



Cohesive Societies Policy Review

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January 2019

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Executive Summary

This review of social cohesion policy was commissioned by the British Academy in 2018 as part of the Cohesive Societies programme. Its aim is to provide an overview of current policy on social cohesion at different levels of government: UK, devolved nations and (English) local government.

The review team analysed 41 documents in total, identifying major themes that help sketch out the major continuities and differences in approaches to social cohesion across the UK. This is complemented by historical context where appropriate. The review also compares social cohesion policy in the UK as a whole to approaches taken in Australia and Canada to identify whether anything can be learnt from varying experiences of social cohesion policy in other contexts.

At the centre of the review are three implicit questions: *what* is social cohesion, *who* is social cohesion for (and *who* is the subject of social cohesion policy), and *how* should social cohesion be pursued?

The review finds that: social cohesion in policy suffers from imprecise definition and a lack of measurement strategies; social cohesion looks different in different parts of the UK; the aims and means of social cohesion are not always clear, including the impact that socio-economic inequality has on cohesion, and; policy largely (but not exclusively) has a problematic focus on ethnic difference and security, primarily in urban areas. There are also tensions between the complexity of the UK's spatial, temporal and political situations and the need for simplicity in policy. This may mean that formal avenues are not the best way to actually achieve cohesion. There are also clear opportunities to learn from the approaches taken by Australia and Canada in developing social cohesion.

The review relates its findings to the five key themes of the Cohesive Societies programme: cultural memory and tradition, social economy, meaning and mechanisms of social responsibility, identity and belonging, and care for the future. It provides a discussion on the ways in which these themes are relevant, and in some cases directly relatable, to social cohesion policy in the UK. The analysis of policy documents, alongside the consideration of the British Academy's five themes on cohesive societies, enables the review to provide a number of suggestions for future research.

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Introduction

Social cohesion, though variously defined and implemented, has been a policy concern in the UK for some time. As the parallel academic literature review demonstrates, social cohesion is a complex and multi-faceted concept (Baylis, Beider and Hardy, 2019). This poses specific issues for policymakers who are forced to define, present and employ it in more straightforward terms than is probably desired.

This policy review was commissioned by the British Academy as part of its Cohesive Societies programme, which is concerned with understanding the nature of division and togetherness in the face of contemporary challenges such as Brexit, the political intensification of (and contrasts between) local, national and supranational interests, and a realignment of the priorities of global leaders. The programme centres on five themes:

- a. Cultural memory and tradition
- b. Social economy
- c. Meaning and mechanisms of social responsibility
- d. Identity and belonging
- e. Care for the future

This review is tasked with surveying the policy landscape of social cohesion in the UK. It does this by reviewing policy literature from the UK government, the devolved governments of Scotland and Wales, and English local government, as well as providing some broad comparison between the UK, Canada and Australia.

The major findings of the review are:

There remain significant problems in defining and measuring social cohesion.

How social cohesion is understood and defined differs across the UK, and these definitions can reflect different political, ideological, social and economic priorities.

The relationship between social cohesion and (largely national) security is problematic.

It is not clear whether one leads to the other, or indeed whether one does or should operate in service to the other.

There is a disconnect between the acknowledged importance of socio-economic inequality and measures to tackle it within the context of social cohesion.

Inequality is identified throughout the policy literature as a problem that needs tackling, especially at the devolved and local levels. Yet there is a clear tension between this and the priority placed on (national) security¹ in which a major concern is, essentially, race relations. As such, it is hard to see how commitments to tackling social exclusion and inequality in the context of social cohesion would materialise in practice.

Spatial, temporal and power-related questions concerning social cohesion remain to be answered adequately.

¹ Here, 'national security' is used to refer to the defence of the UK. However, it could also feasibly relate to the security of the constituent nations, ie England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Social cohesion is inherently about neighbourhoods, communities and social groupings, yet although social cohesion is discussed with respect to different contexts, the implications of space, time, and power relations are not made clear. There are many questions which arise from these considerations: Is it (un)desirable for approaches to social cohesion to differ too much geographically? Is this about local organisations responding to local problems, or does it reflect differences in access to funding and support, for example? If it is undesirable, is it unavoidable? And if it is unavoidable in its current configuration, can it be solved or mitigated? Furthermore, is it feasible or desirable to focus on developing a set of common or British values? In designing social cohesion strategies and implementing processes, who has the power? Do – or should – local communities have autonomy, or is there a hierarchy of needs associated with social cohesion (eg security and adherence to common values over economic integration)?

Some of these issues are easier to deal with in policy than others. The final finding can be addressed, potentially, by finding new ways to bring in communities who are directly affected by policies into the policy formulation and implementation process itself, so that these communities have genuine agency in shaping policy relevant to them. Yet, this does not necessarily help to ease the tension between social cohesion and national security, which will, ultimately, require a review of security priorities and practices when it comes to community well-being (which is clearly beyond the scope of this review). A different area that could see benefits quickly is in designing a clear, simple definition of social cohesion that can be applied uniformly across the country, to provide continuity and common understanding of the major problems social cohesion policy is supposed to tackle. This means ensuring that definitions in the first instance clearly state what social cohesion *is*, *who* it is for and *how* it may be implemented, while ensuring there is scope – especially on the last point – to account for local needs. This would also help situate the significance and role of socio-economic inequality within the broad concern of social cohesion.

Such a process of definition could take the form of a national charter of social cohesion, for example. This could be overseen by the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Social Integration. Alternatively, a new APPG on social cohesion could be set up. Although it could be argued that this would encroach on the work of the APPG on Social Integration, subsuming work on social cohesion under this group runs the risk of upholding one of the critiques laid out in this report. This critique is that, currently, social cohesion is too amorphous and remains too interchangeable with other concepts and frameworks, leading to confusion over the character and definitions of social cohesion, and its uses and needs.

In order to capture the broad landscape of social cohesion policy and practice across the UK, the review takes into account three separate levels of government: UK, devolved nations (Wales and Scotland) and local (ie local authorities, including some with a metro Mayor). This is done on the assumption that the nature and dynamics of social cohesion, alongside the challenges to social cohesion, will take on different characteristics and significance depending on the level of government, the responsibilities and competences held at that level, the relationship between levels of government, and the material conditions in different parts of the UK (eg employment levels, economic strength, infrastructural issues etc.). In addition, the review provides some modest comparison of the UK with two other countries: Australia and Canada.

The review is split into four main sections. Section one provides a brief overview of solidarity in the UK since World War Two, and the impact of division on social cohesion. Section two provides the substantive review of national, devolved and local level documents, making comparisons where appropriate. Section three compares the UK landscape to documents from Australia and Canada. Section four considers the British Academy's five themes associated with the Cohesive Societies programme, in light of the findings of the review. Section five concludes the review and provides a discussion on opportunities for future research. Following this is an appendix of useful sources and methodological information.

1.0 A history of solidarity and division in the UK

No society is truly and wholly cohesive. Rather, there are pockets and periods of cohesion and disunity. Social cohesion in reality is seldom uniform across societies and countries. This is not least because political dynamics and constellations influence what cohesion *is*, through establishing dominant definitions and processes. These definitions and processes exclude as well as include, regardless of whether this is intentional or not.

To an extent, the history of social cohesion in the UK can be traced through an identification of broad in-groups and out-groups in various historical periods. Though this is necessarily a generalised approach, it does provide the ability to contrast such generalisations with various nuances. It also problematises the concept of social cohesion at the outset, inviting us to question exactly what we mean when we talk about cohesion and who it relates to, and to be more specific about the desired outcomes. The remainder of this section is split into five different periods, the boundaries of which overlap with one another, but nonetheless map out some of the central examples of solidarity and division in recent British history.

1.1 1939-1960: The Second World War and the beginning of the post-war consensus

From a British perspective, the Second World War is primarily framed as a war against fascism, which of course it was (though not in the same way as the Spanish Civil War, for example). However, this framing emphasises the battle of ideas and of peoples, which has important implications for social cohesion. The ‘Blitz Spirit’, which has often been invoked in political discourse since, was an example of intense social cohesion and solidarity with one another in the face of a common enemy. In that sense, it was driven by a need to come together in a country riven by well-defined and (especially at that time) policed class, race and gender differences. These differences, due to the necessity of war, were diluted so the UK was able to operate a war effort as efficiently as possible. It offered positivity in difficult circumstances, but it was nevertheless a form of social cohesion driven by response to crisis, a desire to survive and in opposition to a well-defined enemy. It could only last as long as the crisis to which it was responding.

Divisions between groups in British society were lessened in this period, because a common enemy existed. This does not mean there were no divisions; these remained, especially along class, race and gender lines. However, the realities of war necessitated a Durkheimian functionalist notion of social cohesion², in which different groups and members of society played increasingly specific roles. This kind of social cohesion was not about breaking down barriers but rather performing a specific task. It was imperative that one knew one’s place and that social order was maintained.

In this mould a narrative could be built that a form of collective action can help a nation survive and thrive against the odds. This provided the basis for the post-war Labour government of 1945-50, and its ambitious social programme. The achievements of this government are well publicised, the two most prominent being a mass-scale rebuilding project and the creation of the

² Please see section 1.2 of the parallel literature review (Baylis, Beider and Hardy 2019).

NHS. These achievements took place in a context of continuing austerity and rationing. The Labour government was able to take advantage of more than just social solidarity, but a sense of comradeship, to promote the inherently universalist notions of council housing, a nationalised health service, the expansion of education.

This romanticised account should be contextualised by the wealth and resources provided to the UK by the British Empire. The UK was able to call on subjects of the Crown across the globe to come to the UK to help rebuild the country. The most famous example, thanks to contemporary events (mentioned later), is the Windrush Generation; people from the Caribbean who arrived in the UK on the ship *Empire Windrush* in 1948 in order to work in the UK on the invitation of the British government. Though invited to the UK, members of the Windrush Generation faced discrimination and racism, along with new arrivals from closer to the UK, such as the Irish. These groups fit less easily into an understanding of national social cohesion at the time. In terms of social order, the picture is relatively clear, but it was also the specificity of these groups' arrivals and purpose that posed questions for social cohesion. Their contribution to the UK was not enough; if they wanted to stay in the UK, they must also assimilate. As the cultural theorist Stuart Hall noted on his experience at Oxford University, arriving from Jamaica as part of the Windrush Generation, 'I'm not English and I never will be. The life I have lived [assuming as a Jamaican he was also British] is one of partial displacement. I came to England as a means of escape, and it was a failure' (Jeffries, 2014). Those who rebuilt the infrastructure of the UK were met with signs proclaiming 'No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs'.

Encapsulating this tension were the Notting Hill riots of 1958, in which White youths entered the Notting Hill area (then an impoverished neighbourhood populated mainly by African-Caribbean migrants) and attacked the black residents, damaging property, to which retaliations followed. Non-British (and especially non-White) groups remained firmly as out-groups in British society.

1.2 1945-1975: The 'golden age' of the welfare state

The conventional narrative suggests that the post-war consensus made possible the 'golden age' of the welfare state. Between 1945 and 1979 the British welfare state experienced stability and broad-based support, backed by economic growth and high employment (Taylor-Gooby, 2002; Wincott, 2013). Social cohesion and solidarity in this era may have been the product of a commitment to some form of universalist social citizenship (at least in principle), in which all citizens should be afforded a 'modicum of economic security' and the ability to enjoy the 'life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in society' (Marshall, 1950). Again, the narrative is glossier than the reality. The NHS for example, often seen as the jewel in the crown of the British welfare state, was met with fierce resistance by many of the doctors of the time. The solution was to 'stuff their mouths with gold' as remarked by Aneurin Bevan, the Health Minister credited with the creation of the Health Service. This demonstrates that solidarity only goes so far, and sectional interests remain. This continues to be a central problem when considering social cohesion today.

Racial tensions remained, which led to the passing of the Race Relations Act 1965. The Act made it a civil offence to discriminate (broadly) on the grounds of race, colour or national origins. The Act was updated in 1968 to include employment and housing, and later repealed by an act of the same name in 1976, that led to the creation of the Commission for Racial Equality.

Another important event, especially when considering issues of social cohesion in hindsight, was the UK joining the European Economic Community in 1973, which reconfigured trade between the UK and its European neighbours. The UK held a referendum on membership of the EEC in 1975, in which 67 per cent of those who voted did so in favour of remaining in the EEC. While there was a clear majority, not all parties supported membership. The Liberals and Conservatives were for, whilst the Labour Party was ambivalent at best, if not against. Those against, especially on the left, were not convinced that the common market could deliver all that was promised. This could be interrogated in the context of the ‘golden age’, as well as the notion that Britain, backed by a Commonwealth, could remain outside the trading bloc. Nevertheless, unlike in the 2016 referendum, there were fewer explicit tensions between voters on the issue.

1.3 1979-1997: Thatcher(ism) and the rise of the New Right

The years leading up to the 1979 election were tumultuous. The ‘golden age’ of the welfare state was threatened by high inflation, which hit 25 per cent in 1975. A perceived break down in the ‘social contract’ between the trade unions and the Callaghan Labour government led to waves of strikes in both the private and public sector. This, alongside other political events, led to a vote of no confidence being called in the Callaghan government. The Government lost the vote, leading to a general election, which Margaret Thatcher’s Conservative Party won.

Thatcher’s election marks a critical juncture in which a supposed solidarity is broken down and transformed into an intense individualism, encapsulated by the oft (mis)quoted line ‘there is no such thing as society’. Examples include the ‘Right to Buy’ scheme, in which council tenants were able to purchase their properties at heavily discounted prices. However, this led to a shortage of social housing stock, increasing competition for council housing whilst also increasing the influence of property developers. Large-scale deregulation as well as the beginning of the financialisation of the economy combined with a global recession in the early 1980s. Measures to combat the recession led to the steep decline of many industries. Unemployment remained high throughout the 1980s. An exemplar of the polarisation of the time was the miners’ strike of 1984-5, in response to the closure of multiple collieries. The strikes were met with force in many cases, the most famous being the ‘Battle of Orgreave’.

1981 saw riots break out across the UK, most notably in Toxteth (Liverpool), Brixton (London), and Handsworth (Birmingham). These areas were deprived neighbourhoods with large ethnic minority populations. In Brixton tensions between residents – who were suffering particularly badly at the hands of the recession – and the police were increasing. The situation was similar in Toxteth, another deprived area. In both cases (perceived) ill treatment of residents by the police was the main trigger for unrest.

Other developments included the publication of the Swann Report in 1985, which highlighted the differential attainment of people from African-Caribbean, Asian and White backgrounds (Modood and May, 2001). It acknowledged the influence and impact of racism in education and attainment. Significantly for considerations of social cohesion, the Report supported the development of ‘multicultural education’, in which ‘all ethnic groups, both minority and majority, [can participate] fully in shaping society... whilst also allowing, and where necessary assisting the ethnic minority communities in maintaining their distinct ethnic identities within a

framework of commonly accepted values' (DES, 1985: 5, cited in Modood and May, 2001: 307).

1.4 1997-2010: New Labour, continuity and change

The 'Wilderness Years' was a period of change for the Labour Party. Reformers such as Neil Kinnock looked to change the party's image, disassociating the party-at-large from its more 'militant' wing. New Labour was the result of modernisation, the influence of the Third Way and of key figures such as Tony Blair. Elected to government in 1997, New Labour was positioned as an antidote to both Tory excess and an 'old Labour' in hock to the unions. It was a compromise between the New Right and traditional social democracy; individual entrepreneurship was encouraged but checks against the worst effects of individual competition were implemented.

New Labour also represented a new way of governing for some; what Nikolas Rose termed as the 'death of the social' and a turn to governing via community (Rose, 1996). It is perhaps little surprise, then, that it was New Labour that developed Community Cohesion into a discrete policy area, after so-called 'race riots' in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley in 2001. The overarching theme, reinforced by the Cantle and Denham reports (the first two reports to look into the riots), was the idea that 'communities' (taken to mean ethnic groups) were living parallel lives and in many cases had 'self-segregated', which led to mistrust, fear and eventually anger. This narrative has been heavily contested in the academic literature (see the parallel literature review, Baylis, Beider and Hardy, 2019:14-16; Donoghue 2018).

Other events emphasised social cohesion as race relations. The murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993 and the subsequent inadequate police investigation led to a government inquiry into the case. This resulted in the 1998 MacPherson report, which described the Metropolitan Police as institutionally racist, as well as highlighting that recommendations of reports into the Brixton and Toxteth riots had been ignored. Another key event in the development of community cohesion policy, although for different reasons, was the July 7th bombings in London in 2005. This was the first major terrorist incident carried out by Islamic extremists in the UK (though of course the UK had experienced multiple bombings during The Troubles), which led to a major reorientation in UK anti-terror and anti-extremism policy. The result was increased emphasis on the CONTEST strategy, initiated in 2003, and the Prevent arm of the strategy in particular. The strategy has been criticised widely for focusing primarily on Muslim groups. It is also a prominent example of the securitisation of social/community cohesion in the UK (discussed in detail in this review). 2006 saw the creation of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), established by the Equality Act 2006.

Unusually for the Labour Party, this period of power coincided with a sustained period of economic growth that, along with utilising private capital finance, helped fund relatively expansive social programmes. The financial bubble burst in 2007/08, triggered by the US subprime mortgage crisis. The chain reaction of events plunged the world into the Great Recession. Though the UK did not face a sovereign debt crisis on the scale of countries like Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain, the close links to US markets in the UK's highly financialised system threatened to collapse the economy. As such, Labour's focus moved from social programmes to an historically unprecedented bail-out package for the banks. The conversation shifted from what kind of economy the UK should have to technocratic debates on the depth and extent of austerity that was needed to keep financial markets afloat. Individuals' and

households' hardship were compounded by the previous decade's reliance on widely available (and, as it turned out, largely unaffordable) credit, alongside a move to asset-based welfare (in which assets such as investments, property etc. become the main source of economic support for households, rather than relying on state support).

1.5 2010-2018: Interlinked crises and critical junctures

The Coalition (2010-2015) and Conservative (2015-) governments implemented a significant austerity programme, which has had geographically uneven impacts, increased inequality and severely restricted funding for public and social services (Gray and Barford, 2018). This is clearly to the detriment of social cohesion in the UK. The money cut from the provision of services, alongside the inability for many people to find sufficient employment in terms of tenure, job quality and adequate remuneration, resulted in a marked increase in inequality between classes, geographical areas and ethnic and racial groups. In the UK feelings of resentment and division have been rising – analyses using data from the British Social Attitudes Survey describe the UK as being divided, especially over the EU referendum and issues surrounding immigration. The narrow vote to leave, according to the survey, was driven by older more authoritarian and socially conservative voters concerned about immigration (NatCen, 2017). The *Independent* newspaper reported on a 100 per cent rise in hate crimes across the country in the wake of the EU referendum (Sharman and Jones, 2017). This points to deeper divisions in the UK than just disagreement over membership of an economic and political bloc. The tensions on show are fundamentally about what the social structure of the UK should look like; questions about cultural pluralism, citizenship and identity in the UK were 'exacerbated by the prominence of immigration in the referendum campaign, the democratic deficit in the EU and the longer-term erosion of the welfare state' (Ashcroft and Bevir, 2016: 355). This is fundamentally a question of social cohesion. It is also something that policy alone cannot address entirely; rather, policy and socio-political practice on social cohesion needs to open routes to a more fundamental transformation of the social, economic and political fabric of the UK.

Compounding the mistrust and fear of migration felt by some was the refugee crisis of 2015. Many governments responded to the forced migration of thousands of people from countries like Syria with increasingly aggressive rhetoric. Theresa May, Home Secretary at the time, was accused of creating a hostile environment for all kinds of migrants, criminalising irregular migrants in particular whilst ignoring the benefits migration can bring (Travis, 2016). The UK was in fact accused of systematically excluding refugees and asylum seekers who arrived in the country (Bakker et al., 2016). During the EU referendum campaign, Jo Cox MP was shot and stabbed by a far-right sympathiser who accused her of being a traitor to her race (Cobain et al., 2016). Lee Rigby, a soldier, was killed by two men in retaliation against the killings of Muslims by the British armed forces; one of the attackers was known to MI5 and had been deported while in Kenya for suspected extremist activity (Dodd and Halliday, 2013). These events put the media spotlight on underlying social tensions in the UK, prompting public and political debate and scrutiny of the Government's policies.

Another compounding factor has been the rise of populism across the UK, Europe and more globally. In particular, right wing populist parties such as UKIP enjoyed a level of influence disproportionate to their size and support base and can make a claim to have 'won' the EU referendum vote for Leave. On the other side of the political spectrum, the election of Jeremy Corbyn as the

leader of the Labour Party is seen by some as ushering in a period of left-wing populism. The essential character of populist politics is an appeal to a 'pure' people in opposition to a corrupt elite, be they Eurocrats, political elites, financial elites, etc. In that sense, populism is inherently about division, but it could feasibly also improve the cohesiveness of smaller groups.

Social cohesion, then, is an uneven process with uneven effects. It is not possible to understand the threats to, or attempts to develop, social cohesion if it is conceived as applying to a homogeneous group. As with all policy, a detailed engagement with individual components and appreciation of different groups in society is needed. This is the focus of the following sections.

2.0 Social cohesion in the UK

2.1 Understanding the overall ‘vision’ for social cohesion from the Westminster perspective

Even when not explicitly discussing what social or community cohesion should look like, the priorities highlighted in the UK documents on cohesion and related issues (discussed below) allow us to sketch out the landscape of social cohesion. This section outlines the major themes apparent in the UK level documents, to which subsequent sections will refer.

2.1.1 Emphasis on British values

The notion of British values uniting British society was a common theme across the UK level documents. British values were consistently defined as: democracy, rule of law (DCLG, 2012), individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs (Casey, 2016; HM Government, 2015a; 2018). Other values such as equality and freedom of speech (Casey 2016; DCLG, 2012), freedom of expression, fairness, inclusiveness (Casey, 2016), equality of opportunity and treatment and the rights of men and women to live free from persecution (DCLG, 2012) were also sometimes included.

Adherence to these values was frequently referenced as forming the foundations of social cohesion and integration from the Government’s perspective. However, the *Casey Review* (2016) said that the public had mixed views on the promotion of British values, including criticisms about whether it would allow for diverse identities in society, or threaten other important values such as freedom of speech and expression (HM Government, 2015a: 67). Another document stated that ‘those who reject the idea of multiple identities and reject shared commitments – for example, far-right and Islamist extremists – threaten integration’ (DCLG, 2012: 20). Extremists were only defined as far-right or Islamist (HM Government, 2015a; 2018), whereas hate crime was identified as predominately anti-Muslim or anti-Semitic (DCLG, 2012). In the more recent documents British values were linked to the execution of the Prevent strategy (Casey, 2016; HM Government, 2015a).

The role of publicly-funded schools in promoting British values was emphasised a number of times (Casey, 2016; HM Government, 2015a; 2018), as was the importance of these schools recruiting students from diverse backgrounds representing communities in the local area (HM Government, 2018). Faith schools in particular were identified as needing to prepare their students ‘for life in modern Britain’ (ibid.) and to work against social exclusivity (Berkeley, 2008; HM Government, 2018). The *Casey Review* also identified the need for stronger safeguards for children who were home-schooled to prevent social isolation.

There was a tension through many of the documents between the notion of shared commitments to British values and allowing for multi-cultural, multi-faith diversity in society (Bell et al., 2017; DCLG, 2012). The suggestion was that a cohesive society would ‘look beyond’ the differences between different cultural groups, with a sense of shared purpose, belonging (ibid.) and living ‘shared lives’ (Bell et al., 2017). Some of the documents placed emphasis on a shared history in the UK which included contributions from people of all backgrounds as a foundation for future collaboration (DCLG, 2012).

This ran parallel with an apparent tension between allowing people from various religious or cultural backgrounds to practice their traditions and making sure that they adhered to British laws and values:

The government will always protect people's legitimate rights... but we will not shy away from challenging cultures and practices that are harmful to individuals or restrict their rights and hold them back from making the most of the opportunities of living in modern Britain. (HM Government, 2018: 56)

2.1.2 The influence of immigration

Recent immigration was often framed as a local issue which must be managed in order to promote community cohesion (Bell et al., 2017). There was an acknowledgement that the Government should make clear and comprehensive changes to immigration policy, addressing economic, civic, cultural and social aspects that would support community cohesion (ibid.). There has been a review of immigration requirements such as English language requirements for families of working migrants, changes to the Life in the UK test, and the provision of information for potential migrants about their rights, obligations and expectations for integration in the UK (Casey, 2016; HM Government, 2018). The *Casey Review* even suggested that an integration oath be required from long-term migrants upon arrival in the UK (Casey, 2016: 17). Immigration policy changes would then lead to greater public confidence and social integration at the local level (Bell et al., 2017). There was also a suggestion that the Government should introduce a statutory duty for local government authorities to promote the integration of immigrants (ibid.).

Bell and colleagues (2017) suggested that migrants should be viewed as 'Britons-in-waiting', and as such should have access to faster, more direct routes for attaining British citizenship. They framed citizenship as a process of belonging, encouraging a reciprocal relationship with their local community and the Government. They also stated that politicians have a responsibility to not fuel negative rhetoric about immigration following the EU referendum, and to promote the values of integration beyond preventing extremism, and the development of welcoming local communities in the UK. They suggested that there should be a regionally-led management system for immigration which incorporates social integration, and the formation of a 'social compact' between various sections of British society in order to foster and maintain trust, reciprocity and solidarity.

2.1.3 Local focus for integration

Much of the action behind promoting social integration was discussed at the local or community level and frequently linked to the concept of community resilience and the prevention of extremism and terrorism (DCLG, 2012; HM Government, 2015a; Cabinet Office, 2016d). The creation of 'strong' and 'integrated' communities was put forward as a goal for local government authorities in this security context (DCLG, 2012; HM Government, 2015a), but also in relation to upholding British values (DCLG, 2012). There was also acknowledgement of the social and economic benefits of integration, but these were often cited as secondary to security issues (Casey, 2016).

The concept of 'resilience' was frequently linked to the ability of communities to respond in emergency situations where formal authorities (police, emergency services, army, etc.) were unable to address local needs (Cabinet

Office, 2016a; 2016b). Community resilience was seen to be a local issue, and community members were encouraged to have ‘ownership of their resilience’ in emergency planning and preparations (Cabinet Office, 2016b; 2016c). Such resilience was then linked back to cohesion where a ‘greater capacity and motivation for collective action’ would lead to ‘a greater sense of community, with greater inclusivity and cohesion’ (Cabinet Office, 2016d).

Local leadership was often cited as a mechanism by which community changes could be managed (Bell et al., 2017). The *Casey review* acknowledged that too much pressure had been put on inter-faith groups and leaders to deal with negative community perceptions. Local authorities were encouraged to examine particular issues in their communities which impact on social cohesion including the provision of good social housing, dealing with anti-social behaviour, isolation of members of the community such as older people and people experiencing long-term illness and disability (DCLG, 2009).

Segregation was seen as a problem that could be addressed by changes to the built environment, like the development of quality public spaces and community involvement in local planning projects (HM Government, 2018), regeneration of disused or ill-used spaces, and the refurbishment of key local landmarks to reflect the diversity of community members (DCLG, 2009). While residential segregation was difficult to address and not necessarily a cohesion issue, providing opportunities for different groups of people to mix would work to tackle social segregation (*ibid.*).

Local economic regeneration was another mechanism which was proposed to address social disadvantage (DCLG, 2012). This included the provision of additional funding to jobcentres and apprenticeships to support members of segregated communities to work in ethnically diverse environments, and universal credit by the Government (HM Government, 2018). Community investment in the creation and maintenance of shared public spaces was put forward as a mechanism by which diverse community members would be encouraged to mix and experience a sense of belonging to the community (*ibid.*). Libraries were often mentioned as spaces which promoted social interaction and cohesion (*ibid.*).

Issues of disadvantage and inequality were linked with a lack of cohesion and inclusion in local communities (DCLG, 2009). Fear of crime was said to have a greater impact on perceptions of neighbourhood cohesion than actual crime rates, but the effect of increased cohesion on these fears was unknown (*ibid.*). The causal direction between social cohesion and crime – ie whether increased crime is a result of low social cohesion, or if high-crime areas are unable to become socially cohesive – is therefore unclear.

There was also an apparent issue around the rate of social change in local areas. People’s perceptions of the increased rate of population change since 2000 as a result of increased international travel, the expansion of the EU, sustained and substantial increases in migration to the UK was thought to be a challenge for integration (DCLG, 2012), as well as the state of the UK following an economic downturn (Casey, 2016). This was linked to perceived issues with the allocation of resources such as social housing, and perceptions of social cohesion in the community and whether new migrants and refugees were getting preferential treatment above longer-term residents (Casey, 2016; DCLG, 2009). It was highlighted that a growing number of White people felt discriminated against in the UK, and disempowered in their communities, leading to intolerance and fear of ethnic minorities (DCLG, 2012).

There was a tension throughout these documents between national government versus local government roles and responsibilities in promoting community integration and cohesion. It seemed that while the government documents emphasised that issues of cohesion and their solutions were at the local level, critical reviews of government practices emphasised the need for more government funding and clear direction to achieve integration.

2.1.4 Use of 'integration' instead of 'cohesion'

In the older documents (before 2010), it seemed that the term 'social cohesion' was used most often, whereas in the recent literature the term 'integration' was more frequently used or used interchangeably with 'cohesion' or 'community cohesion'. Integration was also much more likely to be used in a security context, along with the terms 'resilience', 'strong' and 'empowered'.

Definitions of integration included 'where people live out their responsibilities to one another, their local community and their country' (DCLG, 2012: 20), 'creating the conditions for everyone to play a full part in national and local life' (ibid.: 2), 'the extent to which people from all backgrounds can get on – with each other, and in enjoying and respecting the benefits that the United Kingdom has to offer' (Casey, 2016: 20). Integration would be achieved when 'neighbourhoods, families and individuals come together on issues that matter to them' (DCLG, 2012: 2).

Issues which were said to affect integration included cultural attitudes and practices, the ability to participate in society, social mobility, and intolerance and discrimination, extremism (DCLG, 2012), and overseas influences undermining attitudes to rights and freedoms in the UK (HM Government, 2018). Other proposed threats to integration included minority sections of society (in particular faith groups, often identified as 'Muslim') 'expressing less progressive views, for example towards women's equality, sexuality and freedom of speech' (HM Government, 2015a: 12), and the effect of recent immigration on local areas (Bell et al., 2017). Suggested avenues for improving integration included 'empowering marginalised women' through the reform of laws on marriage and religious weddings, promoting inter-faith dialogue and effective delivery of the Hate Crime Action Plan (HM Government, 2018).

It was also put forward that integration at the local level could be enhanced by community members volunteering in their local areas (DCLG, 2009; 2012; HM Government, 2018). Community based English language programs in particular were encouraged (Casey, 2016; HM Government, 2018). It was suggested that the ability to speak English should be seen as a right for new migrants, and that this should be supported financially and structurally by the Government (Bell et al., 2017). English language competency was seen to be key for participating in British society and key to social mobility and realising the economic potential of migrants (ibid.).

2.1.5 Conclusion

The lack of clear definitions of 'integration', and its interchangeability with 'cohesion' in the more recent documents is problematic. The implication underlying many of the documents was that it was for migrants or people from minority ethnic backgrounds to integrate with existing British values, laws and society. The idea of White British individuals and communities being the target of integration strategies was mentioned rarely, if ever. There was also a clear link with integration as a means of addressing local and national security concerns. The social and economic advantages of integration were

acknowledged but were not the focus of the majority of the UK level policy documents.

2.2 Cohesion at the devolved level: articulating national visions within the constraints of devolved powers

The constituent nations of the United Kingdom have, since 1998, had differing levels of autonomy concerning legislation, budget allocation and national administration. The UK government at Westminster retains overall responsibility for constitutional matters, defence, national security, and immigration, amongst other things. The devolved nations of Scotland and Wales (and Northern Ireland, not included in this review) have autonomy over health and social care, education and training, agriculture, environment and planning, tourism, and economic development. As a result of the Scotland Act (2016), Scotland also now has a number of welfare competences, including the creation of new benefits, and the ability to top-up UK-wide benefits such as Universal Credit, Tax Credits and Child Benefit. It can also make discretionary payments, change employment support, and make discretionary housing payments. Scotland also takes control over disability and carers' benefits, maternity payments and funeral payments (Scottish Parliament, 2018).

Wales does not have as much autonomy, operating instead on a 'Reserved Powers' model, in which the Welsh Assembly may pass any Act provided that it does not infringe on any of the reserved matters set out in the Wales Act 2017 (for more information, see Welsh Assembly, 2018). Thus, Scotland has more autonomy and more options regarding how it approaches the issue of social cohesion and the range of responses it can develop to what it sees as threats to cohesion (whilst being bound by regulations and legislation regarding national security, for example). Wales, on the other hand, has fewer legislative routes it can pursue regarding social cohesion and related issues such as social exclusion and deprivation.

Though social cohesion strategies could, and perhaps should, be seen as aspirations for constituent nations, they may equally be compromised, restricted or enabled by the level of social competences allowed by their respective Acts of devolution (or indeed the Localism Act 2011 in the case of England – see section 2.3). This means that Scotland and Wales in particular may feasibly use pronouncements and initiatives around social cohesion in a potentially more normative fashion, as statements of intent, as well as practical roadmaps to increase solidarity and decrease division within societies.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), created by the Equality Act 2010, encompasses the former race, disability and gender equality duties. Those institutions covered by the PSED must act to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between those who share protected characteristics and those who do not (EHRC, 2017). This on its own does not necessarily contribute to social cohesion, but the considerations of the PSED have clear links to many of the central concerns around social cohesion. Both Scotland and Wales have additional, specific PSED duties. In Scotland these include reporting on mainstreaming the equality duty and publishing equality outcomes and report progress, among others (EHRC, 2018). In Wales, some of the specific duties are to undertake equality impact assessments and improve the evidence base around equality and diversity (Welsh Government, 2018).

The concept of social cohesion does not appear in discussions of these duties. This is interesting considering that the Labour government of 1997-2010 directed considerable resources into mainstreaming community cohesion concerns into its work on equalities and the public sector. Of course, eight years have passed since Labour left office, and governments of different political persuasions are not keen on retaining flagship policies from other parties, even if just in name. It is also possible that many of the issues considered within community cohesion mainstreaming are now covered by the PSED. However, as this review emphasises, equality and social/community cohesion are not the same things. At the same time, the prominence of the PSED in policymaking within Scotland and Wales has an impact on the extent to which equality concerns may appear in discussions on social cohesion. The existence of a clearly marked space for equalities concerns means that policymakers need to be careful not to duplicate work already being undertaken by PSED initiatives. This understandably affects the nature of social cohesion strategies and may explain, for example, why Wales' approach to social cohesion focuses more strongly on deprivation and inequality than Scotland's, where the PSED looks to be more wide-ranging.

The uneven nature of devolution clearly plays a role in the development of social cohesion strategies, although more research is needed on this issue. The dynamics of social cohesion policy in Scotland and Wales are explored in more detail in the following subsections.

2.2.1 Differences in definitions

How Scotland and Wales define and measure social cohesion illustrate tensions in fundamental questions of cohesion: what is cohesion *for*, *who* is it aimed at, and *how* should it be pursued. Definitions tend towards either remaining vague or overly technical, suggesting ambivalence regarding the above questions. Table 1 provides a side-by-side comparison of representative definitions of social/community cohesion³ in Wales and Scotland.

Wales	Scotland
<p>Community cohesion is the term used to describe how everyone in a geographical area lives alongside each other with mutual understanding and respect. This apparently simple definition engages with a complex array of issues, including citizenship rights and responsibilities, perceptions of belonging, fairness and trust, and relationships between different groups. This complexity, and the fact that it is a concept rooted in perceptions and attitudes, renders the measurement of community cohesion a real challenge.</p>	<p>A cohesive society is one with a common vision and a sense of belonging by all communities; a society in which the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and valued; and a society in which similar life opportunities are available to all. The Scottish Government is committed to building strong, resilient and supportive communities, and ensuring that community cohesion is maintained and strengthened is key to this. Community cohesion is absolutely essential in ensuring that we are truly 'One Scotland' where people live in peace and everyone has the opportunity to flourish.</p>

³ In many cases, 'social' and 'community' are used interchangeably when discussing cohesion. However, there remain subtle differences, in which 'social' usually leans more towards socio-economic contexts and 'community' leans more towards ethno-cultural contexts.

An evaluation of getting on together: The community cohesion strategy for Wales (2012: 10)⁴.

Tackling prejudice and building connected communities: Scottish Government response (2017: 3).

These definitions share a common thread: people or groups sharing common space and upholding common values, leading to mutual trust, a sense of fairness and the realisation of opportunity. The most significant difference is the acknowledgment in the Welsh definition of the inherent complexity of the task to build such cohesion. Indeed, the Welsh government emphasises that '[a]t the local level, there is no obvious measure of cohesion' (Welsh Government, 2012b: 10), relying instead on proxies such as data from the Citizenship Survey to measure this complex process. More subtle differences include Scotland's slightly more solidaristic and universalist tone (eg 'One Scotland', the title of the Scottish Government's equality campaign). Difficulties concerning how to understand cohesion and its threats in the first place lead to other difficulties, which emphasise tensions in programmes of cohesion.

2.2.2 Centrality of integration

The importance of integration in all the Scottish and Welsh documents reviewed demonstrates the difficulty faced in implementing definitions. Firstly, integration was conceptualised as both an ideal and a process. There are clear exhortations that people, groups, communities and infrastructure (eg public services) should become more integrated. There are also detailed discussions around promoting and supporting integration. Second, many documents contained a tension or dialogue between socioeconomic-focused integration (ie tackling social exclusion and multiple deprivation) and sociocultural-focused integration (ie bringing together people/groups from different ethnic, racial and national backgrounds). A tension that can be seen clearly in the Welsh documents.

The *Community Cohesion Strategy for Wales* highlights the barriers to cohesion posed by deprivation, social exclusion and poverty, whilst also emphasising the threat to integration posed by perceptions of unfairness, especially in times of recession, between settled communities and new arrivals around issues such as the availability of jobs. It also highlights research that demonstrates there is no clear causal link between new arrivals and increased community tensions, nor that minority ethnic groups were either more segregated or less integrated than White working-class groups. The conclusion is that there are clear 'links between low cohesion and the experience of poverty and deprivation, with lower levels of integration being aligned with greater poverty' (Welsh Government, 2012a: 34). However, at the level of practice, focus remains on ethnic groups:

In addition to the Community Cohesion Fund, an annual Community Cohesion Grant of £50,000 was allocated from 2009-2012 to the four most ethnically diverse local authority areas (Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Wrexham) in order to kick-start cohesion work. Three local authorities used the Grant to fund a community cohesion officer, while Swansea used the resource to fund an Ethnic Youth Support Team to work with vulnerable youths. (Welsh Government, 2012b: 25)

⁴ Since the publication of this strategy, the Welsh Government has passed the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, 2015. The Act contains a number of goals to support well-being, one of which is 'A Wales of cohesive communities', described as 'attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities' (Welsh Government 2015: 4). This is the only mention of 'cohesive communities' in the Act; it is also the only mention of the word 'cohesive' (including related words such as cohesion). The Act builds upon earlier strategies without superseding them.

The implication is that though poverty, deprivation and exclusion are the main barriers to integration, the process of integration remains conceived in terms of ethnicity. In the Scottish documents reviewed, there was little explicit discussion of integration. This does not mean, however, that the concept was not important. Discussions focused more on inclusion rather than integration, strongly within the context of the prevention of hate crime and ensuring community safety. Angela Constance, the Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities, remarks in the foreword of *Tackling prejudice and building connected communities*: ‘We must continue to talk up the benefits of equality, diversity and inclusion in our society’ (Scottish Government, 2017: 1).

The dominant focus of the Scottish documents, as hinted at in the titles (see appendix), is on minority groups as those that are most likely to experience prejudice. ‘Hate crime and prejudice threaten community cohesion, and have a corrosive impact on Scotland’s minority communities as well as broader society’ (ibid: 4). This introduces the central concept of security into social and community cohesion.

Though the theme of security is multifaceted, with examples of concerns around social security and security-as-wellbeing, by far the most common usage is in terms of guarding against and addressing issues like violent extremism, radicalisation, hate crime and terrorism. The position and priority of social/community cohesion in relation to security in Wales is ambiguous at the abstract level, but much clearer in practice:

The [community cohesion] unit was originally contained within the Community Safety team, located in the Department for Social Justice and Local Government. The Head of the Unit was supported by a Community Cohesion Policy Officer. The Prevent lead for Wales was also located within the team, reflecting the close links between the Welsh approach to Prevent and the pursuit of community cohesion, and the ambition of mainstreaming Prevent within community cohesion practice. Subsequently, the Unit moved into the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Division and the Head assumed additional responsibilities across this wider portfolio. In 2011, the Prevent lead was relocated into the Community Safety team, leaving the Community Cohesion Policy Officer to lead on cohesion issues. (Welsh Government, 2012b: 24)

Community cohesion strategies in Wales have been designed to operate alongside the Prevent strategy, with Prevent taking priority and security remaining a central concern. The shift of the unit into equality, diversity and inclusion, alongside moving the Prevent lead to community safety (with the implication that before this the community cohesion policy officer was *not* leading on cohesion issues). Though the character of security solutions and threats differ, an underlying thread is change.

2.2.3 Dynamics of change

Change itself is usually not the problem. Rather, it is the pace of change that causes issues. This is a concern that is most emphasised for rural areas in which a certain level of stasis is more common, but narratives in both Wales and Scotland discuss how each country has become more diverse, how economies have changed (particularly in Wales regards the fragile state of previously central industries) and how communities have responded. In Scotland, which has more legislative autonomy and more social policy

competences than Wales, this has also provided an opportunity to lay the foundations for a process of nation-building and promoting the idea of a Scotland that is distinct from England and the UK:

Scotland is becoming a more diverse country, particularly with free movement of people from other parts of Europe to Scotland and with the arrival of refugees and asylum seekers from other countries. Shifting cultural attitudes over years and decades have created a climate where diversity is much more accepted and recognised within society, and individuals and communities feel more able to celebrate their identities. We do not articulate what 'Scottish values' are in the same way that the UK Government has articulated 'British values', nor do we seek to.
(Scottish Government, 2017: 4)

In this instance, change is articulated as almost wholly positive, either in what it delivers or in the way the Scottish population has reacted to it. A lack of clearly articulated Scottish values does not suggest there are none (the document discusses 'common themes that run throughout Scottish society'), but rather that they are distinct to those that are ostensibly 'British'. This actively questions the position and utility of British values as a whole, questioning also whether even talking about social or community cohesion at a national level is appropriate. This strengthens the emphasis on developing local solutions to local problems found in the UK, devolved and local literature, but leaves question marks over whether there should be a relationship between the different levels of government regarding social or community cohesion, and if so, what this relationship should look like.

2.2.4 Conclusion

Defining social cohesion remains problematic at the devolved level. The varying levels of autonomy and independence clearly influence the ability to (re)define or repurpose social cohesion. In Wales there is a noticeable focus on socio-economic inequality and deprivation. In Scotland there is some evidence to suggest issues and priorities around social cohesion are being used within a broader strategy of nation building, extenuating differences between Scotland and the other constituent nations of the UK (especially England). There is an issue around the centrality of security, and a tension around the relationship between ethnic difference and inequality in both Wales and Scotland.

2.3 English local authorities implementing and contesting national cohesion strategies

Recent years have seen a significant push towards decentralisation to local government. This, combined with the position at the national level that barriers to cohesion are best tackled with local solutions developed at the local level, means that local authorities have been given significant autonomy in directing their cohesion strategies. However, unlike at the Scottish and Welsh level in which primary accountability of local authorities is to Scottish and Welsh administrations depending on the competences involved, English local government is directly accountable to Westminster. Compounding this factor is that especially in a period of deep austerity, local authorities are resource poor and are thus more dependent on central funds, which are not particularly forthcoming.

2.3.1 Articulating autonomy

In contrast to the ambiguity in definitions and aims of social cohesion seen in the devolved nations taken as a whole, the central message in much of the local-level policy literature seems more set in opposition to the major national narratives about cohesion. Within this there is a relatively even split between explicitly oppositional language and more implicit opposition to what are presented as the main concerns of central government. The vision for cohesion in Birmingham is about developing ‘a shared vision that promotes a sense of belonging and trust in our communities’, which involves ‘breaking down the barriers to social and economic inequality’ so that ‘[p]romoting community cohesion will enable a shared vision of fairness and greater social integration’ (Birmingham City Council, 2018: 2). This is mapped on to the *Commission for integration and cohesion’s* characteristics for a cohesive society (see Appendix). A summary of evidence commissioned by the London Borough of Camden, which informs the Borough’s approach to social cohesion, suggests its needs do not reflect national priorities:

The national public policy debate on community cohesion has tended to focus on ethnicity, and more recently immigration and religion, as causes of a lack of cohesion between what are assumed to be largely internally cohesive groups. This paper argues that this approach does not reflect the realities of a socially “super-diverse” place like Camden where the relationship between individuals and communities is more complex - many people have multiple identities and ethnicity and religion do not necessarily define communities. Other dimensions such as housing and income are equally as important to community cohesion. (Camden Commission, 2017a: 2)

It is worth remembering here the ambiguity regarding the priority of socio-economic versus ethnic inequalities highlighted in section two. It follows that the increased emphasis on developing local solutions to local problems in fact provides local authorities with more freedom to articulate a vision of social or community cohesion different to the national level. Discussions in the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, which itself is unique in that it has a directly elected mayor with multiple competences related to social cohesion, corroborate this. The Greater Manchester approach to cohesion is unique in that it makes a distinction between *social* cohesion and *community* cohesion:

Social cohesion generally refers to the way that economic inequalities create a sense of unfairness and undermine solidarity. These often reflect social class and political divisions. Community cohesion focuses on the problems between identifiable groups, based on ethnic, faith or cultural divisions and often involve a degree of racism or religious intolerance. (GMCA, 2018: 21)

Compare this to the position taken by Camden in an overview of key policy sources for the Camden Commission:

The terms community cohesion and social cohesion are both used widely to describe the same thing. Camden uses community cohesion. There is no universally agreed definition of community or social cohesion. (Camden Commission, 2017b: 1)

It is clear from this section and the previous section that there can be considerable difference in how the term is defined. If definitions and development of social cohesion can differ, this suggests that social cohesion

may look qualitatively different in different parts of the UK. This in turn suggests that there is a significant, if sometimes subtle, gap between the national vision for cohesion and how it is perceived in different localities. This poses difficult questions around whether it is right to pursue cohesion and integration strategies based upon ideas of common, immutable, values, whilst the questions posed in the previous section – *what* is cohesion, *who* is it for and *how* is it pursued – remain at the local level. A key difference here is that at this more manageable and contained scale, a clear vision of social/community cohesion shines through much more easily, even if this vision can differ significantly from place to place.

2.3.2 Contesting priorities?

As with cohesion at other levels of government, within the local level there is a tension around whether cohesion should be pursued for the sake of security or as an end in its own right. In ‘super diverse’ areas, such as in London, this concern was heightened:

It is important to tackle violent extremism directly and firmly. However, we must ensure that individuals and communities are not alienated in the process. Conflating integration with counter-terrorism can exacerbate division and does little to promote social integration as an issue for everybody and as an agenda that permeates every part of a local authority's work. (London Councils, 2017: 1)

Concerns over such tensions are understandably emphasised even further in locations that have experienced recent terror attacks (Manchester, London). Yet the relationship in the literature between social/community cohesion and security emphasises the fact that in many cases cohesion is set-up as a *response* to a problem, rather than being pursued as a social good. However, this is acknowledged in places; the GMCA Police and Crime panel states that ‘any piece of work that seeks to address and improve social cohesion needs to be much wider than an investigation into preventing violent extremism’ (GMCA, 2017: 3). Camden council point out that ‘[i]ntegration is increasingly being spoken about in terms of tackling extremism and ethnic segregation, but other research suggests the focus needs to remain on deprivation and inequality’ (Camden Commission, 2017: 2). As demonstrated in Scotland and Wales, there remains at the local level a clear tension regarding the main driving force(s) behind social cohesion, and the relationship between them.

Social/community cohesion appears to be at its most reactive when it is coupled, unavoidably or otherwise, with security concerns – rather than as a parallel initiative to security and community policing. A potential counter to this however is provided by Birmingham city council, which has emphasised links to capacity building related to but also beyond security:

... we will take an asset-based approach to promoting cohesion; recognising and building on the strengths within the neighbourhood including: the skills, expertise and experience of local people, community networks and also the buildings and public spaces. (Birmingham City Council, 2018: 15)

Yet detail on how forward-thinking, asset-based approaches will be developed could be stronger. Questions remain about the exact loci of power, and whether such approaches will retain a strong commitment to empowerment if there is a national priority of addressing those barriers to cohesion that have been fundamentally connected to security – hate crime, violent extremism,

some forms of discrimination, etc. This can be seen in the common commitment to free speech with the caveat of ensuring that a right to free speech does not preclude authorities from ‘challenging cultures and practices that are harmful to individuals or restrict their rights and hold them back from making the most of the opportunities of living in modern Britain’ (HM Government, 2018: 58). The position that free speech should be defended but equally so should common values and rights is entirely valid, but nevertheless there remains a tension between the two that has not yet been resolved, or indeed may never be resolved fully.

2.3.3 Sites of change

Fundamentally, what drives concerns around the cohesiveness of communities and society, as well as the barriers to this cohesiveness, remains the issue of change. In the ‘superdiverse’ urban areas, the problem was highlighted not as change itself but as the pace of change. In more rural areas, it is arguably still the pace of change that is important, albeit in these more stable communities it can be the *perceived* pace of change – small demographic changes can appear large and have more of an impact, for example. Yet it is largely the case that the major discussions around barriers to cohesion, how to improve integration and how to respond to threats to cohesion such as radicalisation, segregation and inequality are most discussed in urban areas. This can give the impression that social cohesion is primarily an urban issue. Of course, this is not the case but, as highlighted by the Welsh government in section 2.2, more work needs to be done to identify the needs of rural communities with respect to cohesion. In fact, the strong focus on the relationship between cohesion and security, *particularly in relation to violent extremism, terrorism and radicalisation*, may have a deep influence on the spatial elements of social cohesion, even down to the layout of neighbourhoods, as discussed in Birmingham. This seemingly inevitably de-emphasises the needs and concerns of rural communities in much of the policy literature on social or community cohesion.

2.3.4 Conclusion

Due to the nature of local politics, there is more variation in the understandings, priorities and implementation of social cohesion strategies at the local level. Nevertheless, key continuities remain across the local level and with other levels of government. The tension between security and other social cohesion concerns remains, for example, as does the importance of understanding the dynamics of change in an area. Issues of socio-economic inequality and deprivation seem to be elevated at the local level, whilst the importance of ethnic difference is de-emphasised. This raises an interesting question concerning the locus of power when developing social cohesion strategies: if local areas should develop solutions to local problems, but these local problems either do not mesh with national priorities and/or can only be tackled effectively on a national scale, what power do local communities actually have to develop social cohesion and address barriers to cohesion?

2.4 Zooming out to reconsider the UK as a whole

In ‘reconstructing’ the multilevel review into a composite picture of social cohesion in the UK, a series of key tensions and continuities become apparent. The continuities are the perennial problems that social cohesion ideally addresses, whilst the tensions are problems that arise from the specific development of social cohesion policy and practice in the UK. The continuities are:

The importance of change

Rather than the presence of change (which is a given for studies of social cohesion), it is the *pace* and *dynamics* of change that matter for policy. This could include immigration into new areas, emigration from areas, changes to the local economy or labour market, or even changes to policy itself (eg Theresa May's 'hostile environment' increasing focus and pressure on all types of migrants). Change is conditioned spatially. As the Welsh documents in particular highlight, what would be a slow pace of change for an urban area can be critical for a rural area that is more likely to have experienced some form of stasis up until a perceived crisis point (most likely related to migration, employment or both).

Security as a central concern

As has been documented, there are important differences in how security is conceived and implemented. Yet questions remain around who or what counts as the security threat.

Challenges to cohesion

Across all documents the same challenges were highlighted, such as inequality, deprivation, a lack of common values or purpose, etc.

The tensions are:

How best to decentralise a common vision?

It is up to devolved and local authorities to promote a 'vision' of cohesion as set out in UK-level and national-level documents. Yet this review has highlighted the significant divergence not only in implementation but also in understanding of the main issues and solutions. Perhaps this helps explain some of the points of contention, for example about whether to prioritise economic inequality or ethnic difference.

Definitional problems

The question remains, what exactly *is* cohesion, and *who* is it for? Relatedly, there are multiple important elements to social cohesion (inequality, security, diversity, resilience) but it remains unclear, especially in this composite picture, which (if any) should be prioritised.

Loci of power and responsibility

It is important to empower local communities to help drive cohesion, but who decides what a cohesive community or society looks like? Who has the responsibility to drive social cohesion, and is there a hierarchy of responsibility? Central government want to decentralise this as much as possible, but when a number of social cohesion concerns have become strongly tied up in issues of national security, surely decentralised bodies must follow the national line and are therefore restricted on what they can achieve elsewhere?

To what extent is it possible to develop social cohesion in the context of austerity and a retreating welfare state?

These tensions and continuities, within the context of the wider discussions in the preceding sections can be thought about in a wider international context, which is the focus of the following section.

3.0 Comparing the UK landscape with approaches internationally

This section compares the composite picture of social cohesion in the UK as a whole with two comparator countries – Australia and Canada. These countries were chosen as case studies because of the potential for policy learning through comparison. Both these countries have long intertwined histories with the UK, as former colonies and current members of the Commonwealth. Both Canada’s and Australia’s legal systems operate on a Common Law basis, imported from England. A common law system is based on judicial precedent, where lower courts must align their practice with decisions made in higher courts. Further, legislation passed by government is interpreted and applied by the judiciary, creating precedent for future cases. Though Canada and Australia have federal systems of government in contrast to the UK’s unitary system, the progression towards greater devolution in the constituent nations of the UK means that lessons can be learnt from thinking about a federalised approach to social cohesion. Importantly for policy learning however, the similar legislative processes in all three countries means that future research can also consider paths towards developing policy and/or legislation on social cohesion. Another important consideration is the broad liberal tradition of citizenship present in Australia and Canada, again a legacy of British colonialism, which is of central importance when considering what social cohesion may look like in the UK and what approaches (normative or practical) may be feasible.

A final important difference between Australia and Canada, and the UK is the demographic make-up of the populations. Both Australia and Canada have indigenous populations that have been discriminated against and suppressed, and who are only now beginning to receive proper recognition. In contrast any claim to an ‘indigenous’ population in the UK is highly contestable and contentious. White British people are themselves a product of multiple periods of immigration and invasion, including Romans, Vikings, Anglo-Saxons, Celts and Gaels, amongst others. Indeed, the claim to an indigenous ‘Briton’ glosses over the tribal nature of the British Isles. As such, discussions of indigeneity in the UK (but particularly England) are often utilised in xenophobic and racist discourse to claim a fabricated notion of purity and thus a monopoly on a claim to Englishness or Britishness (for examples, see Wood and Finlay, 2010; Buhr, 2014). This is important to factor in when considering what we can take from the Australian and Canadian experiences. Both countries are post-colonial countries in which immigration originally was a product of British expansion. The UK on the other hand needs to recognise actively its history when considering immigration and race relations. This will be crucial in identifying, parsing and contextualising nuances in both similarities and differences regarding approaches to social cohesion.

3.1 Australia

Two key documents about social cohesion in Australia were reviewed here including *Research into the current and emerging drivers for social cohesion, social division and conflict in multicultural Australia* (Dandy & Pe-Pua 2013) and *Building social cohesion in our communities: A summary of the online resource for local government* (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2015). The concept of social cohesion was frequently and consistently used between these documents.

Although an explicit definition of social cohesion was not provided, it was referred to as the bond or 'glue' which binds people (ibid.). A socially cohesive society was described as "one which works towards the wellbeing of all its members, fights exclusion and marginalisation, creates a sense of belonging, promotes trust and offers its members the opportunity of upward mobility" (ibid.).

Social cohesion was measured using the Scanlon-Monash Index in the online resource (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2015). The other document (Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2013) used a framework developed in Canada by Jenson (1998) which proposes five domains of social cohesion:

- Belonging (shared values and identity)
- Inclusion (equal opportunities for access)
- Participation (engagement in structures and systems)
- Recognition (respect and tolerance)
- Legitimacy (pluralism)

Positive intercultural contact was identified as a key influence over all dimensions of social cohesion (Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2013). There was the acknowledgement that there was a lot of intercultural contact occurring between new migrants and second-generation migrants, but much less between Anglo-Australians and other groups (ibid.). Disharmony between established and newer groups, particularly in population growth areas, was seen to be a challenge for social cohesion at the national and local levels (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2015). Institutions and processes which are trusted by the public would need to be present in diverse communities to mediate intergroup tensions (Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2013).

There was an identified need for the promotion of the value of diversity and pluralism of identities at the various levels of Australian society to support the legitimacy of newer groups (ibid.). Furthermore, greater awareness and understanding of diversity and 'difference' in Australian communities would promote cohesion, as ignorance and stereotypes would lead to cultural misunderstanding, discrimination and prejudice (ibid.). The support of diverse cultures in Australia was put forward as promoting belonging and well-being (ibid.).

The recognition and respect for Indigenous Australian cultures and history in particular was put forward as a factor in promoting social cohesion (ibid.). Equality of access to resources was key to social inclusion, contributing to inter-ethnic tensions where some community groups received or were perceived to receive more resources (ibid.). Particular sections of the community including Indigenous Australians, refugees some migrant groups and Muslim-Australians needed to be socially supported to ensure equal access and fair treatment in seeking employment and healthcare.

Groups which did not feel that they were socially accepted or recognised appropriately were Indigenous Australians, Anglo-Australians, British migrants, and some refugee communities (Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2013). Those who reported experiencing racism were from more 'visible' minority groups (ibid.). Racism and discrimination were said to disrupt all dimensions of social cohesion, such as belonging, inclusion and participation (ibid.). The role of the media was emphasised in influencing national perceptions of Australian community groups (ibid.). It was found that local media in particular challenged negative stereotypes in addition to promoting multiculturalism.

Social media was also cited as a means by which participation and a sense of inclusion could be fostered (ibid.).

A particular asset in the social cohesion landscape in Australia was an online resource which local governments may use to understand how social cohesion works in their communities (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2015). According to the resource, it is aimed at enabling these authorities to:

- Engage their communities and build partnerships between key stakeholders
- Prevent and respond to incidents of racism or conflict between groups
- Strategically plan for the needs of their communities now and into the future
- Monitor, evaluate and share outcomes

There was a clear emphasis on the role of local governments to understand and promote social cohesion in their communities, ‘to reap the benefits of stronger, more resilient and productive communities’ (ibid.). Community activities and the use of public ‘social spaces’ were seen as ways in which positive intercultural interactions could be fostered and enhance senses of belonging (Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2013). English language competency in Australia was also said to contribute to belonging, inclusion, participation and social mobility. It was said to impact on the ability of migrants and refugees to interact with others, as well as the willingness to interact on the part of native English speakers (ibid.).

3.2 Canada

The Canadian social cohesion policy document reviewed here was on the website by the Government of Canada, *Diversity, identity and the social cohesion advantage* (2017).

Social cohesion was explicitly framed as an ‘advantage’ by the Government of Canada. Like the Australian documents, social cohesion was not specifically defined but was referred to as ‘the forces that bond individuals at both the community and national level’ (Government of Canada, 2017). These include social processes of: common values, civic order, democratic participation, equal opportunities and a sense of belonging. The strengths of social cohesion identified by government researchers support for peace, peace-making, safe communities and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. These characteristics were key to distinguishing Canada from America, and in promoting their reputation internationally.

The Government of Canada is yet to define a set of indicators to monitor social cohesion, and currently uses social capital as an indication of social cohesion. They framed social cohesion in the context of promoting ‘economic and social well-being’ (Government of Canada, 2017). Areas of rapid social change were identified which needed to be understood and addressed by future social cohesion policy in Canada, including:

- Participation, citizenship and governance
- Income distribution, equity, inclusion and access
- Immigration, integration and respect for all forms of diversity
- Capacity building in Aboriginal communities
- Peace, safety and security
- Information technology, the new economy, globalisation and integration

On the population level, positive outcomes of social cohesion were said to be the creation of healthy, educated and productive communities. Lack of cohesion would lead to elements of social fragmentation such as ghettoisation, poor health outcomes and crime. The Government argued that voluntary participation in community and social life was fundamental to social cohesion, and required access to economic, political and cultural opportunities. The ability and willingness to participate in society was seen to enhance an individual's sense of belonging and attachment to their community.

Cultural, regional and language diversity in Canada was endorsed as a national asset, and the respect and protection of different groups and their identities was upheld as a Government responsibility. The 'Canadian model of cohesion' was defined by its emphasis on 'widespread and inclusive participation in establishing and working toward collective and community objectives.' (ibid.). It was argued that immigration should also be considered as a positive element of Canadian cohesion and identity, and that there should be active policy responses to enable the integration of migrants into Canadian society.

Identified strategies for monitoring and promoting social cohesion were the development of understandings and measures of social cohesion, capitalising on diversity, telling the stories of all Canadians, and reconciliation (ibid.). This would lead to 'some reshaping of Canadian norms, institutions, and identity' meaning that 'decision-makers will need to be attentive to the positive and negative consequences of changing Canadian values, commitments and social relations' (ibid.). Furthermore, the Government said it is in the right position to facilitate 'intercultural, inter-faith, inter-regional, intergenerational and inter-linguistic' dialogues across the country (ibid.).

It was acknowledged that Canada's existing infrastructure and mechanisms may not be able to adequately deal with these changes. Policy documents may also contribute to the problems facing social cohesion by framing marginalised people as the problem, rather than sending the message that all Canadians are valued (Government of Canada, 2017). Furthermore, the significant impact of poverty in Canada on social cohesion contributes to the 'social exclusion' of vulnerable groups such as children, street youths, seniors and people with disabilities, and immigrants. There were also concerns raised about the digital divide between remote and urban communities.

A response to these issues would be to link economic well-being with social inclusion and was identified as an important area for future focus. The Government of Canada said that they should provide economic support to all Canadians, especially in the wake of the global economic downturn, with special attention paid to supporting recent migrants. This should be managed alongside an awareness of changes in the perception of migrants by the wider community, to reduce inter-group tensions over the allocation of economic resources.

Finally, Aboriginal Canadians did not want their issues to be categorised under the issues of multiculturalism, or to be considered as an ethnic minority. Aboriginal representatives said that they would not agree with a definition of social cohesion which emphasised homogeneity. They agreed that it was important that non-mainstream perspectives be heard in debate, and that the contributions that the diverse groups of Aboriginal people continue to make to Canadian history, culture and society be acknowledged.

3.3 Conclusion

There were many similarities between the Australian and Canadian documents in framing social cohesion as a positive, social endeavour. The role of social cohesion in reducing national and local inter-cultural tensions and the promotion of diversity and multiculturalism ran throughout. The Canadian Government acknowledged that greater social cohesion would lead to fundamental changes in Canadian values, which was seen to have both positive and potentially negative implications. The Canadian document in particular was fairly self-critical and identified areas for improvement which incorporated diverse community perspectives. Both countries emphasised the need for useful measurements of social cohesion, with the Australian documents incorporating two established frameworks into their analyses. The presence of Indigenous populations in both these countries also seemed to have an influence on their perceptions of history and identity, which emphasised complexity over homogeneity.

There were some similarities between the international documents and the UK literature. There was an emphasis throughout on the importance of local level understandings and strategies to promote social cohesion. Similar issues with inequality and access to infrastructure and social support, and their impact on community participation and perceptions of belonging were noted by all. Nevertheless, the Australian and Canadian documents differed in important ways from the UK policy literature. Unlike the UK, the link between cohesion and security issues was not greatly emphasised in the Australian and Canadian documents. There was a strong sense in the international documents that the purpose of social cohesion was to support diverse communities and the expression of their various identities, rather than integrating them into existing norms.

4.0 Relevance to the five themes of the Cohesive Societies programme

This review has identified and highlighted key points of convergence and divergence between different levels of government on the issue of social cohesion, as well as important tensions and continuities throughout. The themes illustrated in the previous sections map on to the Cohesive Societies programmes' five themes relatively strongly. Taking a closer look at how these themes relate to one another, and how tensions and continuities affect these relationships, will help identify and prioritise future areas of research. These five themes are particularly useful in helping to emphasise where definitions, outlooks and practices of social cohesion seem especially restrictive from a policy literature perspective. Understanding clearly where these broad themes chime strongly with current policy and practice and, importantly, where they go beyond it helps to pinpoint novel avenues of research as well as to identify areas where it would be worthwhile to rethink and reconceptualise the approach taken to both social cohesion research and practice in the UK in a time of sustained economic, political and social uncertainty.

4.1 Cultural memory and traditions

Cultural memory and tradition are central to social cohesion in the UK. The strong focus on values at all levels of government clearly references a sense of Britishness (or perhaps Scottishness and Welshness). This places the notion of Englishness in a difficult position, as it would seem that in this case Englishness is synonymous with Britishness, at least in terms of values and common bonds. This also asks questions about where power lies in developing and owning this sense of Britishness. We see that the devolved nations and even some local authorities push back against a common sense of Britishness, but at the UK level to talk only of Englishness would be to exclude vast numbers of people.

The development of common values is treated as the development of values that are inherently British and align very strongly with traditional Liberal values. In this sense, there is a clear appeal to cultural memory, largely implicitly, but with varying levels of emphasis. Beyond these Liberal values, it seems that people are simply expected to know what it means to be British, which erects barriers to new arrivals or those who for whatever reason do not consider themselves 'British' in the way they are supposed to (such as people from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, people who identify as English before British, migrants and people from non-British ethnic backgrounds, or even people with different political beliefs).

A central point is that, especially through policy avenues, a sense of tradition plays upon a cultural memory that at some level has to be a construction. A contemporary example is the comparison between the solidarity demonstrated during World War Two and the immediate post-war years, and more recently an appeal to the Blitz spirit and solidarity to justify a wholly different form of austerity after the financial crisis (eg Farnsworth and Irving, 2018). Popular narratives around the Leave side of the Brexit referendum have also homed in on the Blitz spirit to suggest that the British people have been through hard times and survived on their own, and the UK's withdrawal from the EU will be no different. In this sense, the appeal to a cultural memory is being employed to highlight division rather than togetherness on the one

hand, whilst strengthening togetherness for a specific group of people in opposition to another group. When considering cultural memory and tradition, it is important to remain aware of where the power lies in deciding which traditions are upheld, and to what ends cultural memory is being invoked. Understanding in greater detail how cultural memory and tradition are taken up within discourses and practices of cohesion (particularly in ways that are not obvious at first) would be a fruitful avenue of research.

4.2 Social economy

This theme does not appear *explicitly* in the policy discussions around social cohesion. Rather, there are numerous references to inequality, social exclusion and deprivation, primarily at the devolved and local level. In a small handful of cases, references are made to austerity and the challenges faced by the welfare state. Implicitly, this points to critiques of the market economy as currently organised (not necessarily the principle of the liberal market economy itself). It would be highly unlikely for any policy or policy related document to suggest a wholesale change in the variety of capitalism⁵. However, as section 1 demonstrates, there have been pockets of resistance or at least sustained critique of the current system, either directly or, more commonly, through the side effects of the system.

One reason why this theme is not as easily relatable to discussions on social cohesion in the UK is because of the focus on ethnic, racial and socio-cultural difference. By and large even when socio-economic division and inequality is discussed it is a compounding factor in relation to race and ethnicity (eg White working-class communities feel left behind; in a period of austerity some ethnic groups may feel they are being unfairly disadvantaged regarding the distribution of resources). It is hardly, if ever, conceptualised the other way around (ie ethnic, cultural and/or racial divisions are compounding factors in relation to socio-economic inequality). This may be a subtle difference, but it is one that makes a significant difference when it comes to finding space to debate big ideas such as how to organise the economy and how combatting inequality can improve social cohesion.

It is important to remember that social cohesion can be thought of as a normative concept. Diagnosing threats to social cohesion, barriers to achieving cohesion, and identifying methods to maintain cohesion presuppose a particular kind of ideal society or economy. Green and Janmaat (2011) develop a typology of social cohesion regimes based upon different historical and political conditions in different countries and different types of economy. As such, the debate is not about whether social cohesion can or cannot be achieved in different countries, but rather the characteristics, dynamics and depth of social cohesion as viewed through different national lenses. Social cohesion may look qualitatively different depending on the tradition of citizenship and the form of economy in place. For example, a highly rigid class system may exhibit significant division, but if society is designed to work on a principle of a division of labour and duty based upon class, a highly divided society can still be highly cohesive. Thus, the fundamental question that needs to be asked – and which is largely assumed in the policy literature – is *what kind of social cohesion do we want and why?* The example above would produce a form of social cohesion geared towards social order rather than a more ‘flat hierarchy’ in which inequality is minimised.

⁵ Hall and Soskice (2001) typologised three varieties of capitalism – Liberal Market Economy (eg UK), Social Market Economy (eg Scandinavia) and Coordinated Market Economy (eg continental Europe, especially Germany).

4.3 Meaning and mechanisms of social responsibility

There is a clear link between this theme and the analysis of social cohesion policy and practice. Understandably, rights and responsibilities remain central to the development of social cohesion. Though perhaps not as explicit as first anticipated, the implications of a well-defined set of rights and responsibilities are still mentioned multiple times, as well as being connected strongly yet implicitly to discussions around common values. For example, discussions around promoting particular values in schools, strengthening communities, developing resilience and so on are predicated upon citizens upholding their rights and discharging their responsibilities. Regarding migrants, the focus is generally on the responsibility to integrate, though rights are discussed in relation to broader human rights (rather than, say, social rights). Clearer examples of push back against embedded narratives of rights and responsibilities are more readily found in the devolved and local literature, in which there is a greater likelihood to find a devolved government highlighting its responsibilities to its communities, or a local authority using its position to remind Westminster of its responsibilities – usually financial and economic. On the other hand, central government sets out the responsibilities of devolved and local government regarding security and safety. Perhaps ironically for a country built upon the Liberal ideal of rights and rights claiming, in general rights remain subordinated to responsibilities, especially with regards to security and community safety.

Understanding better how these sites and modes of social responsibility differ at different levels of government is essential, as is understanding how they relate. Considering that policy must often be enacted by law, which brings with it set boundaries of acceptable behaviour and sanctioned action, there is only so much lower levels of government can do. Yet understanding the divisions, continuities and tensions here will also help improve understanding around the impact on citizens' lived experiences of rights claiming, discharging responsibilities and of experiences of social cohesion itself.

4.4 Identity and belonging

Questions of identity and belonging are clearly highly pertinent to social cohesion and especially to the narratives found in the policy and practice documents in this review. Either implicitly or explicitly, identity and belonging formed the core of the understandings of social cohesion at the various levels. The majority of these understood identity in largely cultural terms. Indeed, this may help explain why questions around what the good economy should look like were largely absent from discussions in the policy documents, even where they are central to developing a coherent programme of social cohesion. Identity has purposefully been constructed to deal primarily with culture, ethnicity and race, alongside the benefits this brings and the threats it poses (eg change caused by migration, violent extremism, not adhering to common values etc). As such, belonging was predicated on being able to fit into specific identities. Those that did not were expected to find a way to do so. The idea of common values exemplifies this; if values are common it means they are shared by everyone, so if a person or group *does not* share them, they are seen to be excluding themselves.

What is not explored is the distribution and loci of power in discussions on identity and belonging. As with cultural memory and tradition, people, groups and institutions must construct what identities are acceptable or not. In this sense, 'common values' are likely to be developed from a cultural memory that holds certain attitudes or values in high esteem. For example, respect for the

rule of law is commonly seen as a core aspect of ‘Britishness’. Yet this is more a core tenet of Liberalism than Britishness, *per se*. Respect for the rule of law is also a core tenet of European values, from which many in the UK would prefer to distance themselves. Racism, where whole peoples were and continue to be marginalised because of attributes such as their skin colour, provides a stark example of this. Over the centuries, racism has been justified in multiple ways, and racist practices remain even when ostensibly it is racism that is being addressed (for example, the treatment of Aboriginal people in the Australian and Canadian strategies that treats these people as ‘minorities’ rather than as part of the indigenous population).

4.5 Care for the future

Social cohesion as a concept and a process can be pulled in different directions. On one hand it is about building for the future; moving from conflict, division and difference to a state of social integration and harmony. As discussed above, this can look different, but discussing the need for social cohesion implies a transformation is needed. Yet in the policy literature in particular social cohesion implicitly looks backwards. There is little to suggest, for example, that social cohesion is seen as a social good in its own right. Rather, and as mentioned multiple times in this review, it is largely reactive. It is defined and pursued in relation to negative phenomena so that the process is about moving away from those phenomena. This can make it hard to build for the future. The newer literature on community resilience goes some way to address this, in that it is explicitly about building resilience to future shocks. But that, too, is concerned with being resilient primarily to shocks that have already been, even if they are likely to happen again.

5.0 Conclusions and opportunities for future research

Considering the symbolic power of identity, cultural memory and particular traditions, it may be impossible to develop an entirely forward-looking sense and process of cohesion. Yet it is imperative that further questions are asked around this issue. A useful starting point is to return to the perennial questions of *what* is social cohesion, *who* is it for and, crucially, *what should a cohesive society look like?* This final question has been addressed multiple times in both the policy and academic literature. Yet a positive step here would be to define social cohesion in positive terms – not as absences of (eg absence of conflict), but rather as the presence of. This will naturally involve understanding what needs to be removed or improved, but it also provides a way of looking forwards rather than backwards.

Social cohesion, especially in practice, is particularly vulnerable to conceptual stretching. It implies an absolute state (generally the absence of conflict, or the presence of social order) whereas in practice and implementation it is a compromise between multiple competing interests and a reflection of intersecting power relations across social groupings, institutions and political and social structures. This, of course, reflects the realities of policy-making, in which compromise and arbitrating competing interests are central. However, of central importance is acknowledging *which* interests are best served by existing social cohesion policies and strategies. In many (but not all) cases, the subjects of the policy (eg ethnic ‘communities’ living parallel lives, socially excluded neighbourhoods, groups vulnerable to extremism) have little input into the policy, despite the emphatic rhetoric around empowerment that we have become used to in the UK since the 1980s.

The review also highlights the major areas of contention in social cohesion policy, based upon the authors’ analysis. Based on this, a number of recommendations for future work have been outlined below.

5.1 Opportunities for future work

As this review has demonstrated, there remain significant yet unanswered questions about social cohesion, concerned with:

- Its political and/or policy purpose separate from its use as an analytical tool;
- The complexities of defining and delineating social cohesion in practice; and
- Responses to the development and implementation of social cohesion strategies, both at different levels of government and amongst the public.

These broad themes can be readily addressed through supporting research into social cohesion policy and practice. A number of suggestions are outlined below.

5.1.1 Defining and implementing social cohesion

This review has demonstrated that social cohesion is notoriously difficult to define beyond academic settings. Definitions are rarely concise statements,

but rather ‘shopping lists’ of characteristics and in many cases can be ideologically loaded (for more examples, see Donoghue, 2013; 2016). Research in this area is sorely needed, especially if it can contribute to the development of a more universal (if differentiated) definition of social cohesion that can remain relatively consistent over time, space and place. Other concerns could include whether social cohesion should be legislated for or developed organically, and who should be in control of this process – UK/national government(s), local government or communities themselves. As such, this is not simply about identifying a ‘better’ definition or measure of social cohesion (on which the academic literature has ruminated at length), but how to operationalise this research in a way that resonates clearly with key stakeholders, the most important of these being the very people social cohesion policy and practices are supposed to support. A framing question could be:

What is (or should be) social cohesion in practice: what are its purposes, targets, outcomes and mechanisms?⁶

Within the broad category of definition and implementation, it is also crucial to have a clear understanding of the relationship between economic inequality and social cohesion including, if any, causal paths between the two (ie can we say with any certainty if one causes the other, are they inherently entwined, or is there no clear relationship?). Although much work examines elements of this problem, especially regarding racial, labour market, educational, health inequalities etc. and social cohesion, there are few contemporary examples – especially policy-facing – that directly and in-depth consider the significance, role and implications of *economic* inequality on social cohesion explicitly and in detail. Such research would also be of significant importance for future policy formulation across social policy domains, but especially when considering the bigger picture of the welfare state itself, which is an institution currently in flux across the developed world. A framing question could be:

What is the [precise]⁷ relationship between economic inequality and social cohesion, and what implications does one have for the other?

5.1.2 The Importance of Institutions

We know relatively little about how particular institutions in particular contexts affect levels of social cohesion or vice versa. We do know that institutions are important, thanks to decades of work on the welfare state and integration on the one hand, and work by scholars such as Robert Putnam who demonstrate how, particularly in liberal societies, that participation in civil society remains important. However, this could be disaggregated further, especially in the UK context in which a range of cultural institutions (both formal and informal) structure society strongly, impacting upon social mobility, integration and of course inequality. A clear example in the UK is the schooling system, consisting of state schools (including academies, although many of these are run by private individuals or enterprises), selective schools such as grammar schools, and public schools. When one considers that public schools such as Eton and Westminster ‘dominate’ Oxbridge intake (Weale, 2018), and research by the Sutton Trust demonstrates that the vast majority of people in the top jobs were privately educated (Weale, 2016), one must draw

⁶ These are not intended as fully formed research questions. The use of the phrase ‘framing question’ is to indicate a question around a broad theme to structure support strategies for future research.

⁷ *Precise* appears in square brackets as the connotations of this word may suggest a specific research approach (eg using statistical methods, econometrics etc.). However, the framing question is intended to encourage a plurality of approaches, across all research approaches.

the conclusion that such institutions will have a profound impact on social cohesion one way or the other. More detailed, targeted research is needed in this area. A broad framing question might be:

What is the impact of both formal and informal institutions on the character and depth of social cohesion?

5.1.3 Social cohesion in the context of devolution and federalism

This review has highlighted the importance of devolution in understanding the overall landscape of social cohesion in the UK. However, knowledge in this area is currently inadequate, despite there being plenty of case studies available. An in-depth study of developing and implementing social cohesion policy in the context of devolution for example could engage with the concept in relation to the devolved competences and reserved powers models associated with Scotland and Wales, to ascertain whether social cohesion looks different or operates differently in different cases. This on its own would be a considerable contribution to the literature but could also broaden the scope of existing related work, such as on devolution and social citizenship (eg Greer, 2009). A potential framing question is:

To what extent are the character and dynamics of social cohesion affected in practice by devolution in the UK?

An alternative approach would be to develop an international comparison of social cohesion in multilevel systems such as devolution but also federalism. This would be particularly interesting considering that amongst the major reasons for adopting federal systems are physical size (eg Australia and Canada) or the need to represent and respect the autonomy of multiple social groupings (eg Belgium and Switzerland). This research has the potential to be incredibly timely if discussions around the possibility of the UK adopting a federal model gain traction. Even if this does not happen, such a research project provides significant potential for impact and policy learning. A potential framing question is:

How possible is it to build social cohesion policy and strategies successfully in multilevel government systems, and/or from the local to the global?

5.1.4 The spatial political economy of social cohesion

The majority of policy-related literature on social cohesion focuses on urban areas. The implicit conclusion, then, is that social cohesion is more of a problem in these areas. However, as elements of this review illustrate, there are also issues facing social cohesion in rural areas; in some cases, the threat comes from the different nature of rural areas, which usually have less infrastructure, are perhaps not as well prepared for or used to fast-paced change. Some of the major focal points of social cohesion policy currently – extremism and terrorism – may simply not be as much of a problem in small rural areas, which can affect the utility and relevance of policy, even though issues around the existence of and relationship between in- and out-groups may be exacerbated. A potential framing question is:

How do the dynamics and characteristics of threats to and solutions for social cohesion differ in rural and urban areas?

5.1.5 Divergent outcomes in similar systems, or convergence in diverging systems

Another take-away point from this review is that comparative research on the issue of social cohesion is able to shed light on difficult questions, as well as problematizing taken-for-granted positions. To that end it would be fruitful to conduct comparative research on social cohesion beyond issues of federalism or devolution. The two broad ways in which this could be done are through comparing similar case studies and different case studies. For example, a comparative analysis of social cohesion in the UK, Australia, Canada and New Zealand would enable researchers to understand how countries with similar cultural, political and legal frameworks approach the issue of social cohesion (bearing in mind that all these countries except the UK contain indigenous populations). A framing question could be:

How have countries with similar backgrounds approached the issue of social cohesion, politically, socially and culturally?

Comparing qualitatively different countries could also provide interesting conclusions, in which the researcher could consider how different traditions of citizenship, approaches to welfare politics or different varieties of capitalism affect what social cohesion looks like, who/what it is aimed at, and how it is implemented. This could build directly on work concerned with *regimes of social cohesion* (Green and Janmaat, 2011). A framing question could be:

How do countries with different approaches to citizenship, welfare capitalism and/or multiculturalism approach problems of, and solutions for, social cohesion?

5.1.6 Contrasting policy with practice

A particularly under-researched area is what social cohesion actually looks like ‘on the ground’: who is involved, who (if anyone) is targeted, which actors and institutions influence social cohesion and, especially, how is policy translated into practice. For example, the New Labour government produced work and consultations on ‘what works in community cohesion’ in which local councils were consulted, but the positions of individuals and groups within targeted communities differed considerably from narratives produced by the government (see Donoghue, 2016 for an example). Undertaking research on this subject not only allows for a better understanding of the relationship between policy and practice, but also how policy filters down into communities and how those communities then influence the policy process (as might be studied in Cultural Political Economy or Policy Anthropology approaches). A framing question could be:

What is the relationship between social cohesion policy and practice, and what power dynamics are in play between actors and institutions?

5.2 Concluding remarks

Policy on social cohesion, like all policy, strives for simplicity – identifying clear problems, articulating clear solutions, and putting in place policy instruments to achieve those solutions. But as this review has demonstrated, social cohesion is an inherently messy process and there currently exists a tension between the complexity of the situation and the need for simplicity in policy. This may suggest that formal policy is not the best route to achieving

social cohesion. Conversely, it may be that the current policy and political practice concerned with social cohesion is not entirely fit for purpose – even though there may be pockets of best practice from which we can learn. This leads to one of the few certainties of this review: that more and wide-ranging, multi- and inter-disciplinary, research is needed into the policy and *practice* of social cohesion in the UK are also further afield.

Appendix

List of documents reviewed

UK

Integrated communities strategy green paper	2018	UK	Green paper
Community life survey	2018	UK	Report
Integration not demonisation: The final report of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Social Integration's inquiry into the integration of immigrants	2017	UK	Report
Roles, responsibilities and partnerships to build resilient communities	2016	UK	Guidance
Steps for increasing community resilience	2016	UK	Guidance
The context for community resilience	2016	UK	Guidance
Preparing for emergencies: A guide for communities	2016	UK	Guidance
The Casey review: A review into opportunity and integration	2016	UK	Review
Revised Prevent duty guidance: For England and Wales	2015	UK	Guidance
Revised Prevent duty guidance: For Scotland	2015	UK	Guidance
Creating the conditions for integration	2012	UK	Position paper
Community cohesion and Prevent: How have schools responded?	2011	UK	Report
Guidance for local authorities on how to mainstream community cohesion into other services	2009	UK	Guidance
Right to divide? Faith school and community cohesion	2008	UK	Report

Devolved

Tackling prejudice and building connected communities	2017	Scotland	Report to report
Respect and resilience: Developing community cohesion	2016	Wales	Guidance
Respect and resilience: Developing community cohesion	2016	Wales	Self-assessment tool
Community cohesion national delivery plan 2016-17	2016	Wales	Plan
Report of the Independent Advisory Group on Hate Crime, Prejudice and Community Cohesion	2016	Scotland	Report
National community cohesion delivery plan progress report 2015	2015	Wales	Report
Migrant workers in rural Wales and the south Wales valleys	2014	Wales	Report
An evaluation of getting on together: The community cohesion strategy for Wales	2013	Wales	Evaluation
Getting on together: A community cohesion strategy for Wales	2009	Wales	Strategy

Local (England)

Community cohesion strategy for Birmingham green paper	2018	Birmingham	Green paper
Developing community resilience through schools		Essex	Report
Integrated communities strategy green paper LGA response	2018	IGA	Response to green paper
Manchester City Council report for information	2018	Manchester	Report
Community cohesion: Overview of key policy sources for the Camden Commission	2017	London Borough of Camden	Policy overview
Westminster Community Cohesion Commission	2017	London Borough of Westminster	Report

Promoting successful social integration in London	2017	London councils (combined)	Position paper
Greater Manchester tackling violent extremism and promoting social cohesion commission	2017	Manchester	Report
Preventing hateful extremism and promoting social cohesion commission	2017	Manchester	Report
Equality, diversity and inclusion objectives 2017-2020	2017	Norfolk	Objectives
Local Government Association, Brexit	2016	LGA	Briefing
Rethinking radicalisation	2015	Manchester	Report
Equality, diversity and inclusion policy	2010	Norfolk	Policy
Community cohesion, social capital, social isolation and social action: Summary of the evidence		London Borough of Camden	Review

International

Diversity, identity and the social cohesion advantage	2017	Canada	Website (Canada @150)
Building social cohesion in our communities	2015	Australia	Local government resource
Research into the current and emerging drivers for social cohesion, social division and conflict in multicultural Australia	2013	Australia	Research review
Inclusion for all: A Canadian roadmap to social cohesion	2001	Canada	Consultation report

Methodological note

It is important to acknowledge the omission of Northern Ireland in the devolved category. This is because Northern Ireland, especially regarding social cohesion, is a unique case that requires and deserves in-depth analysis in its own right. To compare approaches to social cohesion in Northern Ireland to those in Wales and Scotland would simply not do the complex historical and political situation justice. Too many nuances would be lost, and the specific circumstances surrounding developing and maintaining social cohesion in Northern Ireland – the intricacies of power sharing, the construction of Northern Ireland itself alongside the political cleavages this created, and of course the importance of the presence or otherwise of the Irish border, which Brexit threatens to revive – cannot be given adequate space in this review. Please see the appendix for an indicative list of resources.

Furthermore, although it would be interesting to compare the UK's approach to social cohesion with that of a European neighbour, such as France, this is beyond the scope of this review. Taking France as an example, the republican tradition of citizenship asks different questions of citizens and sets out a different contract of rights and responsibilities. As such the dynamics, nature and outlook of social cohesion will look different. There are also practical constraints in the context of this review: that the official language of Australia and Canada (here, in addition to French) is English facilitates quick comparison, whereas proper comparison with the UK's European neighbours requires language skills or translation, which were not readily available to the authors in the timescale required to complete this review.

An issue that became evident in the review (and is addressed explicitly in some sections) is the imprecise use of terminology⁸. The difference between social cohesion and community cohesion in the policy literature is unclear, clearly differentiating it from the academic literature in which 'social cohesion' has a long pedigree. This review uses both terms throughout, using one over the other where it adds nuance within the context in which it is being used. In other places, where it is not clear whether using the prefix 'community' or 'social' would be useful, the review simply uses the term 'cohesion'. In this latter case, it is presumed that either prefix would be suitable.

The search procedure for the documents reviewed here began with an online search of UK, devolved and local government websites. Using the search engines provided on these websites, key terms such as 'cohesion', 'social cohesion', 'community cohesion' and 'integration' were entered. The results were then reviewed, and relevant documents extracted. The search for international documents used the same process but began with the Google search engine, combining the above keywords with 'Australia' or 'Canada'. In some cases, a snow-balling strategy could be undertaken where newer documents referred to older ones.

In total, we reviewed forty-one documents: 14 from the national level, 9 from the devolved level, 14 from the local level, and 4 from the international level (a full list is available in the appendix). These documents focused primarily on social/community cohesion, but a number mainly at the national level also focused on relevant cognate policy areas such as community resilience, Prevent and tackling extremism. We conducted a broad 'thematic analysis', in which codes that represent important concepts and ideas were developed and identified in the documents. This was done both deductively and inductively:

⁸ A detailed discussion of this problem can be found in section 1 of the parallel literature review (Baylis, Beider and Hardy, 2019).

we developed codes we felt were likely to be important based on prior knowledge of and reading on the subject (deductive), and during the process we added, removed or altered codes as we gained more information (inductive). This led to a core set of ‘top-level’ codes as well as a number of sub-codes, as can be seen in Figure 2. Figures 1 demonstrates the most important top-level codes at the different levels.

As is clear throughout the review, a code’s prominence does not match perfectly to its importance. Rather, its prominence gives an idea of the overall focus or priorities of different levels of government’s social cohesion strategies. Figure 1 is therefore meant to provide a very broad idea of the key elements in the various social cohesion strategies at a glance. The codes represent the broad themes used to drive the comparison between levels of government as well as comparison within levels of government in the case of the devolved and local documents. However, rather than structuring each substantive section based on particular themes, we instead present a narrative that draws inference from the codes. These themes help us identify potential gaps and silences in policy and practice. This is especially useful for section 2.4, in which we ‘reconstruct’ the national picture based upon problematizing the three levels of government and identifying key areas of convergence and divergence, which can then be related to the British Academy’s five themes on social cohesion.

Fig.1 Chart of most prominent codes

	Security	Identity	Inequality	Integration	Values	Rights and responsibilities	Best practice	Change	Measurement and definition
UK	Black	Grey	Grey	Black	Black	White	White	Grey	White
Devolved	Black	White	Grey	Black	Grey	White	White	Grey	White
Local	Black	White	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	White	Grey	White
International	White	Grey	Black	Grey	White	White	White	Grey	Black

Black – very prominent
 Grey – somewhat prominent
 White – not particularly prominent

Fig.2 List of codes

Name of code	Number of documents	Number of references
Best practice	9	41
Change	15	25
Identity	16	31

Belonging	13	29
Britishness	2	5
Citizenship	3	3
Communities	18	50
Diversity	15	48
Ethnicity	3	9
Indigenous	2	4
Inequality	14	52
Discrimination	1	1
Economic	6	13
Empowerment	1	1
Housing	1	2
Social exclusion	14	58
Women	5	9
Youth	1	1
Integration	24	125
Education	16	37
Faith	8	16
Language	10	24
Migration	17	42
Refugees	5	10
Segregation	6	10
Measurement and definition	18	50
Government	14	27
Infrastructure	1	1
Technology	2	2
Local	5	9
Rights and responsibilities	18	36
Security	23	91
Crime	1	5
Hate crime	3	6
Extremism	1	2
Hate crime	6	11
Resilience	13	27
Risk	4	6
Social cohesion	4	26
Values	18	56

List of resources on social cohesion in Northern Ireland

Equality Commission of Northern Ireland (2013), *Together building a united community: Policy analysis*. Available online: <http://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Delivering%20Equality/TogetherBuildingaUnitedCommunityOctCommPaper.pdf> [Accessed 19 December 2018].

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