

<b>Institution: London School of Economics and Political Science</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 22 Social Work and Social Policy</b>
<b>Title of case study: 'Reading the Riots' and increasing public understanding</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>The Unit's Criminal Justice group has carried out a significant body of research relating to youth disaffection, anti-social behaviour and policing. This led to Professor Tim Newburn being approached by <i>The Guardian</i> to establish a joint research project following the 2011 riots in England. The ensuing research achieved very wide reach via conventional print and other media, informing public understanding of the riots and challenging conventional wisdom about their causes. A wide range of public figures reacted to the research and the Home Secretary's response included the announcement of a formal review of police 'stop and search' practice. This was published in July 2013, and in a parliamentary statement the Home Secretary said she anticipated significant reform of the use of these powers.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p><i>Research Insights and Outputs:</i></p> <p>Since 2002, the Unit's Criminal Justice group led by Professor Tim Newburn has carried out substantial research relating to concerns around police discrimination and police culture; youth crime; the lives of disaffected and troublesome youth; and how best such issues might be tackled. Early work highlighted the clear social patterning of youthful disaffection, examined the complex character of the nature of 'disaffection' – including factors such as gang membership, and involvement in group disorder – and identified a heightened likelihood of problematic relationships with adults in authority, especially the police [1]. This and subsequent research illustrated the problems of intervention, particularly when the police were involved, where high levels of discretion combined with a managerialist target culture led to disproportionate criminalisation of certain categories of young people [2]. Other work examined the growing problem of police legitimacy, especially where minority ethnic communities were concerned [3]. Finally, a significant body of work examined the discriminatory use of police powers and how effectively the police service had responded to calls for radical reform in this area, concluding that despite indications of progress there remained significant problems, not least in relation to the use of 'stop and search' and related powers [4,5].</p> <p>As a result of this research, Tim Newburn was approached by <i>The Guardian</i> when riots took place in London, Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool and elsewhere in August 2011. Influenced by a study of the Detroit riot in 1967, by the University of Michigan and the Detroit Free Press, <i>The Guardian</i> was keen on the idea of a larger-scale study of the disturbances. Negotiations between Paul Lewis (of <i>The Guardian</i>), who was at the forefront of the reporting of the riots, and Tim Newburn led to the establishment of a joint research project. The highly unusual, innovative study, <i>Reading the Riots</i> was announced in <i>The Guardian</i> on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2011. Critically, financial support from the Joseph Rowntree and Open Society Foundations was negotiated within approximately two weeks, enabling staff to be recruited and trained, and fieldwork to start on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2011.</p> <p>The two primary objectives of <i>Reading the Riots</i> were (i) to use social science to engage with public and political debates around the disturbances and inform public understanding of the riots; and (ii) to investigate the validity of some of the assumptions being made about the riots, notably that they were organised by 'gangs', and that social media such as Twitter and Facebook had played a significant role in the organisation of the disturbances. (Analysis of social media was carried out by a team led by Professor Rob Procter, Manchester University.)</p> <p>The research study, which adopted standard social science research methods, involved almost 600 interviews with people caught up in the disturbances. In phase one 270 rioters were interviewed across the five main cities in which disorder occurred. This was completed and published by early December 2011. Key findings included concerns about aggressive and disrespectful policing, particularly focusing on the use of 'stop and search', and no evidence of a</p>

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central role for gangs in the disorder [6].

The second phase of the study commenced in 2012 and involved almost 300 interviews being conducted with police officers across all the major cities affected, with the prosecution and defence lawyers who staffed the courts in the aftermath of the riots, and with victims of the disturbances. This phase was completed and published by July 2012. In a departure from standard social scientific practice a deliberate decision was taken to publish the results of the study entirely in the newspaper, with a short summary report [6] and an edited collection of articles [7] being published in December 2011.

*Key researcher:* Professor Tim Newburn has been full time at LSE since 2002.

### 3. References to the research

[1] Newburn, T. and Shiner, M. (2005) *Dealing with Disaffection*, Cullompton: Willan Publishing. LSE Research Online ID: 12419

[2] Newburn, T. (2011) Policing youth antisocial behaviour and crime: time for reform? *Journal of Children's Services*, 6, 2, 96-105. DOI: 10.1108/17466661111149394

[3] Newburn, T. and Reiner, R. (2004) From PC Dixon to Dixon PLC: Policing and Police Powers Since 1954, *Criminal Law Review*, August, 601-618. LSE Research Online ID: 17280

[4] Newburn, T., Shiner, M. and Hayman, S. (2004) Racism, Crime and Injustice? Strip search and the treatment of suspects in custody, *British Journal of Criminology*, 44, 5, 677-694. DOI: 10.1093/bjc/azh043

[5] Foster, J., Newburn, T. and Souhami, A. (2005) *Assessing the Impact of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry*, London: Home Office. LSE Research Online ID: 13942

[6] Lewis, P., Newburn, T., Taylor, M., McGillivray, C., Greenhill, A., Frayman, H. and Proctor, R. (2011) Reading the riots: investigating England's summer of disorder. Reading the riots, The London School of Economics and Political Science and The Guardian, London: UK.  
<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/46297/1/Reading%20the%20riots%28published%29.pdf>

[7] Lewis, P. and Newburn, T. (eds) (2011) *Reading the Riots: Investigating England's Summer of Disorder*, Guardian Shorts. Available from LSE on request.

*Evidence of quality:* [2], [3] and [4] are peer-reviewed journal articles; [5] is a peer-reviewed Government Report. Grants awarded to *The Guardian*/LSE (administered by *The Guardian*): JRF £79,000; Open Society Foundations £50,000 (Phase 1: 09-12/11); £90,000 (Phase 2: 01-07/12) (£17,000 to Social Policy, LSE). Title: Reading the Riots/Reading the Riots Phase 2.

### 4. Details of the impact

*Nature of the Impact:* *Reading the Riots* informed public understanding of the disturbances in five English cities in August 2011, challenged conventional wisdom around the events, and had a direct impact on policy. *Reading the Riots* deliberately sought to maximise public engagement. This aim was reflected in the research design and this in turn led to further public engagement. Being run jointly with a news organisation meant that the study moved particularly quickly and was unusually extensive in its reach, utilising both the conventional print edition of the newspaper, and other media, to reach as broad an audience as possible in order to improve public understanding of the events. Speed was vital to its success. The study was launched and, most unusually, funding secured within weeks of the riots. The ESRC's announcement of its Pilot Urgency Grants Programme recognised that RCUK need to be able "to respond to urgent or unforeseen events (for example the August 2011 UK riots), where there is a strong case for immediate research" [A]. The research was commended by the Chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee as being both important and complementary to the work of the Committee [B].

From 5<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> December 2011 *The Guardian* ran approximately 34 stories over 23 pages of the

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newspaper reporting the results of the first phase, and in July 2012 ran a further 18 stories over 11 pages of the paper, covering the results of phase two. The study commanded six front page stories. The study was also reported extensively in other UK media. On the first phase launch day, Paul Lewis and Tim Newburn appeared on radio and television programmes with a combined audience of over 30 million. Altogether during 2011 and 2012, 200 references were made to the research in the UK and international media. The dedicated website for *Reading the Riots* has received 2.8 million hits.

*Reading the Riots* informed public understanding and challenged current wisdom in a number of important ways. First, against a background of official denial, the study clearly showed that anger against the police was a specific motivation, particularly in the early days of rioting. This element of the study was the subject of a special edition of BBC2's *Newsnight* (5<sup>th</sup> December 2011), in which a film made by the *Reading the Riots* team illustrating some of the key research findings [C] was followed by a studio discussion (involving the then Police Minister, the former Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Lord Ian Blair, David Lammy MP for Tottenham, and Tim Newburn). This argument was widely reported across the media [D] and formed the basis of a specially commissioned verbatim drama, also broadcast on the BBC [E].

Second, and contrary to initial claims made by the Home Secretary, the research helped establish not only that the role played by gangs in the riots was minimal, but also that a 'truce' existed between gangs during the disturbances [F]. Third, phase two of *Reading the Riots*, which built on previous research on policing, minority communities and disaffected youth (1-5), turned its attention to the response of the criminal justice system to the riots, further informing public understanding. In particular, it identified a series of problems besetting the policing of the riots, highlighting the shortcomings in police radio technology, and in the Metropolitan Police's use of mutual aid support from other forces. The problems with the police tactics in the riots [G], the subject of a second film made by the research team for a BBC2 *Newsnight* special in July 2012, were commented upon by the Police Minister, Nick Herbert, by David Lammy MP and Mark Rowley, an Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police in the studio [H], and subsequently also by the outgoing HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary and by the Metropolitan Police's second in command during the rioting [I].

An indicator of the public debate provoked by *Reading the Riots* is the broad range of policy makers and others who reacted to its findings in a variety of forums including LSE's conference in December 2011, and in articles published in *The Guardian* and other media. They included: the Home Secretary [J]; the Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Home Secretary [K]; the Deputy Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service [L]; the Archbishop of Canterbury [M]; the Mayor of London [N]; the President of the Association of Chief Police Officers, and the Chairman of the Police Federation [J]; the Director of Public Prosecutions [O]; the Chairman of the Government's post-riots Victims and Communities Panel [P]; and Louise Casey, the Government's then lead on the response to the riots [Q].

The most significant direct policy response to *Reading the Riots* came at the LSE's conference on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2011. In her speech, the Home Secretary announced a formal review [R] of best practice in relation to police stop and search powers. A major element of this was a review undertaken by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, a primary prompt for which was the LSE and *Guardian* report [S]. HMIC published their review in July 2013 [T], and in a statement in the House of Commons on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2013 the Home Secretary said she anticipated significant reform of the use of these powers [U].

Recognition of the innovative partnership with *The Guardian*, designed to increase public understanding of the 2011 riots, was demonstrated by the award of 'Innovation of the Year' at the British Journalism Awards, the 'Innovation Award' at the European Press awards, and shortlisting for the THES 'research project of the year, all in 2012. The research has had substantial reach with media coverage and engagement in France, Italy, Germany, Sweden, Australia, India, New Zealand, Singapore, the US, Canada, Russia, Zimbabwe.

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*Wider Implications:* The Unit's work on understanding the riots is important to the communities affected by the violence and destruction; to the policy-makers with responsibility for responding to the issues raised by the disorder, and to the police and other members of the criminal justice system tasked with dealing with such an emergency. By helping provide a more effective understanding of these major events, the Unit's research is helping address the policy and practice issues raised by the riots.

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

All Sources listed below can also be seen at <https://apps.lse.ac.uk/impact/case-study/view/107>

- [A] ESRC Pilot Urgency Grants Programme <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/funding-opportunities/27006/urgency-grants-mechanism.aspx>
- [B] House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, *Policing Large Scale Disorder: Lessons from the disturbances of August 2011*, 16<sup>th</sup> Report of Session 2010–12, Volume II, Oral/written, Ev 90. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmhaff/1456/1456ii.pdf>
- [C] The initial Newsnight film on *Reading the Riots*, broadcast on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2011 can be seen at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/newsnight/9656166.stm>
- [D] For example, by the BBC: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-16018215>
- [E] The Riots: In Their Own Words was first broadcast on BBC1 in August 2012. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0113y0v>
- [F] Newburn, T. et al. (2011) 'The four day truce', *Guardian*, 6<sup>th</sup> December <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/dec/06/gang-truce-english-riots>
- [G] Reading the Riots: Investigating England's summer of disorder: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/video/2012/jul/02/policing-england-riots-video>
- [H] England Riots: Police feared for their lives: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-18653530>;
- [I] Reading the Riots - live Q&A with Sir Hugh Orde, Paul McKeever and Sir Denis O'Connor: <http://bit.ly/MVUtU8>
- [J] Theresa May to review stop and search in wake of Reading the Riots study <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/dec/14/theresa-may-stop-search-review>;
- [K] Reading the Riots: Investigating England's summer of disorder: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/video/2011/dec/14/ed-miliband-riot-report-video>
- [L] Met police must 'do things differently' after riots, says senior commissioner: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/dec/14/met-police-riots-response-review>
- [M] Rioting is the choice of young people with nothing to lose/ Archbishop of Canterbury says riots will return unless we reach out to young. <https://apps.lse.ac.uk/impact/download/file/1186>
- [N] Riots report shows London needs to maintain police numbers, says Mayor <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2012/jul/04/riots-report-london-police-numbers>
- [O] Rapid riot prosecutions more important than long sentences, says Keir Starmer <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2012/jul/03/riot-prosecutions-sentences-keir-starmer>
- [P] Reading the riots – reaction <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/blog/2011/dec/05/reading-the-riots-reaction>
- [Q] Reading the Riots conference – Wednesday 14 December 2011. <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/blog/2011/dec/14/reading-the-riots-conference-live-blog>
- [R] Theresa May announces review of police stop-and-search powers - video <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/video/2011/dec/14/theresa-may-police-stop-search-video>
- [S] Explicit reference to the LSE research is made in the Background Paper. The Management Team briefing document mentions 'two reports into the riots' (one of which was Reading the Riots) but not by name. This source is confidential Available from LSE on request.
- [T] HMIC (2013) *Stop and Search Powers: Are the police using them effectively and fairly?* London: HMIC. <http://www.hmic.gov.uk/media/stop-and-search-powers-20130709.pdf>
- [U] House of Commons Debates 2nd July 2013. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm130702/debtext/130702-0002.htm>