Institution: University of Oxford

Unit of Assessment: 4

Title of case study:

Promoting Community Cohesion and Social Integration through Inter-Group Contact

1. Summary of the impact

Hewstone’s theory and research on intergroup contact has made two major contributions to UK policy on social integration: (1) Promoting community cohesion between different ethnic groups; for example, by providing a guiding principle for policy documents and survey items for the Citizenship Survey prepared by Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). (2) Providing the theoretical base and rigorous evidence for the Sharing Education Programme (SEP) in Northern Ireland (NI), which links schools across the denominational divide, and provides opportunities for sustained contact for pupils who typically have no such cross-group exchanges. SEP is already having impact in changing attitudes in NI and elsewhere.

2. Underpinning research

The impacts on intergroup contact and social integration have been based on research projects directed by Hewstone during the last 11 years at Oxford (see Section 3 for examples).

Hewstone’s review of evidence on the role of contact between members of different ethno/religious groups as a mechanism for ameliorating negative social attitudes, for the Commission on Integration and Cohesion (2006), drew especially on his own research. This showed: (i) the potential for indirect (e.g. knowing that other ingroup members have outgroup friends) as well as direct contact (see ref. 1 in Section 3); (ii) the specific processes by which contact works (e.g., reduced anxiety, increased perspective-taking; refs. 1-3); (iii) how contact impacts on multiple outcomes (e.g. ‘secondary transfer’ effects of contact with one outgroup improving attitudes towards other outgroups; ref. 4).

Northern Ireland (NI) had long seemed to accept the inevitability (and, for some, the desirability) of segregated education, with most pupils attending Catholic or Protestant schools. However, surveys also revealed support from parents for some mixing, but not for integrated schools. The Sharing Education Programme (SEP) has been built (since 2007) on Hewstone’s work as summarised above and in refs. 1-4. SEP enshrines the value of repeated instances of positive contact, supported by shared pupil norms and educational authorities. However, it allows pupils to remain at separate schools (accepting the importance of this to a sense of community identity, and the right to choose education within a certain religious ethos). The SEP programme offers an opportunity for pupils and teachers to cross the sectarian divide. NB: The SEP work was carried out in a collaboration between Hewstone and Hughes (Queens University, Belfast).

Hewstone and colleagues conducted a quasi-experimental evaluation study of 577 students from 14 schools in NI, to compare contact and outcomes in matched schools with and without SEP (ref. 5). This provided direct evidence of the effectiveness and impact of SEP, showing not only (i) an increase in trust and positive action tendencies towards the religious outgroup in SEP vs control schools, but also (ii) that intergroup contact improved attitudes by reducing anxiety and promoting empathy. The scale of the improvements is impressive, given the relatively recent introduction of SEP (students have only been involved for a year or so). For example, (i) respondents who participated in the SEP, on average, reported having 6% more friends from the other community than those who did not participate; (ii) for every point reduction in intergroup anxiety, respondents’ attitudes improved by 6.29 points. In addition, a large-scale, ongoing longitudinal survey of contact experienced by pupils in post-primary schools across NI shows that positive intergroup contact drives more positive attitudes (ref. 6).

3. References to the research


**Grant Support**


During this time, Hewstone has been Professor of Social Psychology, University of Oxford.

**4. Details of the impact**

**UK Policy on integration: The key role of intergroup contact** (See Sources 2 and 7) Following riots in English cities in 2001, the Cantle Report highlighted White and Asian communities living “parallel lives”. The Government’s Commission on Integration and Cohesion...
Impact case study (REF3b)

Hewstone has regularly presented his work via the media. For example, his work on merging intergroup contact into educational policy, as well as his research on shared education, have received significant media coverage. His work has been featured in media outlets such as the BBC and the Irish Times, and he has been interviewed on radio and television. Hewstone’s work has also been covered by the Irish News, the Derry Journal, and the Press Eye. In addition, Hewstone’s research has been cited in numerous academic journals and reports, including the Department of Education’s Annual Report and Accounts for 2013/14.

Northern Ireland: The SEP and education policy (See Sources 1, 3, 5, 6, 9)
SEP, evaluated through Hewstone’s work, promotes collaboration through core curricular activity and mixed environments to enhance educational outcomes and reconciliation (involving 130 schools and 16,000 pupils). SEP was supported in manifestos of four of the main political parties in the 2011 NI Assembly election; is identified as a priority in the Programme for Government, 2012; is supported by the main Churches; and shared solutions were included in area planning recommendations for NI school reorganisation. Hewstone’s contribution is primarily in the design, implementation and analysis of the large-scale quantitative evaluation.

This work is having a major impact on NI education policy. The main Protestant Churches in NI have publicly supported shared education, and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools has encouraged all its schools to promote shared relationships with neighbouring Protestant schools. In 2008, the Education Minister initiated a review of the Department’s Community Relations policy. On the basis of evidence on intergroup contact and SEP, presented by Hewstone’s team, the Community Relations policy (2010) contained a commitment to ‘encouraging greater sharing and collaboration across and between all educational settings on a cross-community basis’. This policy impacts all children and young people in NI. After the conference on Shared Education (December, 2012), at which Hewstone’s team presented their results, the Chair of the Education Committee stated "your studies informed the decision to prioritize shared education."

The SEP team has engaged with all the main political parties in NI. After the 2011 NI Assembly election a commitment that every pupil should have some experience of shared education by 2015 was included in the Programme for Government, and a Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) on Shared Education has been established. Recommendations for area planning published by the local authorities in 2012 have included a significant number of shared education proposals.

In November 2011 the NI Executive released its Programme for Government. Sharing Education is highlighted as a priority, and Shared Education has been prioritised in the Programme for Government. The MAG reported in March 2013, and drawing extensively on the research evidence (5:6 p. 41-69) the report makes 17 recommendations which support the mainstreaming of shared education in NI to ensure that it is placed at the ‘heart of education policy and practice’ (ibid, p.111), through, inter alia, amendment to the Education Bill to place a statutory duty on the Department of Education, and the new Education and Skills Authority, to encourage and facilitate shared education; revision of the common funding formula to include a ‘shared education premium’; a change in legislation to place a statutory duty on schools to comply with Section 75 of the NI Act; and support for teachers in the delivery of shared education (ibid, p.112-124). In May 2013 the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister announced a package of reforms for NI. Reflecting the MAG recommendations, the package included a commitment to start work within in next 5 years on building 10 ‘shared education’ campuses in NI. This is likely to offer the opportunity for the shared education experience to around 50 schools and 20,000 pupils.

International impact of SEP work (See Source 4)
SEP is now (via UNICEF, NGOs, and senior officials from the Ministry of Education in Macedonia), impacting 6 Albanian and Macedonian schools in ethnically mixed municipalities. 60 additional schools are involved in a preparatory programme.

Media impact (See Source 10)
Hewstone has regularly presented his work via the media. For example, his work on merging
Impact case study (REF3b)

ethnically diverse schools in Oldham featured in BBC Newsnight (2011), with a longer interview on BBC World; his work on intergroup contact was featured in BBC Radio 4’s All in the Mind (2012).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

**Letters (available on file):**

1. From Jeremy Vincent, lead civil servant, Decentralisation and Big Society: Research & Analysis (DCLG), November 2012. Includes statement: ‘In conclusion…the theoretical base and use of rigorous quantitative methods in Professor Hewstone’s work were drawn upon in a number of policy documents prepared by DCLG and he advised on an important government survey. The department contributes to draw upon Professor Hewstone’s evidence and expertise’.

2. From David Anderson, lead civil servant for Commission on Integration and Cohesion, July 2007. Includes statement: ‘the contribution you made to the work of the Commission…informed much of the chapter…as it was the strongest evidence the Commission had’.

[Both these civil servants are no longer in DCLG. For corroboration in person, please contact Helen.Connolly@communities.gsi.gov.uk]

3. From Mervyn Storey, MLA, Chair of Education Committee, Northern Ireland Assembly.

4. From Professor Violeta Petroska-Beska, Co-director, Center for Human Rights and Conflict Resolution, Skopje, Macedonia. Includes, referring to Hewstone’s work: “…has been central to the development and operationalisation of the Macedonian project.”

**Documents and websites:**


December 2008, Department for Communities and Local Government. (Section 3 includes reference to Hewstone’s work, e.g. “Meaningful interaction between people from different backgrounds has been shown to break down stereotypes and reduce prejudice. Professor Miles Hewstone presented on this to the Commission on Integration and Cohesion and summarised the evidence from social psychology research…”.


**Media impacts:**

10. Hewstone’s work on intergroup contact was featured in BBC Radio 4’s All in the Mind (2012). http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00t7ppc