showing] that citizens together can create the Big Society" [5.4]. In a subsequent letter to Stoker (dated 1 July 2010), the Minister added: "*I have taken away with me clear views... in particular about what we should be doing differently here at the Centre in order to generate the trust and support we need to deliver the Big Society. It has given me even greater appetite to understand more about the behaviour and motivations of our citizens... I look forward to a continuing dialogue with you all as we develop and realise our vision for the Big Society*" [5.5]. Clark then wrote the foreword to *Nudge, Nudge, Think, Think* (2011), describing the book as "both timely and welcome" (5.6). (The book itself has been downloaded over 5000 times by the end of 2012.) The dialogue between Clark and Stoker continued in 2012 as they shared a platform at the British Academy discussing the connection between localism and Nudge [5.7].

Stoker has taken the work out to senior policy makers in Australia and New Zealand, through the Australian and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG), where behaviour change policy has become a feature of state level government in New South Wales and Victoria. Monica Pfeiffer, Director Applied Learning at ANZSOG comments: '*Gerry's presentations and publications resulted in a better understanding of the relative merits of different approaches to behaviour change so that governments are more confident about what is worth doing and how; and equally significantly what not to do*' [5.8]. Notably Helen Wyn, the Director of the Policy Advisory Group of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet in New Zealand (after a presentation by Stoker in Wellington, on 13 September 2012) commented that the *Nudge, Nudge, Think, Think* book was valuable because it took a critical and empirical stance to the new ideas of behavioural change. She describes the work '*as poking a stick at it, asking questions about what is really going to work*'. She praises in particular the innovative introduction of the 'useful concept of think' alongside the established work on nudge and concludes: '*your work helps to raise awareness about applications and their limitations*' [5.9].

Media interest in the research has increased public awareness of civic behaviour as well as related concepts such as the Big Society. Stoker was interviewed, for example, about Nudge by Radio 4's *Today* programme on 23 August 2010, 8 June 2011 and 3 May 2013. He also participated in a BBC South documentary, broadcast in Autumn 2011, about the prospects for the Big Society. In addition, Stoker and Smith have made numerous presentations of the research to practitioner audiences and the take up of the work by consultancies has increased its impact at an operational level [5.10].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- 5.1 For corroboration, contact Manager, Office of Public Management, a London-based consultancy company. See also Judith Smyth (2013) , [Achieving and demonstrating impact: a case study of Southampton University's C2G2](http://www.southampton.ac.uk/C2G2/documents/Achieving%20and%20demonstrating%20impact) (Centre for Citizenship, Globalisation and Governance) p9 (Available at C2G2 Website <http://www.southampton.ac.uk/C2G2/documents/Achieving%20and%20demonstrating%20impact>)

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- 5.2 Email sent by Deputy Director, Behavioural Insights Team, 3 May 2013 (available upon request)
- 5.3 <http://www.matthewtaylorblog.com> Figures confirmed in email from Barbara Corbett at the RSA on 1 August 2012. See Judith Smyth (2013) , Achieving and demonstrating impact: a case study of Southampton University's C2G2
- 5.4 <http://www.communities.gov.uk/newsstories/newsroom/1621887>
- 5.5 Letter from Greg Clark, Minister for Decentralisation, 1 Jul 2010 (available upon request)
- 5.6 Greg Clark 'Foreword' in Peter John et al (2011) Nudge, nudge, think, think : using experiments to change civic behaviour London: Bloomsbury Academic
- 5.7 <http://www.britac.ac.uk/policy/Nudging-citizens-towards-localism.cfm>
- 5.8 Collaborating contact: Director Applied Learning at ANZSOG. See also Smyth (2013) (reference 1) p10
- 5.9 For a recording of the comments consult: <http://www.anzsog.edu.au/events/events-calendar/2012/09/16/ssc-new-zealand-partnership-program-event/363/professor-gerry-stoker-nudge-nudge-think-think-experiments-in-the-small-statebig-society-wellington> (see 43.00 mins to 47.00 mins in the recording)
- 5.10 In addition see comments from practitioners in Judith Smyth Report, p9 and also one example of a practitioner report accessed at <http://youngfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Capital-Ambition-Guide-to-Behaviour-Change-May-2010.pdf>