
Anthony Heath

Professor Anthony Heath CBE FBA is Professor of Sociology, University of Manchester.¹ A video of extracts from this interview can be found via www.britishacademy.ac.uk/prosperingwisely/heath

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What was the initial spark that made you want to study sociology?

Anthony Heath

I think I chose to study sociology partly because I found economics too difficult, but also because I wanted to engage with the real world rather than just the make-believe world of the introductory economics that I studied at Cambridge. I had also been working as a supply teacher in a northern secondary modern school, so I had become aware of inequality and that there were other ways of life, and this is the kind of thing I wanted to engage with.

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What was difficult about economics?

Anthony Heath

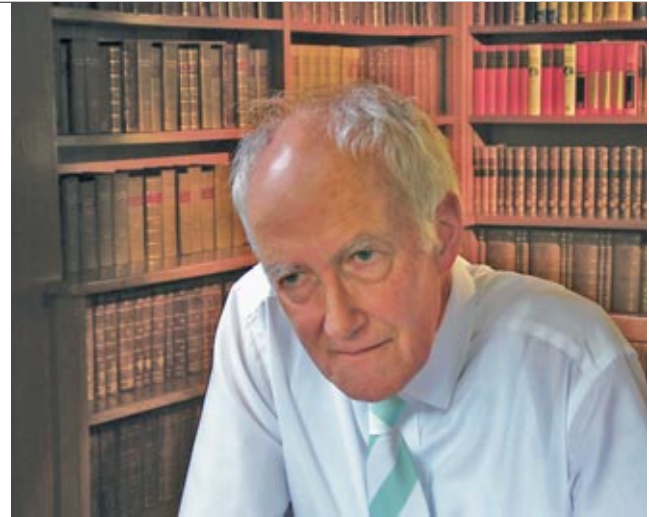
Cambridge economics at that time – this was in the '60s – was highly theoretical, highly mathematical and very abstract. I was taught by James Mirrlees,² the Nobel Prize winner, and he was a wonderful man, and they were doing great things, but it was just over my head. I came across sociology, which was being taught by John Goldthorpe,³ who was a lecturer at Cambridge then. He captured my interest because he was talking about things I could understand and get my mind around – and things that I thought were important. Yes, I might have stayed an economist if I had had good enough maths. But I had some outstanding contemporaries and I knew I was not as good as them at the maths. So, in a sense my comparative advantage was to look at the data, and see what was actually happening, as opposed to producing models. In a sense, that is what I have always done: go out and get hold of some data, rather than theorise or produce analytical models. I want to know what is going on out there.

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But in your work there is still a lot of cross-over with applied economics.

Anthony Heath

That's right. Throughout my career I have drawn on economics, and economic techniques and ways of thinking. I still have to read articles in economics journals, because economists also tackle a lot of the same issues that I am concerned with. I have written a lot on social mobility; but economists have written some very interesting and important work about income mobility. I am very interested in ethnic inequalities in the labour market; economists write about that. Almost everything that I touch, there is probably an applied economist who has also come at it with a distinctive angle as well. So, yes, I have had to be aware of what the economists are doing,



just as I have also tried to be aware of what political scientists are doing and what social psychologists are doing. It is very interesting to look at how you get such different angles on the same topic coming from those three different disciplines.

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Why is sociology a vital discipline?

Anthony Heath

Sociology has been a very important discipline. But it has had, interestingly, huge influence outside sociology, and has even permeated some of the humanities as well. It is important. I think the great contributions have been of two sorts: the more theoretical ways of looking at the world; and then the kind of work I do, which is more descriptive. It is what we sometimes call in sociology the 'political arithmetic tradition', which goes back to Sir William Petty who did the first, fairly hard-headed, quantitative study of conditions in this country in the 17th century – collecting evidence about the state of society. In that sense, it was arithmetic: he was counting and describing empirically what the patterns were – the state of agriculture, poverty and so on. But it was political in the sense that the agenda was an instrumental one, to inform government and decision-making.

The title 'political arithmetic' was used more recently in the first half of the 20th century by a group at the London School of Economics who were looking at social class inequalities in education, and collecting the data to show the extent of the inequalities and hoping that this would lead to educational reforms. I worked a great deal with

¹ Anthony Heath is also Emeritus Professor of Sociology at the University of Oxford.

² Sir James Mirrlees was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1984.

³ Dr John Goldthorpe was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1984.

Chelly Halsey here at Oxford University – my first major study was with Chelly⁴ – and he was very much part of that same tradition: ‘Let’s get the evidence on the state of inequality and let us see what can be done about it.’ Of course, Chelly worked very closely with the Labour government in the late ’60s, at the time comprehensive reform in schools was happening. Comprehensive reform was itself partly driven by the evidence accumulating from people like Chelly Halsey about the lack of opportunity for the children in the secondary modern schools, where I had done some teaching. The concern is to look at inequalities or social conditions much more broadly, and to bring that to bear on issues of public concern and public debate – so we have a more informed public debate about inequalities, rather than one based on prejudice or what your friends have to say.

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The idea of inequality is quite abstract. Couldn’t we have sociology based on levels of happiness?

Anthony Heath

I don’t agree; I think happiness is a very strange, abstract concept.

People like Chelly Halsey and myself were interested in: Why don’t children from working-class homes, whose parents are manual workers, get into the grammar schools? Why don’t they go on to university? Today, the issues are: Why are so many people in a university such as Oxford privately educated? Why are young people from comprehensive schools – even more, young mature students who have been through further education – almost invisible in a place like Oxford University? I think these are very concrete issues; I don’t think there is anything abstract. You can dress it up with your theory of class, but the reality is a very practical one which affects lots of people’s lives.

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Yet we live in an increasingly unequal society. So one might say that social trends have been largely unaffected by your work.

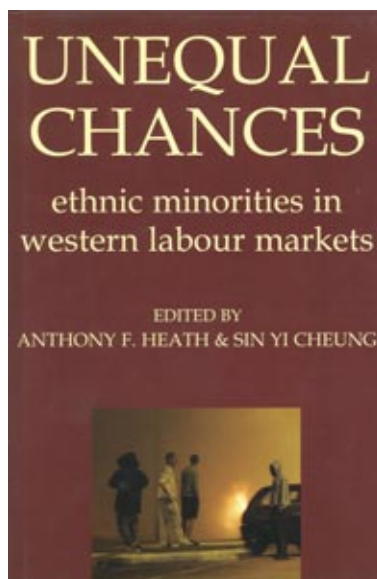
Anthony Heath

I think it is certainly fair to say that our work exposing these inequalities has often not led to the kind of reforms in the real world that those of us who have addressed these issues would have liked to have seen. I think sometimes there have been effects, not always the ones that we wanted. Comprehensive reorganisation was partly driven by the evidence that sociologists were producing. I think there are other examples: the education maintenance allowances, which were one of the successes of the last

Labour Government, had a solid, empirical basis, because that was directly in the tradition of showing that working-class kids were leaving school early, immediately after the end of compulsory education, often for economic reasons. I think there have been reforms that have at least taken on board the evidence that we are providing. While inequality, of course, has increased over the last 20 or 30 years – and I think is a major issue for the general well-being of society – that has been driven by other influences, often political ones. I think it would be unrealistic of social scientists to think that we can change everything.

What I think we have tried to do is shine a light on particular issues, like social class inequalities in education. In my more recent work, I have been trying to shine a light on the issues of ethnic inequality, particularly the huge issue of black unemployment rates,⁵ where young black men have double or treble the unemployment rate of their white contemporaries. I think that is a major issue of social injustice. I think it is also a major issue that threatens social cohesion and social order. I see part of my role as being to highlight these issues, to monitor them, to see whether they are going away – and I only get exercised about them because the evidence shows that the inequalities are huge and not declining. If they were smaller and declining, I would be much less worried. I would probably turn my attention to some other great problem of which we have many, lining up to be looked at – like the education of children in care and what happens to children in care, which I think is a major scandal. So if ever we overcome ethnic inequalities and inequality of opportunity, there are plenty of other issues that are waiting for empirically-minded sociologists to investigate and to highlight.

Anthony Heath discusses black unemployment rates in this volume in the ‘Proceedings of the British Academy’ series.



There are two stages. The first stage is just descriptive. It’s not very intellectual, in a sense, just, ‘Let’s get some good data, best possible data, and see what is happening. What happens to kids in care, when they leave care? Let’s see what happens to young black men who have good qualifications, who have done all they can be expected to in the educational system, when they leave school and university.’ So the first step is just to highlight what is going on: is it getting better, is it getting worse? Are we living up to our ideals as a liberal society of offering equality of opportunity? The second stage, of course, is to try to think what could be done? What reforms would be effective?

⁴ A.H. Halsey, A.F. Heath & J.M. Ridge, *Origins and Destinations: Family, Class and Education in Modern Britain* (1980). Professor A.H. ‘Chelly’ Halsey was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1995.

⁵ See for example Sin Yi Cheung & Anthony Heath, ‘Nice work if you can get it: Ethnic penalties in Great Britain’, in Anthony F. Heath & Sin Yi Cheung (eds), *Unequal Chances: Ethnic Minorities in Western Labour Markets* (Proceedings of the British Academy 137, 2007).

So there is an important policy element there. Highlighting the issue is political, and so is trying to say, 'Can we investigate potential levers – like educational maintenance allowances – that might go some little way towards reducing the inequality?'

More information is going to make for better government than less information – and even information that you don't like, you would still be wise to take on board rather than suppress.

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Does giving that sort of advice make you subversive?

Anthony Heath

I think there is a long tradition of sociology being subversive.

I take, perhaps, the rather naive and optimistic view that, surely, more information is going to make for better government than less information, and that even information that you do not like, you would still be wise to take on board rather than suppress. I hope that my research would be of interest to a government of any complexion. Although, in a sense, my political agenda sounds left-wing, I think the issues I am addressing are ones that would be of great importance to a Conservative government as well, because the issues are real ones.

For example, take ethnic inequalities. The National Audit Office showed in a recent report on these inequalities that under-employment of minorities costs the economy something like £8-9 billion a year.⁶ So, if you are only interested in the business case, there is a very powerful business case for tackling issues of discrimination and under-employment. I don't think that what I am saying should be ignored by, or is necessarily antithetical to, a Conservative government, because one is saying, 'Here is a problem, and this problem affects your ability to achieve your objectives.'

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So there are two levels of argument: one about values, one about practical consequences.

Anthony Heath

Yes, just as with ethnic inequalities, I think it is also the case with class inequalities that you have two crucial parts to the argument. One is the social justice argument, that we certainly claim to be a liberal society that supports equality of opportunity, and I think all politicians alike would subscribe to that. So, partly, our kind of research is highlighting whether we meet those ideals of equality of opportunity that we profess. We are concerned to expose social injustice. That is one element, and it is directly, if you like, normative or ethical, because it is saying, 'You favour social justice; here are examples where it is not working, they need to be tackled.'

The other is to say that there is a business case for diversity; there are social consequences of injustice. Even if you don't share the same values, in a society like ours if you allow social injustice to be widespread, then there is a risk for social order and social cohesion. It costs money to police, to put people in prison, and so on. I suspect most people do share the values, as it happens, in Britain. But there is an instrumental aspect of this as well as a purely moralistic one.

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Are there comparisons with what Charles Dickens sought to achieve?

Anthony Heath

I think sociologists can learn a great deal from the kind of work that others do – writers, novelists, film-makers, certainly anthropologists. There are a lot of similarities between those traditions of working. They focus on the individual – the novelist above all. Anthropologists often focus on a particular village, for example, in the classic tradition of anthropology. So, although I do large-scale, quantitative work, I think there are great insights, essential insights, really, to be gained from the in-depth study of particular cases. It doesn't help to be too blinkered to other insights and other approaches.

I sometimes tell my students, 'Even if you are not going to do ethnographic or anthropological work, you should go and have a look.' I once examined a doctorate on Russia, and I asked the student 'Have you ever been to Russia?' No, he had never been to Russia. He had only looked at the results from surveys. I said, 'How can you be confident about your interpretations if you have never been there, and you don't speak a word of the language? Shouldn't you have gone and had a look just to see if the findings you think your surveys have produced ring true to people who live there?'

Although my professional expertise is analysing large-scale, quantitative survey data, actually to go and have a look helps give you some ideas of what you should be looking for. It gives you a quick check on whether what you are coming up with is sensible or not. I did some work for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Bosnia.⁷ I did the survey, and it produced a really rather grim picture of divided communities who hated each other. I went to have a look. I arrived in Sarajevo and thought, 'What a wonderful place. My survey must be completely wrong. Here they all are, sitting, chatting in the sunshine, in the cafes, playing street chess. I must have got something wrong. I need to check this out more.' Then we went around and we talked to people – some of them Bosniaks, some of them Serbs. And we concluded, 'No, our survey was right. There really is a great deal of antagonism and hostility still.' So it was very reassuring that the results of the survey then tallied with our going around and seeing and talking to people. But I was very worried for a bit, when I just saw this lovely scene in Sarajevo and I thought, 'No, we have got it wrong.'

⁶ *Increasing employment rates for ethnic minorities* (2008) www.nao.org.uk/report/increasing-employment-rates-for-ethnic-minorities/

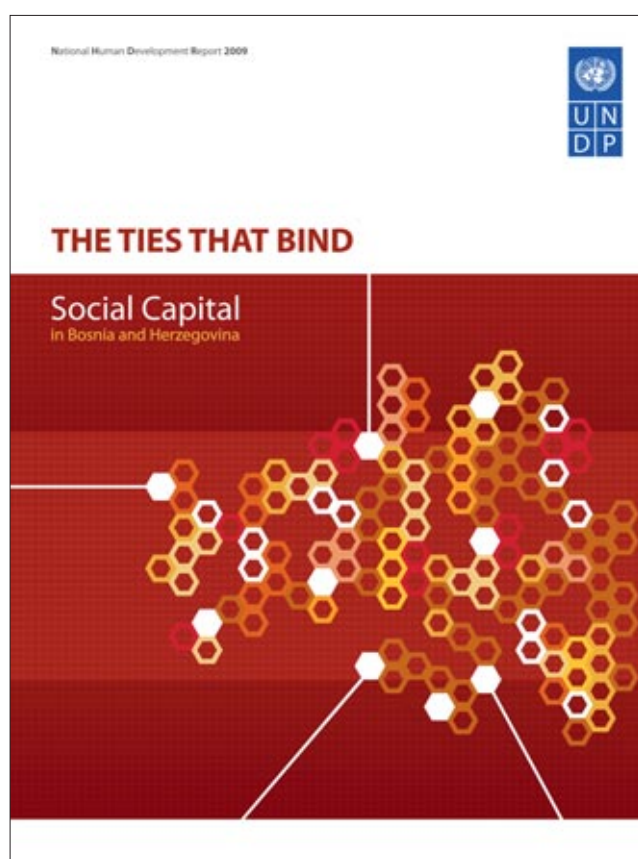
⁷ *The Ties that Bind: Social Capital in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (2009) <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/ties-bind>

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Much of what you are dealing with is what is in people's heads and hearts.

Anthony Heath

That's right. And one of the things that our survey research can do is to give ordinary people a voice. In fact, the first project we did in Bosnia, we titled, 'The Silent Majority Speaks', because what we were doing was talking to the silent majority – who were not part of the great and the good, or the academic or international community – and getting what they thought about the situation and what their priorities were.⁸ So essentially, we are concerned in a lot of the research in giving ordinary people, ethnic minorities, the disabled, a chance to say how they see the society, what their problems are and to convey their experiences.



This research into social cohesion in Bosnia and Herzegovina was undertaken for the UN.

Obviously, you want to check that the responses you get in your survey do match with what ordinary people think, because there are all kinds of problems. A standard technique, which we are doing at the moment on one of my surveys on attitudes to immigration, is to draw up your question and get a trained interviewer to do an in-depth conversation with the man or woman in the street, and say, 'What were you thinking of when you answered this

question? What was going through your mind? How did you interpret the question? What did you think we meant by this?' You always have this task of going back and saying, 'Does this survey really reflect how our respondents – basically, ordinary people – address the issue, how they think about it?'

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It's rather like the 20th-century Mass-Observation project in trying to find out what people are thinking.

Anthony Heath

Mass-Observation was very much in this tradition of going and talking to ordinary people. (It sounds rather pretentious, doesn't it? 'Ordinary people', as though I am not ordinary. Sociologists need to remember they are ordinary too – 'Ordinary sociologists'.) The major difference is that Mass-Observation was not a systematic random survey, so there are all kinds of unknown biases in the kind of work that Mass-Observation did.

What we have seen – it was started before the war, but we have seen great developments since the war – is the move towards systematic sampling, so that you have got a representative sample, so you're tapping, in a better way, what people in the society think. The worry with some of the earlier pieces of research, or indeed some contemporary pieces of research from phone-in polls, is you are just getting a very biased selection. One of the great strengths of what fieldwork companies are doing now is the application of these systematic sampling methods, so we really are representing a cross-section of the population.

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When you are commissioned by policy-makers – such as government departments – to conduct research, do you regard yourself as a partner of them or a lever on them?

Anthony Heath

Sometimes I have tried to be a partner, sometimes a lever, sometimes simply a servant. It has depended to some extent on the topic, and on who is commissioning the research.

There are some topics I have worked on and want to continue working on, like discrimination, inequality of opportunity, black under-employment, where I am perhaps moving more towards the activist direction. I work closely with various ethnic minority groups; I provide them with the evidence to strengthen their arguments, and the case they want to make to government. I think for some topics, I care passionately about them. I hope I am using my research in a dispassionate way, in order to be a lever on government. So I think I'm certainly doing that some of the time.

In other cases, I was commissioned. There was a very nice study that we were able to do on ethnic diversity and social cohesion for the Department for Communities and Local Government,⁹ and there we did not know what the

⁸ Oxford Research International & UNDP, *The Silent Majority Speaks: Snapshots of Today and Visions of the Future in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (2007).

⁹ J. Laurence & A. Heath, *Predictors of Community Cohesion: Multi-Level Modelling of the 2005 Citizenship Survey* (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2008).

The research actually showed that diversity had no negative effects on social cohesion, and that the real driver of lack of cohesion was poverty and neighbourhood deprivation.

answer would be before we did the research – we were not committed to any particular answer. The DCLG wanted rigorous, impartial evidence on whether diversity undermined cohesion or not. We did our best job, so I think there we were being a servant. They just wanted our expertise and I wanted to do a good, professional job to provide evidence on an important topic, which could have gone either way; we had no idea until the research came out. The research actually showed that diversity had no negative effects on social cohesion and that the real driver of lack of cohesion was poverty and neighbourhood deprivation. I was very happy with that result. But that came out of the statistics – it didn't have to come out that way. And it has actually been replicated by other researchers, from different political persuasions.

A lot of our research is really trying to get independent – as far as we can be – evidence where we do not have a particular stake in the outcome. It is following this mission of: better government involves better evidence. That is our expertise: looking at the evidence, and understanding what is representative and what is a high-quality sample, as opposed to a low-quality sample. What are the appropriate statistical techniques? I have applied that kind of approach to quite a number of different projects, and often I'm just interested to know what the answer is. I don't know when I set off. And even with the ethnic inequalities, if the evidence shows that ethnic inequalities are declining, I will say, 'Hooray, let us find out why and see if we can do a bit more in that direction.' But in other cases, I think I am as much a servant with some technical expertise: these are interesting and important issues of public concern, let's go and have a look.

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Can you identify a particular piece of work that has perhaps been your biggest achievement?

Anthony Heath

I always think my biggest achievement is going to be the project I am working on right now.

Right now, I have just published a book on ethnic minority political integration.¹⁰ Often when I finish a book, I am a bit dissatisfied. But this time I think we've not done too bad a job. I have learned a bit. I thought it was going to be a book all about political exclusion of minorities and how this has all kinds of unfortunate consequences for lack of political participation, apathy, alienation and so

on. In fact, the evidence did not show that. The evidence is a very positive story that second-generation ethnic minorities are actually politically very well integrated. They participate at more or less the same rates as their white British contemporaries. They have very similar attitudes to many of the political parties of the day. In fact, Britain, compared with many other countries in Europe or indeed America, has actually been rather successful at the political integration of ethnic minorities. That is not to say there are not some concerns that the book is also going to highlight, particularly the effect of discrimination and prejudice and feelings of relative deprivation among the second-generation black population.

One idea we are putting forward is what we call the 'paradox of social integration'. The more groups become socially integrated, the more aware they are of the inequalities of treatment that they experience. Hence, they become more disaffected. Social integration can lead to greater criticism and dissatisfaction because you are more aware of what you should be receiving. I think that is an important issue.

I have also written a piece I think is important, on multiculturalism,¹¹ which has been very topical, saying, 'Let's go and look at the evidence'. I used to be rather critical of multiculturalism; I didn't like it as a set of policies. Then politicians started saying it was bad, and I thought we ought to check the evidence: let's have a look and see what multiculturalism is, first of all; and has it had the bad effects politicians claim? In particular I wanted to look at the second-generation groups – young people born in Britain, particularly those from, say, Muslim or Sikh backgrounds, where there have been multicultural policies that have particularly given them exemptions from, say, the rule to wear crash helmets; that would be a good example. Is there any evidence that the groups that have been the beneficiaries of multicultural policies have become less integrated as a result? The evidence could have worked out either way. But the evidence showed very clearly that all second-generation groups are becoming more integrated. This applies equally to the Muslim groups, to the Sikh groups, to the black groups. And we see great generational progress towards social integration, feeling British, speaking English. All the things that politicians have complained about, you actually find are getting better in the second generation without any political interference. In a way, this is a case where we say, 'Britain is becoming a more integrated society, and we just need to let people get on and lead their own lives. No need for political reform – don't interfere.'

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So the picture is often more complicated than one might expect.

Anthony Heath

There are many dangers in the kind of research I do – and particularly in the kind of interview that *this* is. The temptation is to oversimplify and to produce one-liners.

¹⁰ Anthony F. Heath, Stephen D. Fisher, Gemma Rosenblatt, David Sanders & Maria Sobolewska, *The Political Integration of Ethnic Minorities in Britain* (2013).

¹¹ Anthony Heath, 'Has multiculturalism failed in the UK? Not really', *Guardian*, 10 August 2012; Anthony Heath & Neli Demireva, 'Has multiculturalism failed in Britain?', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (2013) DOI 10.1080/01419870.2013.808754

The real world is much more complicated than one-liners allow. One of the things I tend to criticise is what economists call ‘stylised facts’, which are sort of simplifications of the real world. Yes, I try to give a quick summary of some of the results, but the results are much more complicated than that one-liner.

One of the interesting developments is that, in many ways, British society is becoming more fragmented, more complex, more diverse – not just in an ethnic sense, but in looking at a range of criteria. One of the recent government projects I was involved with was one for the Government Office for Science, on the future of identity. It was launched at the British Academy in January 2013.¹² One of the main themes emerging from a very large number of different research papers that the Government Office commissioned was this increased fragmentation – which means that these stylised facts are even less and less appropriate, because the real world is very complicated. So, obviously, the detailed research tries to convey that complication. In the book, we have tried to emphasise that there is huge internal diversity within the ethnic minorities, both culturally and socially, just as there is within the white British population. When I talk about ethnic minorities and the white British, that is over-simplifying very, very complex realities.

Going back to the theme of social attitudes, one of the biggest stories is the huge generational shift in attitudes. Again it is a very complex statistical issue to sort out whether it is generational change or change of the life cycle. But there are very big differences, descriptively, between older people and younger people in their attitudes to things like multiculturalism, ethnic minorities, racial prejudice, inter-marriage. Young British people, both white and black, tend to have very liberal views. I think there has been huge change across the generations in my lifetime.

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Given that the research you are describing seems so crucial to how we live our lives and how we enact policy, is this an argument for the public funding of the humanities and the social sciences?

Anthony Heath

I think it is crucial to have public funding of social science. It is very important to get better information and independent information, so that government actually has

a better basis, and so that citizens have the most reliable and trustworthy data for issues of public concern.

I have just finished a piece that is coming out on the last Labour government’s education policy, for example.¹³ There we find that, if we look at the government statistics under Labour, it looks as though educational standards have been getting better and better and better. Yet, the other parties were saying, ‘No, if you look at this other bit of evidence, it has been getting worse and worse and worse.’ The trouble is that neither of these were based on properly independent, reliable, high-quality data. There is a great danger in just relying on government statistics or the statistics generated by Ofsted and these other bodies.

One of the crucial things about social science, and the ESRC funding of social science, is to get genuinely independent evidence which we can check against the claims made by political parties for their own political advantage. It gives you an independent basis for holding government to account – which, going back to our earlier point, can be subversive, can be very uncomfortable. But, if you want good government, any government surely would rather be doing it on the basis of better evidence than on the basis of worse, biased evidence. I think the academic research funded by the ESRC in the British case enables us to hold governments to account, and to provide governments with the evidence that will help them to make more sensible decisions that might actually work. It is the independence and the rigour of the data that is absolutely crucial.

And I should emphasise that Britain is very lucky to have the

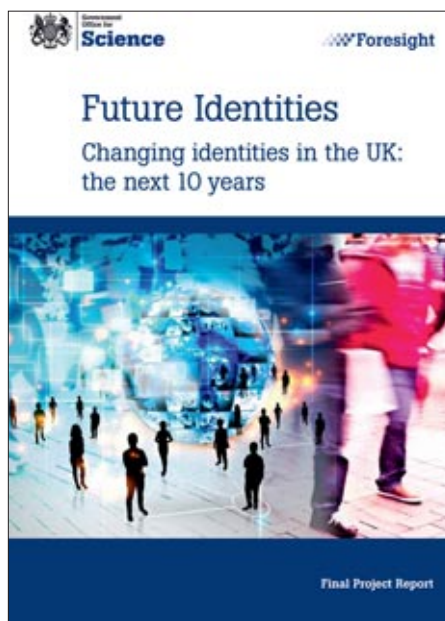
ESRC. When I talk to my international colleagues, they often say they have much greater difficulty. Britain is seen as a world leader in public funding of independent research.

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Social science provides the data to make sensible policy decisions. But isn’t all of that sociology work completely pointless if, in the end, we do all the analysis and we inform policy-makers, but the issues remain?

Anthony Heath

We shouldn’t expect too much of social science. I think one of the problems is that there is a long history in social science, going back to Marx and before, of tackling very big issues. That is important. But then, perhaps, as a result – and this is most obvious with Marxism – the political programme is almost utopian and unrealistic. One of the



This report for the Government Office for Science was launched at the British Academy in January 2013.

¹² *Future Identities. Changing identities in the UK: the next 10 years* (2013). www.bis.gov.uk/assets/foresight/docs/identity/13-523-future-identities-changing-identities-report.pdf

¹³ Anthony Heath, Alice Sullivan, Vikki Boliver & Anna Zimdars, ‘Education under New Labour, 1997-2010’, *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, 29 (2013), 227-247.

things social science can do is tell us the limits of, if you like, social reform. It's quite important that we learn a bit of humility about what we cannot do, as well as what we can do.

I don't think that I am too disappointed that we have not overcome class inequality or social inequality generally, because I never thought that the kinds of tools that government has at its disposal could ever really do more than make a difference at the margin. I think educational inequalities, which is where I first worked with Chelly Halsey, are a pretty good example. It is just a fact of life that middle-class parents are going to try hard for their children, whatever the educational system. You can reform the educational system and the middle-class parents will quickly adapt – just like accountants adapt to the latest tax regulations. Middle-class parents will adapt to the latest educational reforms, and they still try to do well for their children, so middle-class parents' children still get better qualifications. Yet, we would not want to live in a world where we stopped middle-class parents from doing the best for their children. That is also a strength of our society. We just want everyone to be doing the best for their children and to have the skills so they can put it into practice.

I don't think I would see it as a problem for social science that we have not achieved utopia today. It would be nice to make a difference – and I think there are some issues where I think we can say, 'Yes, there is evidence that this is a problem, and furthermore, there is evidence that we can ameliorate the problem if we do the following things.' I think that is helpful. For example, with Christopher McCrudden we did work evaluating the affirmative action programme in Northern Ireland.¹⁴ Northern Ireland's problems go much, much further than just ensuring fair employment. But we were able to evaluate a programme and show that it had been successful and it played a small but probably important role in helping overcome the Troubles. Although there are still tensions in Northern Ireland, we were able to show that at least one element of the package that had been put in place, back in the 1990s as part of the Good Friday Agreement, had been successful. So, if social science can make contributions of that sort, even if they are marginal, I think that is something to be proud of.

Q What did election to the Fellowship of the British Academy mean to you?

Anthony Heath

Election to the British Academy is a wonderful accolade for anybody. It was completely unexpected. So, yes, I was absolutely delighted, very honoured.

I was also a little bit critical. I thought at the time the British Academy ought to do more work in promoting the discipline, in organising academic events – should be more proactive. I have been delighted that the Academy has been doing that. I think I would probably be even more delighted to become a Fellow now, because the Academy is punching its weight much more than it did when I was elected 20 years ago.

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Has the British Academy been useful to you?

Anthony Heath

It certainly has been. The British Academy has been very generous to me, partly because I try to put into practice the things I preach. Thinking that the Academy ought to be a bit more proactive, I put in bids to run symposia, and to have the proceedings published. The Academy has been very generous in supporting my conferences and then publishing the work.¹⁵ These have often been interdisciplinary conferences, so in the course of them, I have worked with other scholars from completely different branches of the Academy. I organised one conference with Christopher McCrudden who is a leading human rights lawyer, and that was a conference on affirmative action, a topic on which he is a much greater expert than I am.¹⁶ That kind of interdisciplinary work, bringing together law and social science, and actually economists and political scientists as well in this case, was of great intellectual benefit. Because the British Academy was able to fund these events, and because it likes to fund interdisciplinary work, it encourages you to go out and talk to people like Christopher McCrudden. Indeed, I organised another one on 'Educational Standards' with Harvey Goldstein,¹⁷ who is one of our leading educational statisticians; that probably wouldn't have happened without the Academy.¹⁸ So that interdisciplinary collaboration – in all these instances working on conferences followed by publications – has been a great asset to me, and I have been very glad to have been given the opportunities to do this kind of work.

¹⁴ Christopher McCrudden, Robert Ford & A.F. Heath, 'Legal regulation of affirmative action in Northern Ireland: an empirical assessment', *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*, 24 (2004), 363-415; Raya Muttarak, Heather Hamill, Anthony Heath & Christopher McCrudden (2013) 'Does affirmative action work? Evidence from the operation of fair employment legislation in Northern Ireland', *Sociology*, 47:3 (2013), 560-79. Christopher McCrudden was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 2008.

¹⁵ For example: Anthony F. Heath, Richard Breen & Christopher T. Whelan (eds), *Ireland North and South: Perspectives from Social Science* (Proceedings of the British Academy 98, 1999); Anthony F. Heath & Sin Yi Cheung (eds), *Unequal Chances: Ethnic Minorities in Western Labour Markets* (Proceedings of the British Academy 137, 2007); Anthony F.

Heath & Roger Jeffery (eds), *Diversity and Change in Modern India: Economic, Social and Political Approaches* (Proceedings of the British Academy 159, 2010). Heath & Brinbaum (eds), *Unequal Attainments: Ethnic Educational Inequalities in Ten Western Countries* (Proceedings of the British Academy 196, in press).

¹⁶ The conference on 'Affirmative Action in the Labour Market: International Perspectives' was held at the British Academy in November 2009.

¹⁷ Professor Harvey Goldstein was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1996.

¹⁸ Harvey Goldstein & Anthony Heath (eds), *Educational Standards* (Proceedings of the British Academy 102, 2000).