

Experiences and Reflections on Issues with Research Impact

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SPA Conference Mixed Methodologies and Impact

Overview

- Experiences from Reading the Riots research
- Experiences from Money Matters project
- Thoughts, lessons and suggestions

Experiences from Reading the Riots 1

- Collaborative project between the LSE and the Guardian Newspaper with advantages for both sides
- 1st phase: 6 days of newspaper coverage, Newsnight, conference and community conversations, large research team and resources, website
<http://www.theguardian.com/uk/series/reading-the-riots>
- Impact strategy, media team, expertise: know how to package the research to maximise interest whilst analysts able to focus on research
- No academic publications but LSE impact case study: affect decisions – Theresa May and stop and search; improved understanding – not all about gangs and criminality



Experiences from Reading the Riots 2

Blame the police: why the rioters say they took part

Exclusive Revenge as well as opportunism cited by summer looters

Paul Lewis
Tim Newburn
Matthew Taylor
James Ball

Widespread anger and frustration at the way police engage with communities was a significant factor behind the summer riots in every major city where disorder took place, the biggest study into their causes has found.

Hundreds of interviews with people who took part in the disturbances which spread across England in August revealed deep-seated and sometimes visceral antipathy towards police.

In a unique collaboration, the Guardian and London School of Economics (LSE) interviewed 270 people who rioted in London, Birmingham, Liverpool, Nottingham, Manchester and Salford.

The project collected more than 1.2m words of first-person accounts from rioters, giving an unprecedented insight

Reading the riots

First day of a week of reports from the Guardian/LSE study, pages 2-9
Gary Tongue, page 25

into what drove people to participate in England's most serious bout of civil unrest in a generation. Five people died and more than 4,000 people were arrested in the riots.

Rioters revealed that a complex mix of grievances brought them on to the streets, but analysts appointed by the LSE identified distrust and antipathy toward police as key driving forces. Detailed in the research findings, which are also based on analysis of an exclusive database of more than 2.5m riot-related tweets, will be unveiled in reports over the next six days. Today's findings include:

• Many rioters conceded that their involvement in looting was simply down to opportunism, saying that a perceived suspension of normal rules presented them with an opportunity to acquire goods and luxury items they could not ordinarily afford. They often described the riots as a chance to obtain "free stuff" or sought to justify the theft.

• Despite David Cameron saying gangs were "at the heart" of the disturbances, evidence shows they temporarily suspended hostilities. The effective four-day truce - which many said was unprece-

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Riot police outside a burning building in Croydon on Monday 8 August. Photograph: Carl De Souza/APP/Getty Images

What the rioters said

'It was literally a festival with no food, no dancing, no music but a free shopping trip for everyone'

'It felt like I was part of a revolution, showing these stupid police that, you know, they're not invincible'

'In the sickest way possible it felt good because everyone for once was actually stuck together'

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No retreat in Afghanistan, urges top UK commander

Nick Hopkins

The most senior British commander in Afghanistan says the Taliban cannot "assassinate their way to power" and too many lives have been lost over the last 10 years for the west to flinch in its campaign against the insurgents.

In an interview with the Guardian, Lieutenant General James Bucknall said the UK had made "an investment in blood" and that now was not the time for western nations to turn their back on the country. He claimed that the Taliban had been pushed back everywhere and that insurgents would not be able to kill off the top 10 insurgent leaders every month. He concluded that too often over the last decade the military had "over-promised and under-delivered".

Bucknall said he understood why politicians, the public and the armed forces themselves felt war-weary. Mistakes, he admitted, had been made.

"We're not over it to those who have gone before to see the job through," he said. "Having made this investment in blood, I am more determined. If I didn't think we could do this I would take a very different view but I am confident we can do it."

Bucknall's comments come on the eve of an international conference in Bonn to discuss the future of Afghanistan. There is mounting concern about the amount of aid the Afghanistan will receive and a growing political clamour in the US and UK for western forces to speed up their withdrawal. But Bucknall said critics of the military campaign should ask whether the Taliban leader Mullah Omar had been able to achieve any of his goals over the last two years.

"Let's mark this work. It was serious about overthrowing the government and grabbing a portion of Afghanistan for his own, you have to do three things. You have to secure your own heartland in Kandahar and central Helmand. Is he doing that? No. They lost their safe havens around Kandahar in 2010 and they didn't take them back in 2011. They are not holding their own heartland."

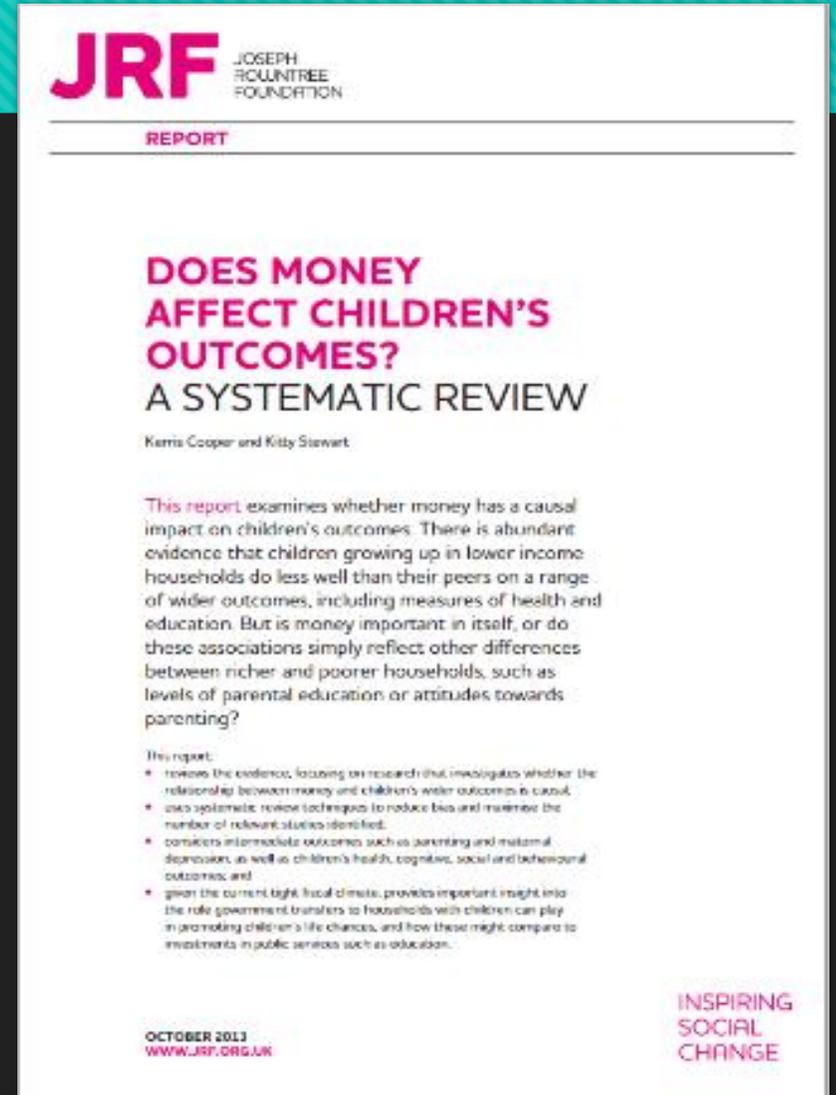
"Secondly, you have to spread your influence around other areas. There is absolutely no evidence anywhere in Afghanistan that they are doing that. Thirdly, you have to affect the seat of government. Not only is the seat of government unaffected, but Kabul is a flourishing capital city that is much safer than Karachi." The Taliban has been reduced to a terrorist group, adopting terrorist tactics, said Bucknall.

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- Phase two: interviews with police officers, prosecution and defence lawyers
- Other findings: poverty and inequality, cuts, anger at injustice of double standards, 'nothing to lose', empowerment, consumerism, opportunism
- Time scale: preliminary findings only
- Limited control over representation of the research, despite systems put in place
- BBC programme – The Riots in Their Own Words
- Some of these issues improved for 2nd phase

Experiences from Money Matters Project

- JRF-funded research project at CASE, LSE with Kitty Stewart
- Does money have a *causal* effect on children's outcomes? Particularly topical at the moment
- Newspaper coverage fell through – framing of findings?
- State of the Nation Report on Child Poverty and Social Mobility – not politically palatable

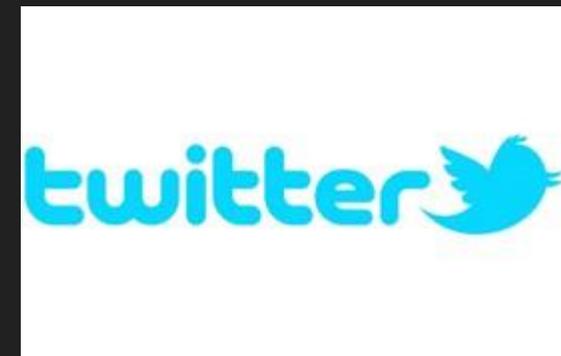


Experiences from Money Matters project



- Conferences and contacts e.g. Unicef, DWP
- Difficulty measuring impact e.g. Harrow Council
- Ongoing impact strategy with advice from others
- Challenges: Time, effort, expertise and incentives

- Blogs – concise, policy-relevance
- Twitter – but continuous investment, training



Lessons, conclusions and points for discussion

- Balancing impact with accuracy – Traditional Media
- Framing findings and research message
- Making use of New Media

Lessons, conclusions and points for discussion

- Training and support for researchers
- Building time and money into an impact strategy
- Re-thinking academic incentives – a broader understanding of impact for social policy research

Comments and points for
discussion...