

Social Science Bites

A new podcast series with
leading social scientists

www.socialsciencebites.com

In association with



Ted Cante on Segregation

David Edmonds: *Ted Cante, welcome to Social Science Bites*

Ted Cante: I'm delighted to be here.

David Edmonds: *The topic we are going to talk about is segregation. Take us back to the events of 2001, the events that dominated British television screens.*

Ted Cante: There were a number of riots, which had a racial characteristic, in northern towns in England. Some of these riots involved criminal behaviour, they certainly involved a great deal of disturbances, and damage to property, and following that, I was asked to put a team together to investigate the causes of those riots.

David Edmonds: *And, they took the country by surprise?*

Ted Cante: They did. We have had race riots before in Britain. What was different about these was that it wasn't really between black and minority communities, and the police, it was really between minority communities and the majority white communities, and that's really the focus of the attention.

David Edmonds: *They occurred not in the big cities, but in the mill towns of the North?*

Ted Cante: Well, they did occur in the mill towns of the North, and that's where most of the disturbances were noted, but actually we found that these disturbances could have taken place in many other towns and cities up and down the country. In fact, disturbances did take place in the Midlands and in the South, but they didn't get to the same level, and those that didn't have disturbances certainly had the conditions in which they might have taken place.

David Edmonds: *You were approached by the government to write a report. What was your remit?*

Ted Cante: Well, really my remit was to come up with policy recommendations to improve the way in which communities related to each other, and not really to dwell so much on what exactly had happened, and who was to blame, but really to look at future policy, so this was distinct from previous reviews of riots, which had often been led by a judge, and were there to find out, you know, what had happened, this was much more policy-focused.

David Edmonds: *What was your methodology?*

Ted Cante: Well, we put together a team of people who have a variety of backgrounds, but a lot of people from the community themselves, and different communities. We essentially went, not just to the riot-torn areas, but those areas that hadn't had riots. We asked what

had gone right, as well as what had gone wrong, we talked to a lot of people from the statutory agencies, local government, the police, a range of voluntary organisations, as well as communities directly on the ground, and we spent a lot of time really trying to bring together their views, and express the way they saw the events that had taken place.

David Edmonds: *And, there's one phrase that comes up time after time, you can't see reports of the Cattle Report, your report, without this phrase being used, and the phrase is: 'parallel lives'. You described a Britain in which different ethnic communities lived lives which didn't mesh at all.*

Ted Cattle: Yes, I thought a long time about how to try and express this problem of completely separate lives, and the term 'parallel lives' just sprang out of the report. It isn't just that people lived in separate areas, it's that they went to different schools, they had different social lives, different cultural experiences, different workplaces, and they actually had no contact with each other at all, and consequently lived in fear, and certainly apprehension of each other, had no tolerance of each other, there was no way, really, of them beginning to understand the other, and that was the most striking finding from people on the ground, as well as the agencies that we talked to, so consequently, it was quite easy for mischievous political leaders, often from the far-right, but from other groups as well, to stir up hatred about the other community.

David Edmonds: *And is that why it matters, because many people will say, well, you'd expect people to live parallel lives, they've got very different backgrounds, different religious backgrounds, many of the communities you were talking about, they were recent immigrants from rural areas in Bangladesh and Pakistan, of course they want to live together and socialise together, why would that matter?*

Ted Cattle: Well, that is precisely the point, that is why it matters, because people who lived in these parallel lives had no understanding of the other, they could easily be dealing with prejudices and stereotypes, they had no opportunities to disconfirm them, they had no opportunity to really challenge their own race's views, or their own views about another faith, and unless we can find, in what is a multi-faith, multi-ethnic society, unless we can find ways in which people can actually come to terms with each other, and understand each other, then we are always going to be prone to conflict and tensions.

David Edmonds: *I wonder if there's a kind of class bias going on here because the communities that rioted were essentially working-class communities, and they involved working-class whites, and they involved working-class Asians, and I wonder if we would be so concerned about 'parallel lives' if we were talking about middle-class communities?*

Ted Cattle: Well, I think we would, and we certainly did not want to, in any way, reflect a class bias. We were concerned about any system which separated different groups and

where prejudices and stereotypes were not challenged, and it's interesting that community cohesion, after our report, was used in so many different contexts. It was used in Northern Ireland, Protestant-Catholic communities; it was used between different generations, older people and younger people; it was used for disabled people in homes, and in schools, it's been used really to reflect the way in which one community, however that community is described, is denied the opportunity to get to know another, and gated communities would come to mind now as being a good expression of that, and of course, faith schools, which are often the preserve of middle class communities, so any of these areas which deny the opportunity for mixing, and interaction, and cross-cultural contact, I think, has the potential for tensions and conflict. We actually found, in at least one of the towns that we visited, that it was the middle-class white communities that were more concerned, than the white working-class communities in that same town, and that they were more easily stirred by some of the far-right, for example, and as I said, other aspects of segregation, really, apply to middle class communities, as much as to working class communities. I think this idea that it's only working class communities that can be racist, or have anti-Semitic, or is Islamophobic views, is just wrong. Middle-class people can, and do.

David Edmonds: *There's been some strong criticism of your report since it's come out, and some academics have said when you drill down into the numbers, the pattern is not as segregated as it looks. So, although on the surface it looks like there are these segregated neighbourhoods, in fact, that's explained by some people moving out into more integrated neighbourhoods, and other immigrants coming in, and the pattern, actually, is one of steady integration, and we shouldn't get too uptight about this so-called picture of segregated Britain.*

Ted Cattle: I think the academic criticism has really fallen away. It was initially there because, I think a lot of academics thought that they had been promoting a concept of multiculturalism for some time, and there was almost an academic theology behind multiculturalism, which my report directly challenged, and I make no bones about it, those old-style multicultural policies, in my view, are completely out of date, they're completely inappropriate for a modern, multi-diverse Britain, in which we draw more from international communities, and all aspects of diversity, whether that's gender, disability, gay and lesbian communities, really, old-style multiculturalism completely missed the way in which societies had changed, but in addition to that, with specific regard to segregation, again I think there's a number of academics that have tried to protect their position, and said, well, actually segregation is breaking down, it's not getting worse, and I think that, again, the more recent academic work shows that is not the case. Yes, there are more mixed communities, if you look at cities as a whole, for example, it depends where you draw the boundaries, but it is also absolutely the case that we have a greater sense of ghettoization, particularly around minority communities, but in some cases around white majority communities as well, we have more schools that are segregated, we have workplaces that

www.socialsciencebites.com

Cattle Nov/2015

You may view, copy, print, download, and adapt copies of this Social Science Bites transcript provided that all such use is in accordance with the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/)

are segregated, and particularly in respect of Eastern Europeans, for example. So, this idea that segregation has somehow fallen away, or improved, it's just not the case, we still are faced with segregated communities.

David Edmonds: *Do you see yourself as a social scientist?*

Ted Cattle: Yes, absolutely, I mean my background is in sociology, but I think one of the problems that we've had, looking at this area, is that the silo arrangements of academic communities, I was really shocked that, particularly sociologists, my own background, had drawn nothing from social psychology, had drawn nothing from anthropology, had drawn nothing from a whole range of other studies, so when I re-read all of those multicultural texts, I found that they, it amuses me anyway, that I can no accuse those academics themselves of living parallel lives. They didn't actually go to each other's conferences, they didn't actually talk to each other. I've given a lot of lectures to academic communities, and I've often found that there's a sociology group sitting in one side of the room, and the social psychologists on the other, and the anthropologists, and I've introduced them to each other, and this, I think, is a disaster. The multidisciplinary approach means that we can borrow concepts, like Contact Theory, into multiculturalism, which was not done before my report of community cohesion.

David Edmonds: *And, just to explain, Contact Theory borrows from the world of psychology, and talks about the importance of contact for breaking down prejudice.*

Ted Cattle: That's absolutely right, and if you re-examine the multicultural texts, and particularly those written by sociologists, you will find that Contact Theory is hardly mentioned, if at all, it is astonishing, and you mention criticism of my report originally, well, it was a challenge to the academic community. It was a challenge to the sociology section of the academic community, I think that has been transformed by recognition that social psychology can actually contribute, fundamentally, to understanding our diverse communities.

David Edmonds: *This is social science in practice. That makes it rare. This is social science being taken on by the government, by civil servants looking at your recommendations, and trying to implement at least some of them.*

Ted Cattle: Yes, and I was delighted when the government accepted my report, and set up an implementation system, which I led for four or five years, inside government, I maintained in independent position, but we worked with all government departments: Education, Social Services, Housing, Regeneration, to try and change their practice, to try and reflect this new idea about cross-cultural contact, about developing a sense of belonging around new identities. We tried to develop that through a range of government departments, and especially in local government, and I have to say, it was warmly received

in local government because they could recognise that on the ground, it was transforming relationships between communities, it was diffusing tensions, it was actually improving, and, again, there was research to show that this was the case, it was improving the number of people that said, actually, we now get on better with people across our communities than we ever have done before. We actually demonstrated it worked.

David Edmonds: *When you're coming up with recommendations, the fact-value distinction begins to break down, because you're not merely describing what's out there, you're coming up with normative suggestions for what needs to be improved?*

Ted Cattle: Well, yes, that is true, but I think we're doing so on the basis of at least some evidence. Evidence, firstly, of what people on the ground, living and working in those communities, had actually experienced for themselves, and could inform the way we responded, and secondly, we could look at the actual results. What we've seen is a transformation of practice, first of all, that there are now numerous programmes and policies up and down the country which are still there, which are still trying to bring communities together through voluntary organisations, through other agencies, and I'm sure that that will continue. I would like to see us going much further, in terms of breaking down some of the institutional barriers, some of the barriers around faith schools, for example, the barriers around workplaces, trying to work with communities in particular, so that they saw mixed communities as something which was valuable and positive, rather than encouraged to think of them in rather negative terms.

David Edmonds: *You were involved actually in implementing your recommendations, as well as coming up with them. Did anything surprise you about that process, anything that you hadn't imagined was going to be a difficulty, which became a difficulty?*

Ted Cattle: Well, I was firstly surprised how warmly they were embraced by other practitioners, and that gave me confidence that we'd got the report right, that people said yes, we should have done this a long time ago, and we haven't. What surprised me, I guess, was the academic community, who still were critical, and saying this is all some sort of political programme, or political plot, or it was the government trying to avoid its responsibility for equalities and rights, and I realise that that was them hanging on to, almost a theology which they had maintained for some time.

David Edmonds: *Is there a sense in which the social science academic world is suspicious of those who go into the practical world of actually implementing policy?*

Ted Cattle: Oh yes, I think that's always been the case, and it is a very unfortunate case because, if social science isn't there to influence practice, what on earth is it there for, so that's exactly what I wanted to see happen. We are here to change the world, we are here to make it better.