

Re-Defining Who We Are

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Measuring change and influences of change over the years is something that historians and policy makers have been trying to do for centuries. Well now, through government funded research a project which could help re-define human interaction and behaviour, which in turn could affect future government policies, is set to be launched.

You may remember last week we reported on the new Timescape initiative that has recently been funded at Leeds University for five years of study. Well I caught up with leading research consultant Dr. Bren Neale to discover what they hope to achieve through the project.

It is apparent the study is focused primarily on the development of changes encountered in human relationships whether between family members, friends and lovers. Dr. Neale explained that there are three focuses the first being on relationships and the affects of society on them. The second will be monitoring an evaluation of time as an affect and finally the third of the strands is homing in on the techniques used.

It is perhaps the first two that are likely to produce the most interesting information with Dr. Neale intimating findings could

affect future policies.

"Another aim is to produce practical knowledge, knowledge that is going to be useful for policy makers." This is particularly poignant when Dr. Neale talks about the family breakdown in society and how society itself has aided this.

"A major affect was the change in the divorce board in 1969 that made it possible for normal people to divorce. The line that David Cameron would take is that we now have a break-down in society and that is a direct consequence of a break-down in marriage so we have a lost generation of youth who have no moral fibre and this is a cause of gun-crime and all sorts of things."

She therefore feels that this study could have great benefit in recording changes and affects of policies in society. However, for Dr. Neale it is just as important to understand continuity, particularly when evaluating family life.

"When you have someone like David Cameron saying that the root cause of all evil is a breakdown in marriage it is important to contest these views. These changes have been rife for a while now."

There is also a pertinent historical element attached as this study, especially if it is extended beyond the initial five years, could have huge benefits for historians



understanding change and how we used to operate. The interviews and video clips and voice recordings will all prove invaluable testimonies of how we think and consequently how those views change as a consequence of time and affects of society and geography.

"Our lives are dynamic so we have to understand how individual lives are changed so we need to understand how people get from a to b; what were the drives, or constraints, what happened along that journey?"

The project will use 400 volunteers who, in order to glean a fair assessment of answers, come from all walks of life, age-groups,

geographical backgrounds and families.

"There is also the geographical element and we have studies from all over the country with one in Wales and one in Scotland so there is a locality spread and that is important. The people that make up the study are from all walks of life and backgrounds so there is a diversity and geographical spread of people."

Although they are aware this won't produce a conclusive study, it will represent an idea of how things affect people. This in turn could be used to re-define the policies of government in order to make the country a more cohesive and unified place.

