

Institution: The University of Edinburgh

Unit of Assessment: 21 Politics and International Studies

Title of case study: Political Representation and the English Question

1. Summary of the impact

Politics staff at the University of Edinburgh (Henderson and Jeffery), working in collaboration with colleagues at Cardiff University and the Institute for Public Policy Research, have conducted research (2007-13) on changing political identities and constitutional attitudes in England. This work has informed public debates about the place of England and Englishness within the United Kingdom; has shaped the findings of the McKay Commission; and has influenced the constitutional thinking of the Labour party.

2. Underpinning research

The impact is underpinned by research into the implications of territorial reform for England and English public attitudes, carried out by Henderson, Professor of Political Science (at Edinburgh since 2007), and Jeffery, Professor of Politics (at Edinburgh since 2004), in collaboration with colleagues at the University of Cardiff (Wincott and Wyn Jones).

Research by Henderson and Jeffery has explored the way individuals define national political communities, and the forms of institutional delineation that both result from, and contribute to, the shaping of political communities (Henderson 2007; Jeffery 2009). Focusing on devolution in the UK, Jeffery (2009) has suggested that its impact on England could be conceptualised as a process of delineation by default, insofar as devolution had effectively left England institutionally on its own; but also, increasingly, delineation by design, as political actors made the case for distinct mechanisms/institutions to govern England.

These and other ideas about the delineation of Englishness were explored through a 'Future of England Survey' (FoES), conducted in 2011 through a collaboration between Edinburgh, Cardiff and the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR). Plentiful anecdotal evidence suggested that identity patterns in England were changing; FoES was designed to provide systematic evidence about the extent to which people identified as English, defined England as their political community, and sought England-specific institutional arrangements to reflect this sense of community. The survey built on a previous major study led by Henderson and Jeffery on Citizenship after the Nation-State (CANS), coordinated through the European Science Foundation and funded by national funders in five states. The first FoES survey was carried out by YouGov in July 2011, with findings publicly presented in January 2012. A second wave (FoES II) was conducted in autumn 2012, to test the robustness of the original findings, provide more detailed evidence on ethnic minorities in England, and explore the relationship between attitudes to England's 'two unions' – the UK and EU.

The main findings of the FoES surveys have been:

- while dual Anglo-British national identities persist, there appears to be increasing emphasis on the English aspect;
- there are few regional or socio-economic distinctions in attitudes, with the significant exception of ethnicity: ethnic minority respondents are significantly more likely to stress a British identity;
- there is substantial and growing support for England to be explicitly recognised in the governing structures of the UK. This sentiment has not crystallised behind a specific constitutional form, but encompasses support for England to be dealt with as a distinct unit (there is little support for English regionalism) and substantially declining support for the territorial status quo. There is also strong evidence of increasing 'devo-anxiety': resentment at the privileged position devolution is perceived to have granted Scotland within the UK;
- the greater an individual's sense of English identity, the more likely they are to support an

Impact case study (REF3b)

English dimension (whether an English parliament of some version of English votes for English laws at Westminster);

- national identity and devo-anxiety are both strongly related to attitudes towards England's 'other Union', the EU. Those with a stronger English identity are also more likely to adopt a hostile attitude towards UK membership of the EU; perhaps counter-intuitively, a more British national identity is associated with more positive EU attitudes.

3. References to the research

Henderson, Ailsa (2007), *Hierarchies of Belonging: National Identity and Political Culture in Scotland and Quebec*. Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press. Available from HEI.

Henderson, Ailsa, Charlie Jeffery, Daniel Wincott and Richard Wyn Jones (2013), 'Reflections on the "Devolution Paradox": A Comparative Examination of Multi-level Citizenship', *Regional Studies*, 47: 303-322. DOI: [10.1080/00343404.2013.768764](https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2013.768764).

Henderson, Ailsa, Charlie Jeffery and Daniel Wincott, eds (2013), *Citizenship after the Nation State*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. To be sourced from REF2.

Jeffery, Charlie (2009), 'Devolution in the United Kingdom: Problems of a Piecemeal Approach to Constitutional Change', *Publius. The Journal of Federalism*, 39/2: 289-313. DOI: [10.1093/publius/pjn038](https://doi.org/10.1093/publius/pjn038).

Wyn Jones, Richard, Guy Lodge, Ailsa Henderson and Daniel Wincott (2012), *The Dog that Finally Barked: England as an Emerging Political Community*. London: Institute for Public Policy Research. http://www.ippr.org/images/media/files/publication/2012/02/dog-that-finally-barked_englishness_Jan2012_8542.pdf

Wyn Jones, Richard, Guy Lodge, Charlie Jeffery, Glenn Gottlieb, Daniel Wincott and Roger Scully (2013), *England and its Two Unions: The Anatomy of a Nation and its Discontents*. London: Institute for Public Policy Research. http://www.ippr.org/images/media/files/publication/2013/07/england-two-unions_Jul2013_11003.pdf

4. Details of the impact

A comprehensive impact strategy was built into the FoES project from the outset. IPPR's involvement in the project was central to implementation of this strategy: IPPR helped ensure publicity for the findings of the successive waves of research, and also brokered discussions with senior Labour party figures. The strategy has enabled the research to have three substantial non-academic impacts.

First, the research stimulated widespread public debate on the status of England within the United Kingdom. Publication of the two FoES reports (in January 2012 and July 2013) prompted widespread media comment and debate, including:

- well over 100 newspaper reports on the findings (including stories in all the main London quality newspapers), and Leader articles in many London and Scottish-based newspapers;
- features on major broadcast news shows (including Radio 4's Today programme) and on the BBC News website (see 5.1 below);
- op-ed pieces written by research team members around publication of the FoES II report, published in the *Daily Telegraph*, *Scotsman*, *Western Mail*, and on the *Conservative Home* and *New Statesman* blogs;
- Analysis by leading political commentators (including Bagehot in *The Economist*(5.2), Andrew Rawnsley in *The Observer*(5.3), Jackie Ashley and Martin Kettle in *The Guardian*,

Philip Johnston in the *Daily Telegraph*, Dominic Sandbrook in the *Daily Mail*, and Brian Taylor of BBC Scotland) of the implications of the research for England's status within the UK and/or the potentially destabilising effects for Britain of English dissatisfaction with current governing arrangements.

The wider influence of FoES on political debate is shown by, *inter alia*, references to the research made in Alex Salmond's January 2012 Hugo Young Lecture; references in the November 2012 report of the Commission on Improving Devolution in Wales; numerous discussions of the research on highly influential blogs (see examples 5.4 and 5.5); and the invitation extended to the research team to present findings at the 2013 Hay Literary Festival.

Second, the research directly influenced the Final Report of the McKay Commission (the Commission on the Consequences of Devolution for the House of Commons) (5.6) to which Jeffery was appointed in recognition of his expertise on territorial politics. FoES II included several questions requested by the Commission. The Commission used (then unpublished) FoES II findings in its March 2013 Final Report, citing FoES heavily (see McKay 2013: pp14-20) (5.6) as providing 'compelling evidence that there are distinct concerns, felt across England, that lack sufficient opportunity to be expressed through current institutional arrangements' (p.21). This understanding of public attitudes, in turn, underpinned the Commission's central recommendation that 'decisions at the United Kingdom level with a separate and distinct effect for England...should normally be taken only with the consent of a majority of MPs for constituencies in England' (pp.8-9). The direct influence of FoES II has been acknowledged by Lord McKay: '[I]t was essential to understand how the electorate in England viewed present arrangements, and what if any adjustments they considered necessary... These demands were fully met by the FoES 2012...The FoES was in short an essential, clear and helpful foundation for the Commission's understanding of the contents and direction of the "English Question" in spring of 2013. On that basis the Commission was enabled to make proposals for a solution to the West Lothian Question' (5.7).

Third, the most prominent FoES finding – of an increasingly distinct English identity and growing demand for institutional recognition of that identity – has influenced the Labour Party's constitutional thinking. Several left-leaning blogs immediately responded to the first FoES report by arguing for a new Labour approach towards England. That challenge was taken up by senior Labour figures, including John Denham, Private Secretary to Labour Leader Ed Miliband, who blogged on the IPPR website in late-January 2012 about the need for Labour to develop a positive 'case for a progressive England,' referring directly to the FoES' finding of resentment among the English: that they 'feel like they are losing out and being treated less fairly than the others' (5.8). Denham advocated a response based in the revitalisation of English local government rather than special procedures for English laws at Westminster. These thoughts were expanded upon in a major speech by Ed Miliband in June 2012 in which Miliband argued that 'the best reflection of devolution to Scotland and Wales in England lies in taking power out of Whitehall and devolving it down to local authorities'; Miliband's Senior Advisor has confirmed that '[t]he report on English attitudes was studied by Ed's advisers, and helped inform the speech he gave at the Royal Festival Hall last year. We all recognise the growing importance of this agenda and your research has proved an invaluable resource for us' (5.9). Other senior Labour figures, notably the Shadow Minister for Political and Constitutional Reform, while taking a rather different line in advocating special procedures for English laws at Westminster, have also referred directly to FoES findings in developing their arguments (5.10).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

PDFs of all weblinks are available at www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/REF2014REF3B/UoA+21

5.1 'British or English – a false choice?' by Mark Easton (Home Editor), *BBC online* (310 comments) 7 June 2012. Available at: <http://bbc.co.uk/news/uk-18355571>

5.2 Bagehot, 'Now come the calls for the English to be given a say', *The Economist*, 16 January 2012. Available at: <http://www.economist.com/blogs/bagehot/2012/01/independence-debate-scotland-1>

5.3 'Who most wants independence for Scotland? The English...' by Andrew Rawnsley (award-

- winning chief political commentator) *The Observer* (2071 comments) 29 January 2012. Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/jan/29/andrew-rawnsley-english-pro-scottish-independence>
- 5.4 Michael Kenny, 'Our parties must respond to the rise of Englishness', *New Statesman*, 15 December 2012. Available at: <http://www.ippr.org/articles/56/10097/our-parties-must-respond-to-the-rise-of-englishness>
- 5.5 Peter Hoskin, 'A Step Closer to English Votes on English Laws?', *Conservative Home*, 25 March 2013 (<http://conservativehome.blogs.com/thetorydiary/2013/03/a-step-closer-to-english-votes-on-english-laws.html>).
- 5.6 The McKay Commission (2013) *Report of the Commission on the Consequences of Devolution for the House of Commons*. Available at: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130403030652/http://tmc.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/The-McKay-Commission_Main-Report_25-March-20131.pdf
- 5.7 Factual Statement, Chair of the McKay Commission.
- 5.8 Denham, John (2012) 'The Rise of English Pride', IPPR Website. Available at: <http://www.ippr.org/articles/56/8585/the-rise-of-english-pride>
- 5.9 Factual Statement, Senior Adviser to Ed Miliband and Shadow Minister without Portfolio (Cabinet Office).
- 5.10 David, Wayne (2012) 'Labour, the constitution and the politics of identity', *Juncture*, 10 September 2012. Available at: <http://www.ippr.org/juncture/171/9605/labour-the-constitution-and-the-politics-of-identity>