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| Institution: University of Kent | | |
| Unit of Assessment: 19: Politics and International Studies | | |
| Title of case study: Transforming Understandings of Brexit among Decision-Makers, Policy Elites, and the Public | | |
| Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 1 September 2015 – 31 July 2020 | | |
| Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit: | | |
| Name(s): | Role(s) (e.g. job title): | Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: |
| Matthew J. Goodwin | Professor of Politics | 2015-present |
| Period when the claimed impact occurred: 1 September 2015 – 31 July 2020 | | |
| Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No | | |
| 1. Summary of the impact <p>Since 2015, Professor Goodwin's ESRC-funded research on public support for, and attitudes towards, Brexit, has transformed decision-makers' understanding of Brexit in the Office of the Prime Minister and strengthened policy and public knowledge of Brexit-related issues. Sustained knowledge exchange briefings to senior advisors to the Prime Minister, Members of Parliament, and parliamentary committees has significantly improved their understanding of the Brexit vote and its impact on British politics, while co-produced research with the charitable Joseph Rowntree Foundation influenced the public policy decision to lift a 'freeze' on welfare benefits that had been in place for three years. An additional strand of activity in public-facing arenas helped to strengthen the understanding of Brexit among citizens.</p> | | |
| 2. Underpinning research <p>The 2016 Brexit vote represented a seismic moment in British politics and one that needed to be explained. ESRC-supported research by Professor Matthew Goodwin drew on large amounts of data to demonstrate who voted for, or joined, populist Eurosceptic parties in the UK and, from 2016, who supported Brexit and why. This research is original and distinctive because it drew on a range of large-scale individual survey data, aggregate-data, experimental and qualitative methods to detail the social, attitudinal, and contextual characteristics of support for movements that were poorly understood. It included a detailed (pre-referendum) book, published in 2016 by Oxford University Press, which mapped the rise of the UK Independence Party (UKIP), the characteristics and drivers of UKIP voters, and the political geography of this support [R1].</p> <p>This was followed, in 2016, by a study of the 'Leave' vote which is the most highly cited article in the journal <i>Political Quarterly</i> [R2]. The study revealed the relationship between the Brexit vote and key factors such as education, class, immigration, and age. Then came, in 2017, the first major book on the Brexit vote [R3], published by Cambridge University Press, which drew on large-scale representative surveys of voters, conducted over a decade, to show how the vote for Brexit was driven by 'a complex and cross-cutting mix of calculations, emotions and cues'. The book included the first ever membership survey of a Eurosceptic party in the UK, which shed further light on the dimensions of Euroscepticism.</p> <p>Then, in 2018, a major public-facing book in the Penguin Pelican series communicated these and other social scientific research findings to a global audience [R4]. This book, <i>National Populism</i>, drew on thirty years of research to explain who supports national populism and why, tracing this support to four deep-rooted grievances over distrust, deprivation, destruction, and de-alignment (the '4 D's'). <i>National Populism</i> has been translated into six languages, has sold nearly 50,000</p> | | |

copies, appeared in the *Sunday Times* bestseller list, and the *Financial Times* and *Times Literary Supplement* 'Books of 2018/19'. This research was developed and refined through two co-produced projects that increased its reach and significance among non-academic beneficiaries (see below).

The first was a long-term partnership with the charitable Joseph Rowntree Foundation, which, in **2016-19**, produced four original and distinctive research reports on how low-income citizens and communities feel about Brexit [R5]. The reports drew on survey data to reveal the attitudes of low-income voters towards Brexit, how these attitudes are shaped by local context, and how Brexit contributed to shifting political loyalties in communities grappling with low incomes and/or poverty. The reports urged parties to devote more attention to disadvantaged areas.

The second co-produced project was an Associate Fellowship (2010-18), Senior Visiting Fellowship, and full-time secondment (2019) with the Royal Institute for International Affairs, Chatham House. It led, in **2015**, to one of the first research reports on the Brexit vote and a report that showed how decision-makers and citizens navigate Brexit-related issues [R6].

3. References to the research

[R1] Matthew Goodwin and Caitlin Milazzo (2016). *UKIP: Inside the Campaign to Redraw the Map of British Politics*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344893.2016.1256033>

[R2] Matthew Goodwin and Oliver Heath (2016). 'The 2016 Referendum: Brexit and the Left Behind? An Aggregate-Level Analysis of the Result', *Political Quarterly*, 87(3), pp. 323-332. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.12285>

[R3] Harold Clarke, Matthew Goodwin, and Paul Whiteley (2017). *Brexit: Why Britain Voted to Leave the European Union*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsx005>

[R4] Matthew Goodwin and Roger Eatwell (2018). *National Populism: The Revolt Against Liberal Democracy*, Penguin Pelican. <https://kar.kent.ac.uk/77435/>

[R5] Matthew Goodwin and Oliver Heath (2019). Co-produced research reports with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, culminating in 'Low-Income Voters in UK General Elections, 1987-2017'. <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/low-income-voters-uk-general-elections-1987-2017>

[R6] Matthew Goodwin, David Cutts, and Thomas Raines (2017). 'The Future of Europe: Comparing Public and Elite Attitudes'. Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/future-europe-comparing-public-and-elite-attitudes>

4. Details of the impact

Influencing Public Policy

Between **2016** and **2020**, Goodwin co-produced four major research reports with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation [R5], which formed the basis of sustained briefings to Party conferences, MPs, and the Conservative Party manifesto team. As the JRF lead summarised, this research was 'used as a platform for a significant public intervention by JRF aimed at persuading the UK political parties to focus on voters on a low income and the policies that would make a difference to their lives' [a]. More specifically, in these presentations, an argument was made to give more support to low-income communities by lifting the 'freeze' on welfare benefits that had been in place for three years. Impact, which includes 'the reduction or prevention of harm, risk, cost or other negative effects', was delivered as this welfare benefit freeze was subsequently removed.

The JRF executive director said: 'At JRF, we feel it is a reasonable claim that it has also contributed to party positioning and even policy impact for people on low incomes. Professors Goodwin and Heath's reports have been completely central to the campaign [...]. The low-income

voter briefings in October [2019] were an opportunity to raise the issue with senior politicians in a position to act, and on 3 November [2019] the government announced to the Sunday media that it would be lifting the freeze. [...] this has been a positive indication that we can use curated research and engagement to highlight the action that would make a difference now, and to see action, that makes a difference to people in low incomes' [a].

Transforming Senior UK Decision-Makers' Understanding of Brexit

Between 2016 and 2019, the above research [R1-6] directly impacted on decision-makers in the Prime Minister's Office, as well as MPs on the Home Affairs select committee [h]. Professor Goodwin delivered repeated research-led briefings to Prime Minister May's senior advisors [b, c, d]. Evidence that engaged scholarship impacted on decisions at the highest level is underlined by the Prime Minister's Director of Government Relations, who stated that the research 'had a clear and significant impact on our decision-making processes within Number 10. Specifically, his peer-reviewed journal articles [...] research monograph [...] directly helped to shape and strengthen our understanding of what factors led to the vote for Brexit' [b].

Similarly, the Prime Minister's Senior Business Advisor said: 'Throughout this period [2016-19] I and people in my team quickly came to rely upon Matthew Goodwin's polling and thought pieces [...]. His work was important in helping us to prioritise concerns of business and the wider populace [...] to move beyond media headlines to understand where we could make policy decisions which would prove productive in helping the UK to have the best environment in the world to start, grow and run a business.' [c].

Research outputs were also distributed to MPs across the spectrum, including the Prime Minister's Senior Opinion Research and Strategy Advisor, who said: 'Your work, particularly your work *Brexit: Why Britain Voted to Leave the European Union* [R3], informed No. 10's understanding of the referendum result, as well as working-class, "left-behind" voters [...]. Ultimately, your research impacted on, informed and guided opinion at the highest levels of government. [...] conclusions from your research were shared with the Cabinet [...] and informed decisions on political strategy, on the policy platform [...] and senior ministers' understanding of the British electorate' [d].

Strengthening Policy and Public Understandings of Brexit

Extended ESRC Senior Fellowships with UK in a Changing Europe, 2015-18, enabled Goodwin to deliver hundreds of keynote talks to high-level organizations, including: the Council of Europe, the London Stock Exchange, Chatham House [g], the President of Germany, the U.S. State Department, the Council on Foreign Relations, the European Parliament, and the Home Affairs Committee [h].

After the Bank of England invited Goodwin to present his research to more than 200 staff, its Head of Parliamentary Affairs summarised the impact as follows: 'members of the MPC [Monetary Policy Committee] used his analysis as part of their own evidence base' [e].

A similar masterclass on Brexit at the Department for Exiting the EU was described by one civil servant as helping to 'set the context for the work that we are doing on Brexit and immigration related issues [...]. This is an important aspect of good policy-making' [f]. This was underpinned by extensive public engagement, channelled through dozens of op-eds in print media, nearly 500 appearances in broadcast media [i].

It was also furthered through talks on Brexit to the likes of Intelligence Squared, How To Academy, Battle of Ideas, York, Cheltenham and New Yorker literary festivals, Financial Times Conference, Wellington College, Dartford Grammar School, and ESRC-sponsored 'town hall' public meetings. This helped to strengthen public understanding by presenting research on the Brexit vote to a wide array of audiences.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[a] Testimonial from the Executive Director of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 11 February 2020.

[b] Testimonial from Senior Special Adviser in No. 10 Policy Unit and former Director of Government Relations in No. 10, 20 January 2020.

[c] Testimonial from Senior Business Advisor to Prime Minister Theresa May, 9 January 2020.

[d] Testimonial from Senior Opinion Research and Strategy Adviser to Prime Minister Theresa May, 18 October 2019.

[e] Testimonial from Head of Parliamentary Affairs, Bank of England, 20 September 2019.

[f] Testimonial from Senior Policy Advisor, Mobility Team, Department for Exiting the European Union, 15 October 2019.

[g] Chatham House Primer. 'The Vote for Brexit', 7 May 2017. Keynote talk to Chatham House members and international audience online. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cfAKL7BeXxA>

[h] Evidence to Home Affairs Committee on Brexit, hate crimes and far-right extremism, 10 January 2017.

<https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/83/home-affairs-committee/news/100648/hate-crime-against-eastern-europeans-and-farright-extremism-examined/>

[i] 395 broadcast media appearances and 1,976 pieces of 'Kantar' print media on file, University of Kent Press Office.