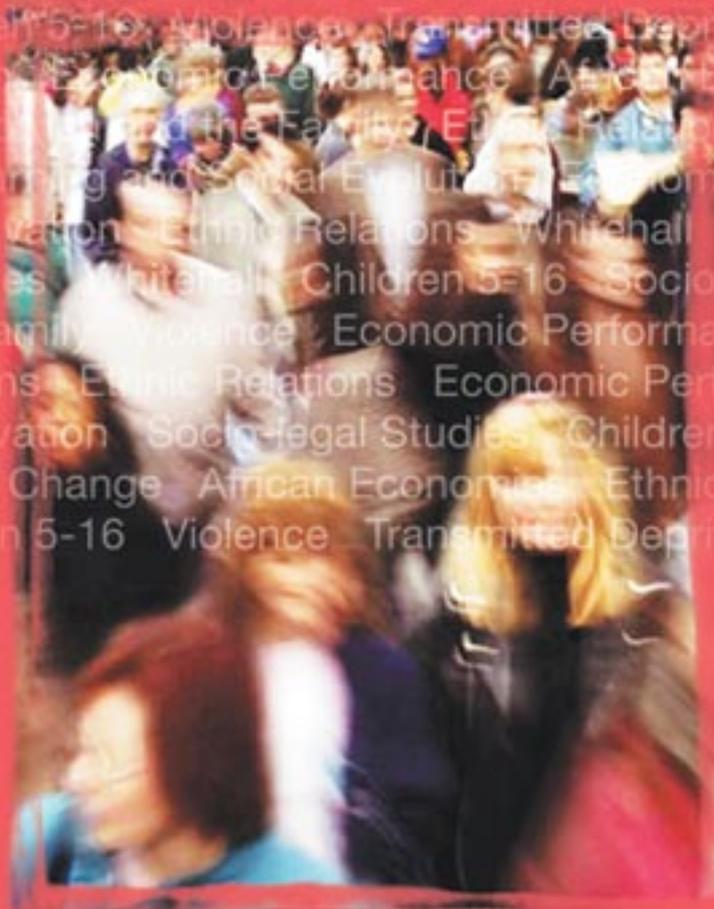


SSRC/ESRC the first forty years



SSRC/ESRC

the first forty years

Industrial Relations Ethnic Relations Economic Performance African Economies
Transmitted Deprivation Socio-legal Studies Children 5-16 Violence
Environmental Change African Economies Ethnic Relations
Whitehall Children 5-16 Violence Transmitted Deprivation Ethnic Relations
Social Exclusion Economic Performance African Economies
Fiscal Studies Women and the Family Ethnic Relations Transmitted Deprivation
Economic Learning and Social Evolution Economic Performance
Transmitted Deprivation Ethnic Relations Whitehall Economic Performance
African Economies Whitehall Children 5-16 Socio-legal Studies
Women and the Family Violence Economic Performance Fiscal Studies
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Note for readers: bold is used within the text to indicate that further details can be found either in the themed boxes or in the chapters at the end of the historical narrative.

FOREWORD



THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN SPENDING MONEY ON SCIENCE SINCE 1675, WHEN CHARLES II FOUNDED THE OBSERVATORY AT GREENWICH. BUT ONLY IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY DID IT GRADUALLY BECOME APPARENT THAT AN ADVANCED INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY NEEDED A RANGE OF STATE AGENCIES TO SUPPORT BASIC AND APPLIED RESEARCH ACROSS THE WHOLE OF KNOWLEDGE.

One response to this imperative was the establishment of the Social Science Research Council in 1965. It was set up by a reforming Government at a time of rapid social change.

The Economic and Social Research Council, as it later became, has since carved out a vital role in British intellectual and public life. It has supported many of the UK's best researchers, who have produced deep insights into key social and economic questions. Without the research it supports, policy on topics such as education, the social effects of new technology, or the direction of the British economy would be far less well-informed than they are.

The pages that follow show that much has changed in 40 years of UK social science. Today's ESRC is more likely to support research in collaboration with organisations within and beyond the UK, and has more of a concern with engaging the general public and specific interest groups in its work. Its priorities are more closely integrated into the overall direction of Government science strategy. And its importance has grown as it has taken more responsibility for the full costs of the research it supports.

But some things about ESRC have altered far less. It has always fought for more resources for social science research, often with success. It has established major new centres and programmes, while being careful to keep cash to respond to the priorities of the academic community. And as a Research Council, it has taken a national role in ensuring that the whole of social science in the UK is healthy, not only the part which it supports directly. One way in which it has done this is by supporting the collection of social science data on behalf of the community at large.

Most importantly, the ESRC has always insisted that while Government pays for most of its activities, it decides for itself what research to fund, solely on the basis of intellectual merit underpinned by peer review. As it strives to engage more users of research in its work, this guarantee will continue to be the cornerstone of the ESRC's credibility in future years. This applies especially to research in controversial areas of public policy such as social exclusion, energy policy, management and innovation.

Despite periodic upsets such as the contretemps, described in these pages, that led SSRC to become ESRC, there is every sign that the Government appreciates the merits of an independent body to investigate the UK's changing economy and society, and the nation's place in the world.

The ESRC's second 40 years will be radically different from its first. The way in which research is carried out is changing, as is the subject matter of social science, and the universities in which we support research. So are economies and societies around the world, not least in the UK. But we believe that our mission is more important than ever, and that our values and methods play a vital role in advancing knowledge and helping the UK shape its place in the world.



Frances Cairncross
Chair



Professor Ian Diamond FBA, AcSS
Chief Executive

1944 - 1964: THE BATTLE FOR RECOGNITION



THE DISCUSSION ABOUT THE NEED FOR A SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL BEGAN IN EARNEST AS THE SECOND WORLD WAR WAS DRAWING TO A CLOSE. IT WAS A TIME WHEN THE THOUGHTS OF POLICYMAKERS AND ACADEMICS ALIKE WERE TURNING TO HOW TO ACHIEVE THE CHANGES IN SOCIETY CLEARLY REQUIRED IN THE WAKE OF TWO DESTRUCTIVE WORLD WARS. IT WAS ALSO A TIME OF OPTIMISM, WITH A BELIEF THAT ALL SOCIAL PROBLEMS WERE ULTIMATELY SOLUBLE. AS MICHAEL YOUNG, THE FIRST CHAIRMAN OF THE SSRC, REFLECTED: ‘THERE WERE HIGH HOPES, EVEN AMONG SOME NORMALLY CAUTIOUS ADMINISTRATORS, ABOUT WHAT SOCIAL SCIENCES SHOULD DO TO ILLUMINATE PUBLIC POLICY’.

However the story of the birth of the ESRC – known originally as the Social Science Research Council – represents a frustrating tale of delay and procrastination. ‘Time and again, rational arguments for establishing a Council encountered

‘It was also a time of optimism, with a belief that all social problems were ultimately soluble.’

a mixture of prejudice coupled with ignorance of what the social sciences were really about,’ is how Lord Moser, a founding member of the SSRC Council and one of Britain’s most distinguished social scientists, described the long battle for recognition.

The story begins in earnest in 1944, when the Government’s Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR) suggested that post-war development would require the appointment of a council to look into the ‘psychological reactions imposed by modern life’. But the proposal was swiftly killed off by one of the DSIR’s existing institutions; the Medical Research Council. ‘We should have some difficulty in accepting the view that sociology had arrived at such a stage of scientific development that an Advisory Council for Sociological Research could be justified as an official Government body’, they warned.

‘Time and again, rational arguments for establishing a Council encountered a mixture of prejudice coupled with ignorance of what the social sciences were really about...’

1944 – 1964: THE BATTLE FOR RECOGNITION

Undaunted, in the same year Deputy Prime Minister Clement Attlee asked Sir John Clapham, a Cambridge economic historian, to chair a committee to ‘consider whether additional provision was necessary for research into social and economic questions’. After two years of investigation the Clapham Committee concluded that social science research in the universities was in a poor state, with just 52 social science professors and readers throughout the UK (compared to 296 in pure sciences and 176 in medicine). Yet crucially they recommended *against* the founding of a Social Science Research Council. Whilst it was

‘a danger of a premature crystallisation of spurious orthodoxies.’

suggested that such a body might be required at some stage in the future, the immediate priority was for more resources to be directed to the university social science sector. Furthermore, the Clapham Report warned, setting up a council could lead to ‘a danger of a premature crystallisation of spurious orthodoxies’.

Despite this disappointment the voices in support of a council pressed on and the Labour Party’s Research Department (led by Michael Young – to become the SSRC’s first Chair) took up the case. They lobbied Herbert Morrison, then Lord President of the Council and responsible for Government research. Morrison was sceptical asking at one stage ‘What is social science?’ and the Treasury was, for reasons of both cost and intellectual snobbery, downright hostile. However, Morrison did initiate a Government Human Factors Panel which, as part of its drive to improve productivity, identified a need for more research on a wide range of what today would be called human resource issues.

In the 1950s the Conservative Party appointed Lord Hailsham to the position of Lord President of the Council. Hailsham was robust in his resistance to the funding of social science research. He believed the priority for public money should be the fostering of the natural sciences and regarded money spent on the social sciences as a diversion of resources or worse, the encouragement of what could be a ‘happy hunting ground for the bogus and the meretricious’.

‘happy hunting ground for the bogus and the meretricious.’

Yet pressure continued unabated and other influential voices were being raised in support of a Social Sciences Research Council. These included Lord Adrian, President of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Lord Robbins (in his ground-breaking 1961 report into the future of higher education) and key members of the House of Lords and the House of Commons (including Judith Hart who was to become a minister in the Wilson Government in 1964).

By 1962 Lord Hailsham was forced to concede, not quite another inquiry, but an inquiry into whether an inquiry was necessary. 'The Government continues to nibble at the idea of an SSRC without bringing themselves to a decision one way or the other,' *The Times* thundered in response to this procrastination. But by now the voices in favour had gathered a momentum and were unstoppable. The inquiry into the inquiry rapidly recommended in favour of a further inquiry and in May 1963 Lord Geoffrey Heyworth (the Chairman of ICI) began work on what was to be the last such investigation.

'...the voices in favour had gathered a momentum and were unstoppable.'

Heyworth's report, published in 1965, concluded with an unambiguous view that a Social Science Research Council should be established. With an enthusiast for the social sciences, Anthony Crosland, installed as the Secretary of State under a new Labour Government, Parliamentary approval was rapidly granted.

The Social Science Research Council's Royal Charter, granted in October 1965, set out five main objectives:

- to support and encourage research in the social sciences
- to provide services for research
- to carry out research in the social sciences
- to provide postgraduate grants and
- to provide advice and disseminate knowledge concerning the social sciences.

It had taken over twenty years, and raised the passions of both its supporters and detractors, but at long last a Social Science Research Council was established.

1965 – 1975: THE SOCIAL SCIENCES FLOURISH



THE CHAIR OF THE FLEDGLING SSRC WAS TO BE **MICHAEL YOUNG**, PREVIOUSLY HEAD OF THE LABOUR PARTY'S RESEARCH DEPARTMENT AND AN APPOINTMENT NOT WITHOUT CONTROVERSY. 'YOUNG,' WROTE THE THEN *MANCHESTER GUARDIAN*, 'WAS ONE OF THE STORMIEST PETRELS OF EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH WITH MANY INFLUENTIAL FRIENDS AND ALSO SOME INFLUENTIAL DETRACTORS'.

Today, Young is recognised as a hero of the social sciences. 'One of the most imaginative, innovative and unique sociologists in the world today,' was how he was later described by *The Guardian's* veteran observer of social policy Malcolm Dean. Certainly with Young's dynamic leadership and fertile mind there was never any risk that the SSRC would be a stolid and unimaginative body.

'...there was never any risk that the SSRC would be a stolid and unimaginative body.'

While the birth of the SSRC was characterised by a series of long and largely inconclusive debates, once finally underway its early years coincided with a boom in the social sciences. Interest from Government, academics and students gathered apace. Intake of social science undergraduates in the academic years 1962/3 to 1966/7 rose by a record 62 per cent.

However, the priority in these early days was establishing a distinctive role and trajectory for the SSRC. In late 1965 and early 1966 attention had to be paid to a potentially embarrassing predicament. What if the Council were to fund research whose findings criticised Government, and therefore which the Government would be unable to accept? This thorny issue was resolved, temporarily at least, by determining that initiatives for research should come from social scientists in the universities, rather than being centrally dictated by the Council. Council policy should in no way direct research and initiatives. The subject however, would continue to be debated and revisited over the years.

'What if the Council were to fund research whose findings criticised Government, and therefore which the Government would be unable to accept?'

The British Election Study Programme, University of Essex

The British Election Study (BES) Programme, established in 1963, is an indispensable national resource and one of the longest social science survey series. Its data cover a sequence of eleven general elections. Director of the Study, Professor David Sanders, notes that prior to the pioneering early work of the programme analysis had been conducted at the aggregate level with little known about why individuals made the voting decisions they did. Indeed, political analysis was largely political journalism. 'Typically, analysts would talk to a few people about why they voted the way they did and would then generalise (with very little justification) to the population as a whole,' says Sanders. After the programme's initial findings were published serious electoral analysts were 'obliged to use representative sample surveys as the evidential base for evaluating many of their theoretical claims'. Since 2000 the BES has widened its focus to concentrate on the question of turnout. It has also been exploring new forms of survey experiment made possible by internet surveys supplementing traditional face-to-face probability sample surveys.

Michael Young had been actively involved in the selection of members of the Council and he succeeded in creating a panel of individuals, all recognised as leaders in their respective fields. At its first formal meeting in January 1966 the Council set about establishing a subject committee structure to guide the funding of postgraduate training and research activities. This structure was initially organised around subject committees covering Economic and Social History, Economics, Education, Human Geography, Management and Industrial Relations, Political Science, Psychology, Social Anthropology, Sociology and Social Administration and Statistics. From the beginning, the SSRC sought to increase the quantity and quality of research workers and teachers in academic institutions. Attention was directed to the importance of training for the future of the social sciences and the careers of those within it.

'Attention was directed to the importance of training for the future of the social sciences and the careers of those within it.'

By its own admission the SSRC at this time was markedly producer-orientated. Its policies were guided very largely by the existing academic interests of those engaged in the various social science disciplines – the improvement of their instruments of research, the perfecting of their methods and the furtherance of research themes which were already well established.

Such an emphasis was entirely appropriate, as the Council itself stressed, but there was also pressure for it to adopt a more proactive approach by identifying where the gaps in research and training were, and then seeking to fill them. By the late 1960s this strategic approach was still in its developmental stages. In essence it involved reviewing the current state of research and then assessing the extent to which it was meeting the demand for trained social science research workers.

In 1967 it was agreed to invest funds in university-based research units and by early 1970 the first of the SSRC's Units were established – a move which was to produce

'...by early 1970 the first of the SSRC's Units were established – a move which was to produce some of the Council's greatest impacts and successes over the next forty years.'

some of the Council's greatest impacts and successes over the next forty years. The **Industrial Relations Research Unit** at the University of Warwick under the directorship of Professor Hugh Clegg; the **Research Unit on Ethnic Relations** at Bristol under the leadership of Professor Michael Banton; and the Survey Unit which ran the Nuffield Summer School in survey methods under Dr Mark Abrams were among the pioneers.

The Industrial Relations Research Unit, University of Warwick

The Industrial Relations Research Unit was established in 1970. An overview of its research priorities offers an interesting insight into the concerns of industry and commerce in the late 20th century. In its early years the Unit's research aimed to achieve a better understanding of workplace industrial relations in general and workplace trade unionism in particular. The Unit played a key role in the work of the Donovan Commission the conclusions of which are still used in analysis of industrial change, and whose influence on the form and content of industrial relations legislation resonated over the next three decades. In the 1980s, the remit was to explore the role of management and the Unit pioneered much-needed research into the then new science of Human Resources.

In the 1990s, the main emphasis was on employment relationship in the context of the internationalisation of the world economy. In recognition of the importance of its work the Unit received core funding from the ESRC until 1999.

Even in these early years, the importance of the Council's objective 'to provide advice and disseminate knowledge concerning the social sciences' was apparent. Rapidly growing Government interest in the output of social science presented both an opportunity and a challenge to the young SSRC. The Council established communication networks across Whitehall in order to communicate its output better. The Annual Report for 1968/69 records that some 35 officers had been appointed to Government and public agencies, enabling the

'Rapidly growing Government interest in the output of social science presented both an opportunity and a challenge to the young SSRC.'

Council to report, with some pride, the beginnings of a framework of 'consumers'. At the same time the Council was advising Government on the needs of social science research, and assisting research-users as to how they might best exploit the work of the SSRC.

1965 – 1975: THE SOCIAL SCIENCES FLOURISH



In 1969 the Council undertook its first major review of research policy which revealed that support for research in universities, colleges and independent research institutes was accounting for 40 per cent of its overall budget, with an even greater figure (more than 50 per cent) devoted to postgraduate training. Although the SSRC was undoubtedly ambitious to expand its research output, it was very much aware that it was spending a greater proportion of 'man hours of work and weight of written documents, for each £100 of research grant' than the other Research Councils. With a budget of just over £4million compared to the £59million of the Science Research Council, this difference was most likely attributable to the economies of scale not available to the SSRC. Yet despite its relative small size the SSRC's budget came under severe pressure.

Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure, University of Cambridge

While the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure was running for ten years prior to the granting of SSRC status in 1974, with Council support, it went on to produce key works which have been instrumental in setting standards for the demographic analysis of past societies.

The Group became the primary interpreter of the role played by population and family systems in the British Industrial Revolution and a pioneer of research into the history of old age. Reflecting on the Group's work in 1990 former SSRC Chair **Robin Matthews** said, "Intellectually, the Cambridge Group has been one of the most highly regarded of all those with which the name of the SSRC/ESRC has been connected. Its work shows the historical significance of the unique Western European family structure in making that part of the world the cradle of modern economic growth. The understanding of trends in family structure and their origins has become ever more important today".

The Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure was funded by the ESRC between October 1985 and September 2000.

In the early 1970s, for the first time, the Council faced the prospect of rejecting high-quality research it would have otherwise supported. It had always been assumed that as the Council's budget expanded the proportion devoted to training would decline, but due to the unusually rapid and continuing growth in the number of graduates opting for social science degrees, the Council was placed under enormous pressure to meet the demand for studentships. In fact, the SSRC found itself spending a higher proportion of its budget on this area than the other more established councils. In 1971/72 nearly half of the Council's budget was

'...for the first time, the Council faced the prospect of rejecting high-quality research it would have otherwise supported.'

being spent on training, as opposed to one-eighth of the Science Research Council's budget and even less in the case of the Natural Environment Research Council, the Agricultural Research Council and the Medical Research Council.

Nonetheless the Council expressed itself satisfied that high-quality training would be put to good use in the production of top-class social science researchers. Research programmes and centres founded in this period made significant advances, despite the financial pressures. The work of the **Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure**, the **Transmitted Deprivation Programme** and the **Centre for Socio-Legal Studies** established in the early 1970s, all had long-term major impacts on the wider UK society.



The Centre for Socio-Legal Studies, University of Oxford

Since its foundation in 1972 the Centre for Socio-Legal Studies has built an international reputation for conducting innovative, inter-disciplinary research into the interaction of law and society. The Centre consists of a group of scholars and researchers from complementary backgrounds in the law and social sciences, whose aim is to generate new insights and practical direction on both enduring and cutting edge issues. Scholars trained at the Centre have produced groundbreaking empirical research into the fields of tort law and compensation for personal injury, the financial implications of divorce and the resolution of family disputes, the regulation of health and safety at work and environmental pollution. In the last decade the centre has emerged as a leading light in the study of media law and policy. In the 2004 Inquiry into Research in Law by the Nuffield Foundation, the centre's work on the creation and development of empirical research into law and legal processes was recognised as one of the greatest academic achievements in the study of law over the last 50 years. However, there are now serious concerns about future capacity in this area which the Council is seeking to address.

Robin Matthews, Chair of the Council from 1971 to 1975 was able to look back on this as a time when the Council enjoyed a period relatively free of political pressures. The then Education Secretary Margaret Thatcher was, he thought, more receptive to the progression of scientific knowledge than many other

politicians. However, he was later to reflect, 'It was not too surprising that the years 1971-5...were the last of the SSRC's honeymoon period'.

'It was not too surprising that the years 1971-5...were the last of the SSRC's honeymoon period.'

1975 – 1985: SOCIOLOGY IN A COLD CLIMATE



I N 1975 THE COUNCIL INSTIGATED A NEW DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURE TO ENABLE IT TO ESTABLISH A 'MORE DELIBERATE AND EXPLICIT PROCEDURE FOR CHOOSING BETWEEN CATEGORIES OF EXPENDITURE'. IT ALSO SOUGHT TO IMPROVE METHODS OF GENERATING, REVIEWING AND EXECUTING RESEARCH.

One immediate outcome of this restructuring was the creation of the Research Initiatives Board (RIB) which sought to promote research in previously neglected areas. Most significantly the RIB sought to operate with maximum flexibility. It rejected the notion of prioritising particular areas of research. A panel of experts not only explored the plethora of ideas originating from the research community but were also charged with considering the merits of both the specific research proposal and the benefits of funding research in the area under review. These Panels also led seminars and conferences which acted as forerunners to new research proposals. They were innovative in their dissemination activities, making contact with policymakers and establishing new networks in the process. Eventually, the Research Grants Board and the RIB were merged to enable a new Research Board which had a more co-ordinated approach to funding research, whilst retaining the benefits of the RIB's new ways of working.

But this restructuring was not able to protect the Council from the wider crisis in the British economy and its effect on the distribution of public money. As budgets were cut the Council's lack of funds began to bite. Enormous resources – over half of the SSRC's total budget – were still tied up in postgraduate training. The implementation of new policies within the Council now placed a considerable emphasis on research, substantially tipping the balance away from training. So when budget cuts came in 1979, postgraduate training had to be cut by 25 per cent.

As the Annual Report of 1980/81 noted, these changes were taking place in 'a cold climate financially for the academic world. Already the effects of the cuts have been serious; some important centres of research have been closed or severely diminished in their activities, and those which have relied on Departmental support have turned to the SSRC, increasing pressure on an already hard-pressed budget'.

'...important centres of research have been closed or severely diminished in their activities...'

SSRC/ESRC Data Archive, University of Essex

Despite the duress of the late 70s/early 80s the Council remained busy and initiatives such as the **Data Archive**, established in 1967, were expanded. The initiative is now the world's largest and most heavily used social science archive and today holds nearly 5,000 social science computer datasets, both historical and contemporary, that are in some way related to the UK. Among those most referred to are the British Crime Survey, British Election Studies, the British Household Panel Study, the UK Census, the Family Expenditure Survey, the General Household Survey, the Labour Force Survey, National Child Development Study and the Youth Cohort Study of England and Wales. The archive was selected by the BBC as a source of data for the Domesday Project, which marked the 900th anniversary of the Domesday Book.

However, in 1979 the climate turned colder still with the election of the Government led by Margaret Thatcher. Despite her personal interest in scientific research, previous Conservative Governments had made clear their opposition to establishing any national funding body for the social sciences. This scepticism about the value of social science research manifested itself in 1981 when the then Secretary of State for Education and Science (but more importantly Mrs Thatcher's intellectual guru) Sir Keith Joseph, announced that he had asked Lord Rothschild to conduct an independent review into the scale and character of the work of the SSRC.

It fell to **Michael Posner**, Chair between 1979 and 1983, to steer a course through one of the Council's most turbulent times. A task he was eminently qualified for. Described today as 'the unsung hero of the SSRC/ESRC' and 'the man who saved the Council', Posner possessed charisma and vision.

'...the unsung hero of the SSRC/ESRC' and 'the man who saved the Council...'

He also possessed an absolute determination to succeed and the relentless energy to network with establishment figures. All of this would be crucial to ensure the survival of the Council through the Rothschild Inquiry.

A fellow of the Royal Society and a George Medal Winner, Lord Victor Rothschild commanded enormous respect. He was asked to advise the Secretary of State on:

- (i) which areas, if any, of the SSRC's work should be done at the expense of the ultimate customer rather than the Exchequer;
- (ii) which areas, rightly supported by the Exchequer, could be done at least as well and economically by other bodies, who would receive payment from the public purse either on a once-and-for-all or recurrent basis;
- (iii) which areas, if any, at present supported by the Exchequer through other bodies could be better covered by the SSRC.

In the view of **Andrew Shonfield**, who as Chair of the Council between 1969 and 1971 dealt with Sir Keith as a shadow minister, Keith Joseph was personally sympathetic to the social science approach. Nonetheless, the Rothschild Inquiry was seen by the Council as a potentially dangerous attack. This sense of threat was not eased by a furore in the press when correspondence between Joseph and Chancellor of the Exchequer Geoffrey Howe was leaked to the media, appearing to indicate a predilection for closing the Council before the Inquiry had begun.

Rothschild's Report was published in 1982 and did not recommend the outright abolition of the SSRC, as many had predicted. Instead, Rothschild concluded that 'It would be an act of intellectual vandalism to destroy the Council'. However, he did

'It would be an act of intellectual vandalism to destroy the Council.'

recommend a stronger focus on empirical research and on research considered of 'public concern'. Symbolically the Council was renamed the Economic and Social Research Council, losing the crucial word 'science'.

Although, as Michael Posner said, he would have been happy for it to have been renamed 'the White Fish Authority' as long as it was allowed to continue funding high-quality social science research. 'We did a deal,' says Posner reflecting on this time. 'The deal was that we suffer more financial deals but the Council survived. The deal was that we had won'.

Face Processing

One of the most exciting fields of ESRC's work established in the 1970s was the work on Face Processing and Human Communication. Research into the psychology of face recognition made a significant contribution to the way in which images are utilised by the police. Subsequently, research into how language shapes visual imagery has helped police help witnesses describe faces more effectively and enhance the possibilities for suspect identification. By the late 1980s ESRC supported work on identification parade compositions, witness' memories of physical characteristics, computer graphic techniques to improve mug shots, and facial composition techniques to enable the development of 3-d portraits established all of these applications for the police force. Subsequent investigations include the joint project between Glasgow and Stirling Universities (1997 to 1999) which explored how human performance can be improved in the identification of human faces from video and how automatic face recognition systems can be used with degraded data. Recently research by Professor Brian R Clifford, of the School of Psychology, University of East London has discovered that getting verbal descriptions of suspects from witnesses and victims of crime as soon as possible may result in subsequent poorer recognition.

1975 – 1985: SOCIOLOGY IN A COLD CLIMATE

But while the Council had survived it faced difficult times. Funding was slashed and spending had to be reduced by £6million between 1983 and 1986. This forced changes to be made to the Council's postgraduate awards; these now placed a greater emphasis on the Council, rather than university departments, selecting award-holders. Enormous concern was felt as the number of awards the Council was able to make diminished to a point where it was feared to threaten the future of scholarship in the social sciences. A problem compounded by the similar cuts then being made in university budgets.

The Transmitted Deprivation Programme

Within the embattled atmosphere of the early 1980s, the Council produced landmark research as part of the Transmitted Deprivation Programme. Yet it is one of those ESRC initiatives which came to make a major impact long after the research had concluded – in this case some twenty years later. Its origins lay in Sir Keith Joseph's controversial 1972 speech which identified a 'cycle of deprivation' through which parents 'who were themselves deprived in one or more ways in childhood, become the parents of another generation of deprived children'. As Secretary of State for Social Services Joseph set in motion a joint SSRC/DHSS Working Party on which recommended a programme of research into the transmission or recurrence of deprivation. On completion the findings were not taken up by the then Conservative Government but a quarter of a century later the Labour Government's interest in child poverty and the cycle of deprivation meant that the programme became relevant once again. The programme raised questions about the need to investigate discontinuities in the cycle of disadvantage – why childhood disadvantage in one area did not necessarily result in disadvantage in other respects. New Labour took up these challenges and in November 1997 officials in the Treasury, and other Government Departments, attended a series of seminars organised by the ESRC on the themes of the Programme. In March 1999 – eleven days after Tony Blair's pledge to end child poverty – the Treasury published what it described as shocking conclusions about the 'passage of inequality from generation to generation'. The central message of the Treasury's report was taken straight from the work of The Transmitted Deprivation Programme, noting that there was a cycle of inequality which had to be broken. The thinking behind the cycle of deprivation can also be seen in the language and orientation of Labour's Sure Start programmes.

In the financial year 1983/84 a re-organisation of administrative structure replaced the traditional subject committees with standing committees organised by theme: Economic Affairs, Education and Human Development, Environment and Planning, Government and Law, Industry and Employment, Research Resources and Methods, and Social Affairs.

This re-shuffle meant that for the first time the Council's research



committees were provided with budgets within which they could plan their work and make their own decisions; both upon the allocation of resources and upon priorities for research and training. This was subject only to the over-riding decisions of the Council itself.

For **Professor Sir Howard Newby**, who chaired the Council between 1988 and 1994, not all the results of the Joseph/Rothschild interregnum were negative. 'Sir Keith Joseph was probably the individual who had the most significant influence on the overall direction of the Council,' he now reflects. 'As a result of the Rothschild Report, the 1980s saw a major shift towards a more empirical orientation which had to be seen as a positive development'. Newby has since pointed to a trend in the 1970s in which British sociology 'moved away from its strengths (and)...indulged in an orgy of theorising, which became ever more speculative and distanced from the real world'. In retrospect, recalls Newby now, the measures arising from the Rothschild Report were probably necessary to sharpen up the Council and, in the long term, make the social sciences more robust.

'Sir Keith Joseph was probably the individual who had the most significant influence on the overall direction of the Council...'

1985 -1995: SETTING A COURSE FOR THE FUTURE



IN THE MID-1980s THE DIFFICULT JOB OF KEEPING THE NEWLY CONSTITUTED ESRC UP AND RUNNING AFTER THE ROTHSCHILD REPORT FELL TO **DOUGLAS HAGUE**, AS THE NEWLY APPOINTED CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL. HAGUE'S COMMITMENT TO THE ESRC AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITS NEW CORPORATE PLAN WAS FELT TO BE INSTRUMENTAL TO THE COUNCIL'S REGENERATION. FURTHERMORE A DECISION TO IMPLEMENT AN OVERALL THEME OF 'CHANGE IN CONTEMPORARY BRITAIN: CONTEXT, ADJUSTMENT AND MANAGEMENT' SUCCEEDED IN LENDING GREATER CLARITY AND SHAPE TO THE COUNCIL'S OUTPUT.

Yet 1984/85 was still described in the ESRC's Annual Report as a challenging year in which limited resources led to the shelving of many worthy projects. The report noted that when committees had announced programmes and invited applications the response was 'embarrassingly large and of very high quality. This certainly demonstrates that there is in British universities and polytechnics a substantial body of good researchers'.

A joint venture between the Treasury, the ESRC and the Bank of England – the Macro-Economic Consortium – had resulted in the publication of models of the British economy which was 'precisely the sort of co-ordinating and comparative role that Council is placed to fill'. This work was to be the precursor to the founding of the enormously influential **Centre for Economic Performance** and **Institute for Fiscal Studies** in the early 1990s.

Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics

Research at the Centre for Economic Performance has laid much of the intellectual underpinnings of the economic and social thinking behind New Labour; characterised by the mantra 'welfare to work'. And none more so than the work of Richard (now Lord) Layard, whose research has demonstrated the importance of getting the unemployed back into the labour market as soon as possible. Established in 1990, this inter-disciplinary centre has become 'one of the leading economic research groups in Europe'. It focuses on key themes impacting on the UK's economic performance, with programmes looking at Labour Markets, Happiness, Education and Skills, Globalisation, Technology and Growth, and Productivity and Innovation. In 2003 it was the first economic research centre to be awarded the Queens Anniversary Prize for Higher Education; according official recognition of the impact of the centre on Government policy in the UK and elsewhere. The Centre for Economic Performance still has a close involvement in informing Government policy and its staff sit, or have sat, on the Monetary Policy Committee and the Chancellor's Council of Economic Advisors. It also regularly advises the Department of Education, Department for Transport, HM Treasury and Cabinet Office, Home Office, Women and Equality Unit among others.

Institute for Fiscal Studies (Centre for the Micro-economic Analysis of Public Policy)

Since 1991 the ESRC has funded research at the Institute for Fiscal Studies. Its funding supports the Centre for the Micro-economic Analysis of Public Policy (CMAPP) which the Centre describes as 'the mainstay of core research at IFS, allowing us to respond quickly, with high-quality analysis, to the changing policy debate'. IFS reports have been extremely influential, informing both the current Chancellor of the Exchequer and his predecessor. And their reputation is enhanced by the universal respect for the independence maintained by the Institute. In 2003 the IFS advised the investigation into child poverty by the Select Committee on Work and Pensions, and CMAPP has played a vital role in research into the impact of 'new tax credits'. In 2004, the ESRC provided funding for a new Centre at the IFS – the Centre for Early Years and Education Research. This is designed to provide a focal point for IFS work on policies targeted on the improvement of education and life chances for children.

Greater emphasis was placed on the role of the Research Units, now re-established as Designated Research Centres (DRCs) – one of these roles being to develop closer integration with their associated universities. In 1984 the Industrial Relations Research Unit based at Warwick became a DRC, and the Research Unit on Ethnic Relations was transferred to the same university as the **Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations** (where they still are today) – both Centres having made major impacts in their particular areas.

Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations, University of Warwick

Today the Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations (CRER) at the University of Warwick is one of the UK's leading academic units for research into race, migration and ethnic relations, with a notable emphasis on teaching and dissemination. Originally founded by the SSRC at the University of Bristol in 1970, by the following decade it had gained an international reputation, frequently consulted by overseas governments and organisations concerned with ethnic relations.

One such consultation was the report 'West Indian Businesses in Britain' on the state of knowledge of ethnic businesses in the UK, produced for the Select Committee on Home Affairs. Following the Brixton riots of 1981, further reports were prepared on inner city racial conflict. The CRER is now based at the University of Warwick, having left Bristol for Aston before arriving at Warwick under the direction of John Rex. It is in the vanguard of research on minority ethnic groups in the UK and Western Europe exploring themes such as racial discrimination, political participation, cultural identity, and ethnic mobilisation and is home to one of the UK's best resource centres on race and ethnic relations.

By 1987, there was a sense that the Council had weathered the worst of the storm and was now firmly set on course for the next decade. Douglas Hague's own observation looking back on the early 80s was that 'British social scientists were living in a time warp, divorced from the huge technological and industrial changes that were shaping Thatcher's new world'. A sentiment that might have played well with the Government of the day but had it been voiced then would have been unlikely to have endeared him to the social science research community.

'By 1987, there was a sense that the Council had weathered the worst of the storm and was now firmly set on course for the next decade.'

Hague handed over the baton to Professor (subsequently Sir) **Howard Newby** who was immediately faced with a new challenge. Along with the Agricultural and Food Research Council, the ESRC were required to vacate their central London offices for a new headquarters in Swindon. Every move is a disruption but in this case two thirds of the Council's staff opted not to move prompting an enormous change in staff. Newby recalls that the 1988 move was traumatic, though it also provided an opportunity to reshape the Council, both physically and symbolically. Certainly by 1989 there was a need to resettle the organisation and restate and clarify its overall strategy. But Newby emerged as an intellectual leader who bolstered staff morale.

'Newby recalls that the 1988 move was traumatic, though it also provided an opportunity to reshape the Council, both physically and symbolically.'

1985 -1995: SETTING A COURSE FOR THE FUTURE

In 1989, in a bid to improve radically the quality and success of social science **postgraduate training**, the ESRC produced new guidelines. These stressed the importance of instigating more formalised training procedures for social science graduates, a move which succeeded in upgrading the quality of British PhD education and came to represent one of the ESRC's finest achievements. Chris Caswill, who served the Council for 33 years – between 1971 and 2004 – ending up as Director of Research, believes that these guidelines represent one of the ESRC's finest achievements.

Postgraduate Training

From the very beginning the SSRC/ESRC was committed to increasing the quantity and quality of research workers and teachers in academic institutions. But the vagaries of funding had seen the numbers of awards rise and fall dramatically over the years. By the financial year 1981/82 the Council was able to offer only half the number of postgraduate awards (880) it had been offering three years previously, a situation where the Council considered that the actual future of the social sciences was under threat. This was however the low point and by 1992/93 the Annual Report noted that the number of studentships granted had increased by 15 per cent over the previous year and the number of PhDs completed in the stipulated four years rose for the fifth year running to 69 per cent. The introduction of Postgraduate Training Guidelines in the early 1990s was a major success; Lord Plant, now at King's College London, commented, 'It's professionalised the whole process... It forced universities to pay greater attention to the level of supervision of PhDs and the breadth of training. As a result the standards have improved'. Postgraduate training remains a key area for the Council, and one of its principal aims is to build the next generation of social scientists by supporting high-quality research training.

They resulted in a training programme that is now, arguably, the model for social science research around the world involving: emphasising the importance of PhDs being completed within four years; funding part-time doctoral students; and introducing the 1+3 programme (a one year Masters Course leading directly to a three-year PhD programme). In the wake of the ESRC guidelines universities were forced to re-think how they dealt with research students, many of whom, it was felt, were being neglected.

ESRC on an international stage

Though the ESRC is now established as a major actor on the European research policy stage, it was not always so. In the 1980s, in the face of hostility to the social sciences in parts of Brussels, the Council paid little attention to Europe. But in the 1990s it was decided that the benefits of participation in European Research and Technical Development Programmes (RTD 'Framework') outweighed the costs. Newby initiated a meeting in Oslo with fellow European social science leaders. He persuaded a significant number of them to sign a letter to the European Commission calling for social sciences to be fully included in the next (4th) Framework programme, due in 1994. Working alongside Government, but again led by Newby, the topics that were to shape the Targeted Socio-Economic Research (TSER) programme were settled and ESRC was invited to take one of the two UK seats on the programme committee. Significant progress had been made but unfortunately European Commission staff, unskilled in social science and perhaps unfriendly to it, produced a 'work programme' for the first TSER call that ESRC not only viewed as unimpressive, but also felt unable to support. Chris Caswill, then Director of Research, joined with German and Danish representatives in rejecting the Commission's text – probably the only time this has happened. The preparation of a new text was led by ESRC, for what became a successful first call. ESRC had made its mark in European research policy and has remained an active and respected player ever since.

Under Newby's leadership the Council underwent a restructuring process which involved the creation of new boards covering Research Programmes and Research Centres.

'My aim was to improve research techniques so that they were more appropriate for the 1990s rather than the 1960s, raise the overall level of training; make greater use of information technology; and in particular, make more use of quantitative techniques... I wanted a more empirical approach based on stronger methodology,' said Newby. This approach was warmly received and, through the course of Newby's stewardship the Council attracted new funding with a budget growth of some 25 per cent at a time when the other research councils were experiencing cutbacks or stagnation.

In terms of research output during this period one of the most prescient moves was making environmental change a key issue for the Council and putting the ESRC at the centre for environmental research. The impact of ESRC research into the social effects of environmental change led to the Government rethinking its approach to the whole subject. Initiatives included the **Global Environmental Change Programme (GEC)** which was to argue that environmental change was not just about the natural world but was also a major social issue; and the **Centre for Social and Economic Research on the Global Environment (CSERGE)**, which had a major impact on decision-makers at local, national and EU level.

**Centre for Social and Economic Research on the Global Environment (CSERGE),
University of East Anglia**

Established in 1991, CSERGE has developed a reputation as one of the leading interdisciplinary research and training centres in its field of global and environmental decision-making issues. The Centre has played a key role in researching sustainable development in an enlarging EU. And in 2001 its researchers devised a methodology for the Environment Agency to enable it to evaluate a scheme for managing the marine environment. In 2003 CSERGE's work on water policy helped develop and validate the position of the British Government when the EU Bathing Water Directive was revised which proved to be highly influential in the EU Commission's final decision-making process with regard to clean beaches throughout Europe.

The Centre for Economic Research on the Global Environment was funded by the ESRC between October 1991 and September 2001. From October 2001 the ESRC funded the Environmental Decision-making Programme at CSERGE.

Global Environmental Change Programme (GEC), University of Sussex

The work of the GEC Programme created capacity in the UK for environmental social sciences and attracted international recognition for the strength of the UK's research in this area. GEC research was fed into official inquiries, Parliamentary committees and the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution. The programme's researchers have fed into Government and provided policy advice on environmental economics, integrated transport policy, agriculture and the business response to climate change. Research on the environmental costs of carbon dioxide emissions made a strong impact on awareness in the UK. GEC researchers have conducted work directly for UK Government Departments and international agencies and at an international level the programme ensured that the UK contribution to global debates on the environment was as strong in economics and the social sciences as it was the natural sciences.

The Global Environmental Change Research Programme was funded by the ESRC between April 1991 and June 2000.

Developments were also made in this period in recognition of the international scope of the social sciences. Today the ESRC's role in developing social science in the UK involves a strong commitment to work across national boundaries, taking advantage of the intellectual opportunities to be gained from co-operative and comparative research as well as maintaining and developing the high standing of UK researchers within international social science research networks.

Centre for the Study of African Economies, University of Oxford

Launched in 1992, the Centre for the Study of African Economies is now established as one of the largest concentrations of academic economists and social scientists working on Africa outside the continent itself. The CSAE applies modern research methods to Africa's economic problems and collaborates closely with such organisations as the African Economic Research Consortium, the Economic Commission for Africa, and the African Development Bank. The centre's most important contribution has been its work in extending the understanding of the determinants of poverty. It has done this by developing new theoretical approaches to development issues and establishing an innovative programme of panel data collection and analysis.

The centre has a strong research reputation and is increasingly involved in policy debates assisting governments both in Africa and in other developing countries. The centre's work contributes to World Bank policy on poverty, and is also used in policymaking by UNIDO, the EU and DfID. The CSAE has recently played a significant role in informing the work of the Africa Commission, currently part of the Government's agenda for 2005 as the UK chairs the G8.

The Centre for the Study of African Economies was funded by the ESRC between October 1991 and September 2001.



1995-2005: A DECADE OF RE-INSPIRATION



THE 1990s HAVE BEEN CHARACTERISED BY DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE GLYN DAVIES AS A 'DECADE OF RE-INSPIRATION WITH MUCH GREATER FOCUS AND ATTENTION BEING PAID TO THE DETAILS OF RESEARCH COMMISSIONING AND DELIVERY'. AS A RESULT, THE CLOUDS THAT HUNG OVER THE ESRC IN THE WAKE OF THE ROTHSCHILD REPORT HAVE LONG SINCE EVAPORATED.

This last decade has seen the launch, or consolidation, of many successful and influential research initiatives whose output continues to have a wide impact on policy formation today. Among these are the **Children 5-16 Growing into the 21st Century Programme** and the **Centre for the Analysis of Social Exclusion**.

'The clouds that hung over the ESRC in the wake of the Rothschild Report have long since evaporated.'

Children 5-16 Growing into the 21st Century, University of Hull

One mark of a successful programme is the speed with which its findings are taken up at policy level. The ESRC programme Children 5-16 Growing into the 21st century published its findings in 2001 and they were immediately taken up in the *Excellence in Schools* Green Paper and the Department for Education's guidelines for childcare partnerships. Their research into aspects of child poverty was used to create better indicators of social change and it has formed part of the Government's *Places, Streets and Movements* initiative. Findings were also utilised by the Mayor of London in his strategy aimed at helping children in the capital.

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority have used work from the programme on the values of children to help develop the *National Curriculum on Personal and Social Education*; and research has been presented to the Home Secretary and a number of leading children's organisations lobbying against the Crime and Disorder Bill's section on child curfews.

The Children 5-16 Programme was funded by the ESRC between October 1996 and June 2001.

Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion (CASE), London School of Economics

The ESRC Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion was the direct precursor of the Labour Government's own Social Exclusion Unit. It has had a profound influence on a range of the Labour Government's policies and practices. For example, the Centre provided the evidence that led to the Government giving greater priority to ending childhood poverty and tackling inequalities in life chances. Its research also contributed to a shift in policy towards low-income neighbourhoods and the development of regeneration; leading to the implementation of strategies that have created more sustainable communities. The centre promoted pioneering housing practices, such as decentralised management and better systems for allocating social housing, which have directly affected Government housing policy and practice. Overall CASE has helped set a modern political agenda that has heralded the introduction of the whole range of 'new deal' policies.

The Government's 1993 White Paper on Science and Technology, *Realising Our Potential*, recommended a full-time Chief Executive position and a part-time Chair be created. With an emphasis on wealth creation, and the need to establish a closer and deeper partnership between the academic community and the users of their research, **Dr Bruce Smith** was appointed as the first part-time Chair of the Council in 1994. The appointment of Smith, an industrialist with a background in physics, indicated the Government's continuing concern to ensure that the ESRC stayed focused on user engagement. In his view, the greatest challenge of his tenure was responding to the Government's wish for councils to consider not just the academic quality but also the relevance of their research. The ESRC's response was to focus activities around Thematic Priorities; a conceptual framework within which spending decisions would be made.

Seven themes, determined by a process of consultation with both academics and users, were identified as priorities:

- economic performance and development
- environment and human behaviour
- governance and citizenship
- knowledge, communication and learning
- lifecourse, lifestyles and health
- social stability and exclusion
- work and organisations.

Consultation over the priorities was, Smith recalls, a 'hearts and minds operation' within the academic community which the Council's first Chief Executive, **Professor Ron Amman**, is said to have masterminded

superbly. Amman's role was not only to persuade the academic community to accept the notion of Thematic Priorities but also to garner their views on what the Themes should be. Smith believes that a key achievement in this process was consulting all the Council's stakeholders – Government, industrialists and the research community- and gaining their agreement that this was a valid method of deciding research priorities. A real benefit of the approach was that the priorities enabled fresh input to be made into old territory and helped the Council to keep a keen eye on emerging topics.

'...priorities enabled fresh input to be made into old territory and helped the Council to keep a keen eye on emerging topics.'

The Violence Programme, Royal Holloway, University of London

The Violence Programme was established to expand and enhance understanding of the various forms of violence to the person. The aim was to increase knowledge about the causes of violence and how they might be prevented, reduced or eliminated. Programme findings influenced continuing debates in Northern Ireland, domestic policy in the Department of Health and policy on racist offenders in the Probation Department. Work undertaken by Programme Director Professor Betsy Stanko also impacted on policy and practice within the Metropolitan Police, for example being used to decide which domestic violence 999 calls require the fastest response. The programme's work on bouncers and the 'night time economy' informed the development of a national register of bouncers and legislation regarding the training of door staff. Other projects on domestic violence have been used to establish new policies on screening for domestic violence in obstetric settings and the appointment of specialist midwives to help those involved with domestic violence.

The Violence Programme was funded by the ESRC between October 1997 and September 2002.



Health Variations Programme, University of Lancaster

The highly influential Health Variations Programme, under the directorship of Hilary Graham at the University of Lancaster, ran from 1996 -2001. Its aim was to 'illuminate the pathways' through which socio-economic inequality exerts its influence on health. Twenty six projects, based in research units and university departments around the UK, covered subjects such as childhood, workplace influence and ethnic and gender inequalities but crucially each research area was considered to be high on the public health policy and scientific agendas. With a determination to enhance policy direction the programme gave a strong focus to building relationships with research users – even initiating a User Fellowship Scheme to enable senior practitioners in health and welfare to work with project teams.

The Health Variations Programme made a significant impact, most notably in the concept of targeting deprived groups in public health campaigns on issues such as diet, drinking and smoking – this in turn built on the work of the ESRC's earlier programme *The Nations Diet*.

The Health Variations Programme was funded by the ESRC between October 1996 and September 2001.

The increasing impact of the Council's work, and the regard in which it was held, became apparent under the direction of **Professor Gordon Marshall**, Chief Executive from 2000 to 2002. Described as a team player who led quietly but with focus, it is no surprise that Marshall today insists that any success during his time was collective and attributable to all staff at Polaris House. However, under his leadership the Council achieved the highest proportionate increase in its income and earned the highest increase of all the research councils in two successive spending reviews. This saw the budget rise from under £70million to over £110million; a growth of nearly one third of total income.

The increased funding was soon to be justified. In 2000, the Government was able to offer an auction of additional spectrum capacity to the mobile phone suppliers to develop new generation 3G services. Initially, the Treasury was said to have favoured a conventional approach to the bids, predicted to raise £2.5billion. By applying advances in risk evaluation and game theory, developed at the ESRC-funded **Centre for Economic Learning and Social Evolution**, the Treasury's auction of the new 3G licences eventually raised £22.5billion – £20billion more than forecast. As current ESRC Chief Executive **Professor Ian Diamond** points out, a fascinating aspect of this was that the research was developed out of 'blue skies' work that some might have dismissed as too theoretical and insufficiently connected to the real world. And as Gordon Marshall reflected, the financial outcome probably paid back the entire public investment in the Council since it was first established.

In 2003, under Chief Executive **Professor Ian Diamond**, the Council launched a new initiative to improve further the quality and quantity of work being produced by those at the very top of the social science tree. The Professorial Fellowship scheme is designed to provide up to five years' funding for leading social scientists that have already made a major impact in the social sciences and who, through the scheme, are enabled to continue so doing.

Another significant area of development in recent years has been of the quality of the Council's contacts with Government. To this end formalised 'Concordats' have been put in place with 11 central Government Departments as well as with the devolved governments. The Department for Trade and Industry, for example, has said that its Concordat (established in 1993) is of 'real practical value' to policymakers, and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) observes 'the ESRC has become more outward looking and DWP officials have found a much greater willingness to engage with Government concerns than previously.'

'...the ESRC has become more outward looking and DWP officials have found a much greater willingness to engage with Government concerns than previously.'

Transport Studies Unit, University College London

Between 1994-2004 the Transport Studies Unit (TSU) was an ESRC designated research centre. Despite the relatively small size of the project the TSU produced work that was considered highly influential, particularly in contributing towards evidence-based policy assessment and development. Its research output was roughly double the per capita level of peer institutes in UK universities.

The research programme was first based at the University of Oxford, transferring to University College London in early 1996. Its initial phase was primarily concerned with the growth of traffic and the development of dynamic analytical methodologies. Later, two additional themes – appraisal tools and changes in behaviour – were selected for further investigation.

Work of particular significance includes their research on traffic reduction; the full findings of which the Department for Transport published in support of the Government's 2004 Transport White Paper. Other outputs include Professor Phil Goodwin's influential *What Future for Rail in the Ten Year Plan for Transport?* report published in advance of the Government's forthcoming review of the Ten Year Plan for transport. The *Review of Price and Income Elasticities in the Demand for Road Traffic* report to the Department for Transport has informed much of the thinking behind the Transport Secretary's recent pronouncements about the necessity of introducing a UK-wide system of road-pricing. This in turn has led to members of the unit making numerous interventions into the national debate through the media.

1995-2005: A DECADE OF RE-INSPIRATION

On her appointment as Chair in 2001, **Frances Cairncross** stressed her commitment to making the work of the Council even more accessible to non-specialist audiences. As a former Senior Editor on the *Economist* she is ideally placed to seek the help of journalist intermediaries for publicising ESRC research.

Strategic appointments to ESRC boards and committees have ensured that business and industry are fully engaged in the ESRC's work and a broad range of networking activities; the ESRC Annual Debates, a wide array of industry-focused seminars, lectures and receptions regularly attract high-level audiences. Social Science Week, fast becoming an established national occasion, has played an important role in raising the profile of the Council and its work to audiences which might otherwise have been unaware of the range and quality of UK social sciences research.

Research into Women and the Family

In terms of its impact on public policy over the last decade, one of the Council's most important roles has been the support of researchers whose work looks at changes in the role of women and family structures. Professor Heather Joshi, at the Institute of Education in London, is an economic demographer specialising in women's choices and the labour market. She has transformed our understanding of life opportunities for women and children in Britain.

Kathleen Kiernan, Co-Director of the ESRC Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion at LSE, has specialised in longitudinal research using data from the British Birth Cohort Studies including the 1946, 1958, 1970 and the Millennium Cohort Study. More recently her work has included comparative data from a range of European countries and the USA. The ESRC's Care, Values and Future of Welfare Research Group (CAVA) was established at the University of Leeds in 1999. At the heart of CAVA's research programme has been an investigation into the values that people attach to their parenting and partnering activities.



But in seeking to widen its network of contacts outside the academic community the Council could not be accused of neglecting what many would see as its home base – the social science research community. In 2004 the Council undertook a series of consultations with universities and other relevant organisations in order to gain feedback on its current standing and to solicit views as to its future direction.

The Political Studies Association was just one respondent, commending the Council for ‘...the attention it has given under its current leadership to developing relations with professional associations’. The Development Studies Association, observing an earlier emphasis of the ESRC on the ‘UK and near-Europe’ praised the Council’s shift to a ‘more internationalist perspective...and efforts by the ESRC to establish a clearer and more systematic link with DfID (Department for International Development)’.

There was a further refinement of the Council’s research strategy in 2004. A new strategic framework was constructed of four areas of activity:

Capacity	Building sufficient capacity for the UK to undertake top class social science. For example investing in training, methodology and quality datasets
Research	Funding cutting edge and excellent research that focuses on pushing back the frontiers of science and on areas of major national importance
Engagement	Promoting social science and engaging in dialogue with ESRC stakeholders to channel research into policy and practice and increase its ‘relevance’ to potential users
Performance	Working as efficiently and effectively as possible to deliver world class social science research

The new framework provides a more concrete emphasis on the development of future research capacity through the investment in, and retention of, world class researchers. The new strategy is also designed to stimulate cross-disciplinary collaborations and promote greater user engagement with projects at the commissioning, research and dissemination stages.

Over forty years it is invidious to separate out one particular achievement, or impact, over others. Yet the change in how the social sciences are perceived – from Lord Hailsham’s ‘happy hunting ground for the bogus and the meretricious’ to its standing today, shaping policy at the heart of Government and informing debates on both a national and international level – is a change in which the ESRC has played a central role. In the words of Deputy Chief Executive Glyn Davies, ‘social science research is no longer seen as the *Cinderella* of the research community but is now viewed as an equal, working in genuine alliance with the other sciences’.

Innovative Health Technologies Programme, University of York

Issues relating to a wide range of innovative health technologies (IHTs) are currently being widely covered in the media. Developments in genetics, imaging technologies, cloning and stem cell research continue to challenge people's traditional concepts of the NHS and healthcare in general. These new developments are clearly going to have an impact upon all our lives and they have, therefore, given rise to many new and diverse questions for social science.

The Innovative Health Technologies Programme seeks to address some of these questions. Funded jointly by the Economic and Social Research Council and the Medical Research Council, the programme examines the role that these and other new technologies now play – and will increasingly play in future – in redefining the way we manage and experience health and medicine.

The overall aim of the programme is to advance our understanding of the interaction between innovative health technologies and wider changes in society. The central question of the programme is therefore: How will people and society be affected by, and in turn affect, innovative health technologies?

The Innovative Health Technologies Programme received funding from the ESRC between September 1999 and January 2006.

Centre for Organisation and Innovation, University of Sheffield

The Centre for Organisation and Innovation (COI) was established in 1996 and is based at the Institute of Work Psychology at the University of Sheffield. The centre researches, from a multi-disciplinary perspective, how employee innovation, performance, well-being and work organisation impact on the introduction of new technologies, techniques and management practices.

Projects benefiting from the involvement of the centre thus far include: the *Department of Trade and Industry Review 2003*, a joint initiative by HM Treasury and the DTI; *The UK Productivity Challenge: CBI-TUC Submission to the Productivity Initiative* – which – at the request of the Treasury, the CBI and the TUC – published a summary of COI findings into innovation and company performance; and *E-Business Prospects*, where COI research on the implications of e-business for policy, practice and research was used by the Department of Trade and Industry.

The centre's research has also been used producing reports and recommendations for a number of individual organisations. One in-house analysis on knowledge management (for a blue-chip firm), will create estimated savings of between £165,000 and £350,000. In another company COI researchers identified performance gains worth £125,000 a year following a study on operator empowerment.

The Centre for Organisation and Innovation received funding from the ESRC between October 1996 and September 2006.

THE WAY AHEAD



AS WE SAW AT THE START OF THIS BOOK, IT IS ONLY 60 YEARS SINCE THERE WERE SEVERE DOUBTS ABOUT WHETHER THERE WAS ENOUGH ‘SOCIOLOGY’ TO JUSTIFY A RESEARCH COUNCIL. BUT THE DOUBTERS HAVE LONG BEEN SILENCED. IN THE 21ST CENTURY, THE ESRC HAS A VITAL PLACE IN BRITISH PUBLIC LIFE. IT IS HARD TO THINK OF A CHALLENGE OR PROBLEM FOR THE UK TO WHICH ESRC RESEARCH IS NOT PART OF THE SOLUTION.

While the ESRC sometimes seems a complex organisation, it has had two main functions over the past 40 years. One is to produce the social scientists that an advanced society needs as academics, managers, policymakers and in other roles. The other is to support researchers in these fields. The ways in which ESRC does this have become more sophisticated over time, but even today’s elaborate range of centres, programmes, networks and responsive-mode awards is unlikely to mark the end of the story.

Having funded research into globalisation, European integration and devolution in the UK, the ESRC is more aware than most of the changing world landscape in which it operates. In particular, it has had a leading role in increasing the contribution of the social sciences to the European Commission’s Framework programmes for research.

The UK will probably have a national research agency for the social sciences in 2045. But it may well regard other research agencies around the world as partner organisations in designing and funding research far more than it does today. And it is likely that such partnerships will involve participants far beyond Europe and North America as globalisation increases the UK’s need for knowledge of other societies. The ESRC’s *2005 Strategic Plan* emphasises a number of key research challenges and the global context within which the Council now operates. New knowledge here is bound to be a participative process in which ESRC takes a leading role.

THE WAY AHEAD

Another theme of the ESRC's first 40 years has been the steady growth in the amount of social science data available to practitioners in the UK and around the world. The ESRC has led the way in such innovation on a national scale particularly through supporting the world renowned birth cohorts and the British Household Panel Study, and was one of the founders of the European Social Survey, the first attempt to create a base of consistent data about social conditions across a complete continent. Likewise, ESRC's commitment to developing the social scientists of the future has been extended in recent years to encompass better support for researchers at all stages of their career.

This emphasis on supporting excellent social scientists will continue, and will be accompanied by further attempts to ensure that social scientists have access to the training and infrastructure they need to face complex future challenges. The ESRC has set up a National Centre for Research Methods to develop better social science methods and ensure that British social scientists have access to them. We recognise that the UK is not the only country making advances in social science methodology, and will ensure that scientists here have access to the world's best research methods and data.

Another feature of the past 40 years has been the ESRC's support of centres and programmes designed to address priority areas where a co-ordinated approach is required. This approach will continue but in a more flexible and creative manner. And the ESRC will also be extending its position of responsive-mode funding for good ideas brought to it by social scientists at the leading edge of research, and approved by expert peer review.

The ESRC's commitment to training, data collection and curation, and methodological development benefit UK social science at large, not just the small part of it supported directly by the Council. ESRC-trained researchers occupy important positions throughout British society and around the world. In the same way, data held by ESRC is used by academics we do not support financially as well as those we do, and by colleagues in industry, Government, the media, the non-profit sector and elsewhere. We also expect the improved social science methods whose development we support to have a universe of users far beyond the ESRC community.

This approach reflects ESRC's more general responsibility for UK social science. While it funds only a part of the UK's social science research, ESRC has to consider the health of the entire endeavour. This means that it concentrates resources in emerging and neglected areas as well as supporting current success. This is a pattern which will continue in coming years.

'This means that it concentrates resources in emerging and neglected areas as well as supporting current success.'

It is also certain that changes in the world around us will bring new challenges to ESRC and alter the shape of our research portfolio. In the recent past, scientific advance in areas such as information technology, genetics and nanotechnology have become the focus of ESRC initiatives. These are all areas in which public debate has been under-informed. Our ambition for the coming decades must be to reach the stage at which the social, business and policy ramifications of innovation are considered before they turn into problems and controversies. In addition, we are investing heavily in research on issues such as the rural economy and land use, energy policy and climate change, all areas in which engineering, the natural sciences and the social sciences need to work alongside each other to produce novel insights. The ESRC is an enthusiastic participant in emerging, integrated approaches to Government science spending and there are bound to be many more cross-council research programmes.

Perhaps more importantly, we can be confident that social change in the UK and the rest of the world will change the concerns of social science. We already know a little about the issues that ageing populations raise for the developed world.

'Perhaps more importantly, we can be confident that social change in the UK and the rest of the world will change the concerns of social science.'

But changing population structures in poorer countries may have even more significant effects. On the political and economic stage, much has been written about the emergence of China and India as potential superpowers. But more remains unclear about the future role of these countries and of Europe, the US, and Japan in the world we are now entering. More research is needed here, and on topics such as changes to the Middle East which may result from the end of the oil era.

THE WAY AHEAD

However, not all the challenges to social science are on such a large scale. New data and technology allow communities to be researched in ever more detail and this trend is likely to continue. The result could be improved understanding of topics such as change in inner city areas which are a magnet for immigration, or at the other extreme, of rural areas which are becoming depopulated.

During its first 40 years, the ESRC has steadily increased the effort it puts into making sure its research is relevant to wider concerns, and reaches audiences which might make use of it. Our ambitious web site, launched in 2005 in its latest form, provides speedy access to our research and our researchers in an accessible manner, and allows users to obtain information from other carefully-chosen producers of high-quality social science. In coming decades, new information technology may transform how social science is performed and communicated in ways we have yet to envisage.

An ambition for future years is for the ESRC's research to be appreciated by a yet wider range of users in such fields as policy, business and the voluntary sector. During 2005, the immense public concern about developing world debt showed that the issues we research are not of concern only to elites, but have resonance amongst the general public.

One way in which our research might broaden its reach is for more of it to be undertaken jointly with partner bodies, including both research organisations with missions comparable to our own and others beyond this circle. Like other funders of

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research, the ESRC never has enough cash to support all the worthwhile proposals put to it. It can be predicted with complete certainty that this will still be true in 40 more years. Bringing in new partners would add to the amount of research that we are able to support, and we already have a small Venture Fund to back timely joint initiatives with partner organisations.

But the value of ESRC's research to the wider world depends crucially upon our being independent of Government and of other parties and interest groups. As this book has shown, it has not always been simple to maintain this impartial role. But the taxpayers who support ESRC, the researchers it supports, and the users of this research, all need to know that our funding decisions are taken on intellectual merit and that our researchers' findings are reported regardless of where they might lead.

The ESRC is only one participant in the lively world of UK social science. But as this book has shown, its contribution is a vital one. Without it, key results would never emerge and there would be far fewer of the researchers the UK needs to provide insights into the UK as it exists today and as it might develop.

In 2005, the ESRC's budget is about one per cent of one per cent of UK GDP. This is perhaps best regarded as the money the UK spends thinking about itself and its place in the world, whether in terms of economics, social change, or the effects of new technology. The growing rate of change in modern society means that the need for such thought is bound to grow, and with it the need for the ESRC itself.

Professor Ian Diamond, Chief Executive



MEASURING THE IMPACT: ESRC CENTRES, PROGRAMMES AND ADVANCES



ALTHOUGH RESPONSIBLE FOR THOUSANDS OF ADVANCES IN RESEARCH AND TRAINING, IT IS ARGUABLY IN ITS INITIATION AND SUPPORT OF MAJOR CENTRES, PROGRAMMES AND ADVANCES IN RESEARCH METHODOLOGY WHERE THE SSRC/ESRC HAS MADE THE GREATEST IMPACT. EVERY PIECE OF WORK IS IMPORTANT AND ADDS TO OUR KNOWLEDGE. THE FOLLOWING REPRESENT A FURTHER SELECTION OF THE SSRC/ESRC'S CONTRIBUTION.

The Whitehall Programme, University of Newcastle

The Whitehall Programme ran from 1994 – 1998 and focused upon developing the understanding of change in British Government. In agreement with the ESRC and the Cabinet Office it was decided that the programme should provide what its Director, Professor Rod Rhodes, called 'policy relevant advice' but to 'combine basic research on the evolution of British Government with policy relevant research on present-day practice in Britain and Europe'. There was a great emphasis on linking practice and academia. The initiative produced a number of influential findings; the insights by political scientists which exemplified how policy development and public service delivery in the UK was fragmented have greatly influenced the thinking of the current Labour Government. Consequently a number of steps have been taken to address this fragmentation – one example being the establishment of the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit which has taken on an overall policy co-ordination role.

UK Longitudinal Studies Centre (ULSC), University of Essex

The UK Longitudinal Studies Centre is the national resource centre for promoting longitudinal research and for the designing, managing and supporting longitudinal surveys. It was established by the ESRC as an independent centre in 1999. It promotes the use of the rich portfolio of longitudinal datasets that exist in the UK and supports users of this data by providing advice, information and training. One of the Centre's key activities is running the British Household Panel Study which samples roughly 5,500 households and 10,000 individuals each year and is now one of the main methods of measuring social change in the UK. The ULSC is also responsible for the National Child Development Study and the 1970's British Cohort Study.

**Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research,
UEA/UMIST/University of Southampton**

The Tyndall Centre is a national UK centre for trans-disciplinary research on climate change based at the University of East Anglia and with regional offices at Manchester and Southampton. The Tyndall Centre is a network of more than 200 UK researchers evaluating the social, political and economic dimensions of policy options for slowing the rate of, and minimising the risks caused by, climate change. Its research goes beyond the question, Is it happening? to ask What can we do about it? The Centre was launched officially in 2000 and it is the result of a unique collaboration between nine UK research institutions and three of the UK Research Councils – NERC, EPSRC and the ESRC. Its research ranges from the domestic to the global and from the present through to the future.

The Census of Population Programme

The Census of Population Programme offers computer-readable access for the 1971, 1981, 1991 and 2001 UK censuses. It has facilitated wide academic access to UK census datasets with an estimated 16,000 using the data 60,000 times in a year. As the foundation for a huge range of social science research into themes such as migration and ethnicity, the census offers an unrivalled blend of detail and population coverage. The programme has had a number of major impacts on the shape of the UK Census and was responsible for the establishment of the new dataset 'Samples of Anonymised Records'.

Blue Skies Research and Longitudinal Studies

Whilst much of the Council's work has been very practical in application, its 'blue skies' research has also had many tangible outcomes. ESRC-funded work in the field of innovation, challenging the belief that innovation can best be characterised as a linear process rather than non-linear has been acknowledged as groundbreaking. Perhaps the major impact of 'blue skies' research has been in the development of the UK's holdings of longitudinal studies, much of which have been funded and maintained by the ESRC. Arising out of holdings such as the National Child Development Study (NCDS), the British Cohort Study (BCS), the British Household Panel Study (BHPS) and the British Social Attitudes (BSA) Survey have come major public policy impacts described by former Chief Executive Ron Amman as: '...some of the most sophisticated resources available to policymakers anywhere in the world – the social science equivalents of a space telescope or a deep sea exploration vessel'.

KEY FIGURES: CHAIRS AND CHIEF EXECUTIVES OF SSRC/ESRC

CHRONOLOGY

CHAIRS:

Michael Young	1965 - 69
Andrew Shonfield	1969 - 71
Robin Matthews	1971 - 75
Derek Robinson	1975 - 78
Michael Posner	1979 - 83
Douglas Hague	1983 - 87
Howard Newby	1988 - 1994
Bruce Smith	1994 - 2001 part-time*
Frances Cairncross	2001 - present

CHIEF EXECUTIVES

Howard Newby	1994 (Dual role as Chair and Chief Executive)
Ron Amman	1994 - 1999
Gordon Marshall	2000 - 2002
Ian Diamond	2003 - present

* In 1994, following the White Paper on Science and Technology Research Councils were required to have a part time chairman and full time chief executive.

BIOGRAPHIES

COUNCIL CHAIRS

MICHAEL YOUNG 1965-1967

As the first Chair of the SSRC, Michael Young was an appointment of some controversy. But founding Council member Claus Moser, writing in 2002, wrote that his appointment ‘undoubtedly...brought the social sciences in this country to a new level of distinction, acceptance and effective public support’. The author Alexandra Nichol, observed that Young was ‘an active chairman and his strong influence on the work of the Council is apparent from the papers he wrote and his minutes’, she also noted that one of the first members of the SSRC, Lord James of Rusholme, ‘went out of his way to praise Young, and also the staff of the Council, in getting the whole thing (the SSRC) started’. A tribute in 1996 pointed to his association with dynamic issues for over half-a-century: ‘He is still active and continues his lifetime commitment to research leading to innovation in social and other policies’. Michael Young accepted a life peerage in 1978 and died in 2002.

ANDREW SHONFIELD 1969-1971

Replacing Michael Young, Andrew Shonfield proved particularly effective at reading the need for changes in funding and controlling research and for improved relationships between policymakers and researchers. On his appointment there had been some misgivings stemming from his background as a journalist and commentator rather than as an academic; his output was more often found in the more widely accessible publications rather than the pages of peer-reviewed journals. Some quarters expected him to be less concerned with pioneering research and more pre-occupied with solving social issues. In the short period in which he served, Shonfield more than adequately proved his worth.

He was particularly successful in steering the SSRC through the difficulties of the then political climate and, in an obituary following his death in 1981, Jeremy Mitchell, Secretary to the Council at the time, observed that his insight was worth just as much posthumously: ‘His analysis of the problem and its resolution would make valuable reading for any newly appointed member of the SSRC at any time’.

KEY FIGURES: CHAIRS AND CHIEF EXECUTIVES OF SSRC/ESRC

ROBIN MATTHEWS 1971-1975

Robin Matthews arrived shortly after the first Rothschild Report into Government research and development which, although not explicitly aimed at the Council, was still a cause of some concern. Nonetheless Matthews observed that 'political pressures on the SSRC were less felt in my time than they had been earlier'. He went on to recall that he found Margaret Thatcher (then Education Secretary) more receptive to the progression of scientific knowledge than many other politicians. Under these conditions 'the SSRC was thus enabled to settle down as more of an ordinary member of the Research Council system – neither threatened by politics nor benefiting from special ministerial favour'. Looking back on his time Matthews reflected that, while he came from a more strictly academic background than his predecessors 'nonetheless the Council moved further in an activist direction under my chairmanship than it had done before'.

DEREK ROBINSON 1975-1978

At the time of Derek Robinson's appointment he was a fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, and Senior Research Officer at the Oxford Institute of Economics and Statistics. At the beginning of his appointment he described himself as 'an applied economist, with emphasis on the applied'. Writing for the SSRC Newsletter shortly before taking up the position he noted that: 'The obvious point is that things will change. The necessity, therefore, is to combine the inevitably greater degree of public accountability with protection of the standards and independence without which academic research ceases to exist as an independent and valuable contribution to democratic society'.

MICHAEL POSNER 1979-1983

Michael Posner, as the Chair responsible for steering the SSRC through the Rothschild Inquiry, came to be remembered as the man who saved the Council. As a business economist, Posner was canny enough to change the name of the SSRC to the Economic and Social Research Council – the more prestigious 'economic' bolstering the possibly less desirable 'social' – and was responsible for abolishing the regime of the disciplinary committees. The Annual Report 1983/84 observed that Posner's Chairmanship was one undertaken throughout a period of change and challenge unprecedented in its history, paying tribute to the 'measure of dedication and skill that Mr Posner contributed to Council's deliberations. In particular, it is appropriate to record his imaginative support for the international relations of Council and his strong lead in encouraging the maintenance and strengthening of Council's international activities, particularly in relation to Europe'.

DOUGLAS HAGUE 1983-1987

Douglas Hague became Chairman of the Council at a difficult time in 1983, just one year after the Rothschild Report. Despite suffering a major heart attack in 1985, he served as chairman until 1987. Of his many achievements during this period he was utterly committed to the development of the Corporate Plan, prompting the theme *Change in Contemporary Britain*. Crucially he was able to carry through a key transformation in the structure of the Committees which rendered the Corporate Plan possible. On his retirement the ESRC Newsletter carried this handsome tribute from Professor Griffiths Edwards: 'To turn the organisation around from battered demoralisation to its present vigour, confidence and sense of direction, demanded exceptional vision and leadership. That is what Douglas modestly but unstintingly provided. It is only in retrospect that one begins to comprehend the extent of that courageous and very personal achievement'.

HOWARD NEWBY 1988-1994

Professor Sir Howard Newby entered chairmanship at a time when the future of UK social science was uncertain and introduced a policy of modernisation which he now believes to be key to the current healthy state of the Council. One initiative which was to have wide reaching implications was the green paper on training, which grew from a substantial amount of interaction with universities. This informed ESRC Postgraduate Training Guidelines which provided a basis for the subsequent Government White Paper on training. The Guidelines, perhaps more importantly, also made a major impact in the improvement in four-year submission rates for social science PhDs which rose by 20 per cent to 74 per cent by the time Newby retired in 1994. Under Newby's Chairmanship researchers were put under pressure to provide more rigorous proposals which not only led to improvements in the quality and number of research applications. Today Newby is remembered for his charismatic vision for social science, his belief that high quality work could be combined with policy relevance, and his optimistic approach to the move to Swindon – which he saw as an opportunity rather than a threat. In his time at the Council Newby emerged as an intellectual leader who bolstered staff morale.

KEY FIGURES: CHAIRS AND CHIEF EXECUTIVES OF SSRC/ESRC

BRUCE SMITH 1994-2001

Bruce Smith became the first part-time Chair of the Council, following the White Paper on Science and Technology's recommendation that leadership of all the Research Councils should be split between a part-time Chair and a full-time Chief Executive. Smith's background raised a few eyebrows among the academic community – he was a physicist and a businessman – but in terms of the White Paper's injunction that social science research should also look at its usefulness to society, his appointment was apposite. Working closely with his Chief Executive Ron Amman, Smith succeeded in gaining acceptance of a change of orientation encapsulated by the adoption of the Thematic Priorities as the template for the work of the Council, rather than the traditional academic disciplines. By the time he left he believed that confidence in the work of the Council among key stakeholders – particularly Government – was high and that the Council's trajectory was positive. Bruce Smith now Chairs the Council of the Smith Institute for Industrial Mathematics and System Engineering, a collaboration between industry and academia in applied mathematics and computing.

FRANCES CAIRNCROSS 2001-present day

Frances Cairncross is a former senior editor for the *Economist* and is Rector of Exeter College, Oxford. On taking up her appointment she stressed her commitment to making the work of the Council even more accessible to non-specialist audiences and has been an enthusiastic advocate for seeking the help of journalist intermediaries to publicise ESRC research. She announced in the Annual Report 2002/03 that the ESRC would not only help address the 'unnerving experience' of talking to the press and broadcast media through the series of training workshops on media skills undertaken earlier that year, but to appoint '...a number of senior journalists as media fellows to our centres and programmes in the hope of stimulating a two-way flow of knowledge and communication skills'. Frances Cairncross is the author of three books; *The Death of Distance*; *Costing the Earth: The Challenges for Government*; and *The Opportunities for Business and Green, Inc.*

CHIEF EXECUTIVES

RON AMMAN 1994-1999

Ron Amman was the first to hold the revised office of Chief Executive as distinct from Howard Newby's dual role of Chair and Chief Executive. His main achievement in office was re-orientating the Council's work towards seven cross-cutting thematic priorities which created a research context in which user-relevance came to be seen as a prime focus. He came to the ESRC from the University of Birmingham where he held a Chair in the Politics of Eastern Europe.

Ron Amman left the ESRC for a senior post at the Cabinet Office and is now Emeritus Professor at Birmingham. His successor as Chief Executive, Gordon Marshall, has praised Amman's skilful balancing of national concerns without ever compromising the other top priorities in our charter.

GORDON MARSHALL 2000-2002

Like his predecessor Ron Amman, Gordon Marshall was a distinguished social scientist before being appointed Chief Executive. He made important contributions to interdisciplinary and cross-national comparative work in the social sciences. His main fields of research include social exclusion, equality of opportunity, distributive justice and the culture of economic enterprise, and he has written widely on these topics. He played an instrumental role in the recent Government Review of Social Classifications, both as a consultant and as a member of the steering group to the study, which was run jointly by the ESRC and the Office for National Statistics and which resulted in major changes to official classifications. He was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 2000 and awarded a CBE in 2003 for his services to economic and social science. Marshall became Vice-Chancellor of the University of Reading in January 2003.

KEY FIGURES: CHAIRS AND CHIEF EXECUTIVES OF SSRC/ESRC

IAN DIAMOND 2003-present day

Ian Diamond was appointed Chief Executive of the ESRC in 2003, initially for four years. He is also, in 2005, the Chair of the Executive Group of Research Councils UK. Before joining the ESRC, he spent twenty years at the University of Southampton, rising to the post of Deputy Vice-Chancellor. A distinguished social statistician, Diamond's work has crossed many disciplinary boundaries, most notably in the study of population but also in health, both in the developed and less developed world. His research career enabled him to work with many Government Departments, but he was persuaded to leave his academic work behind when taking on 'the best job in UK social science'. He recently told *The Guardian* that he sees it as his duty to make ESRC funding more accessible: 'What we are trying to do...is to reduce the barriers to great social science taking place', he says.

Ian Diamond says that his key goal at the ESRC is to strengthen further the Council's relations with stakeholders – Government, business and academia – and at the same time to establish the ESRC at the forefront of producing world class social science. In particular he is enthusiastic about the Council's planned collaborations with counterparts in the USA, Australia, Finland, the Netherlands and Germany, which will facilitate UK researchers' abilities to collaborate internationally.

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Further Information**History of the ESRC**

The Social Sciences Arrive by Alexandra Nichol, published by the ESRC

ESRC Society Today

Current ESRC research can be found at www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk

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Fiscal Studies Women and the Family Ethnic Relations Transmitted Deprivation
Economic Learning and Social Evolution Economic Performance
Transmitted Deprivation Ethnic Relations Whitehall Economic Performance
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