How do our social and political attitudes change over the course of our lives? Diane Hofkins looks at responses from two groups to key issues at different periods in their lives.

ALAMY

THE GENERATION GAME
How do our social and political attitudes change over the course of our lives? Diane Hofkins looks at responses from two groups to key issues at different periods in their lives.

ATION GAME
What is more important – the environment or the economy? Suppose you hated your job. Would you stick it out or walk out? Is it OK for couples with children to separate?

The answers to such questions depend not only on your own personal circumstances, but your age, your sex, your educational background and where you live.

On top of that, your attitudes to moral, economic and political issues are swayed by what is happening in the wider world at the time you are asked, and the deep-seeded influences that shaped your particular generation. So, one would imagine you are more likely to hold on to that miserable job when unemployment is high than at an economic boom time. And if you are a boomer, whose attitudes were formed in a period of welfare state consensus, you are more likely to believe in wealth redistribution than your younger cousins who grew up under Margaret Thatcher?

**CLOSER** – the Cohorts and Longitudinal Studies Enhancement Resource, a collaboration between nine longitudinal studies (studies that survey the same group of people over a long period of time) – has been exploring two generations’ responses to 21 political and moral questions to see how a variety of influences play out. The 1958 and 1970 British cohorts (groups of participants) were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements. When they were in their thirties and in their forties. Members of the National Child Development Study (the 1958 cohort) were questioned in 1991 (age 33) and 2000 (age 42), and the 1970 British Cohort Study (BCS70) in 2000 (age 30) and 2012 (age 42). It is therefore possible to see how attitudes change as people get older and to compare two generations.

Not surprisingly, the economic downturn of 2008 appeared to be reflected in the 1970 cohort’s changing attitudes: in 2000, 35 per cent agreed that you should keep that job you disliked, rising to 47 per cent in 2012. Because both groups were questioned in 2000, researchers can compare the two generations at a specific point in time, and this can help clarify their real differences (in 2000, both cohorts were only one percentage point apart on the job question). Researchers found that the two generations are furthest apart on three questions. The older 1958 cohort is more likely than BCS70 members to agree that ‘censorship is necessary to uphold moral standards’ (67 per cent vs 54 per cent) and in both cohorts women are more likely to agree with this than are men (76 per cent vs 57 per cent and 63 per cent vs 44 per cent).

In 2000, the 1970 cohort is more likely to be racially tolerant than the 1958 cohort, with 65 per cent agreeing with the statement ‘I would not mind if 50 per cent of my child’s school were from another race’, compared with 54 per cent in the 1958 cohort. And in 2000, the 1958 cohort expresses attitudes that suggest more concern about the environment than those born in 1970. Seventy-nine per cent of the boomers agree that ‘we should tackle environmental problems even if this means slower economic growth’, compared with 69 per cent of the 1970 group.

Interestingly, there is very little gender difference in either cohort, although in both cases men are slightly more likely than women to agree with the statement.

**COMING OF AGE**

Both cohort studies are following the lives of more than 17,000 people born in England, Scotland and Wales in a single week, collecting information on health, physical, educational and social development, and economic circumstances, among other factors, over the course of their lives.

“It’s striking that we do find substantial difference in the attitudes of these two cohorts even though they were only born 12 years apart,” says Alice Sullivan of the Institute of Education, London, director of the 1970 British Cohort Study. “Each cohort is most likely to have been shaped by the political and societal context in which its members came of age. For the 1958 cohort we need to set the backdrop as the mid-1970s, before Margaret Thatcher came to power. The 1973 oil crisis and the growing interest in environmental issues it prompted are likely to have shaped this cohort born towards the tail end of the post-war baby boom.”

“In contrast, the 1970 cohort came of age in the mid-to-late 1980s, when Thatcher’s radical policies had already done much to reshape the economic and political expectations, creating a climate that prioritised individual over collective solutions to economic problems.”

So how did the views of those 30-year-olds born in 1970 change by age 42, in 2012? The economic downturn has influenced them profoundly. Only 51 per cent now prioritise environment over economy. “Their concerns have become more immediate, even though scientists warn of future disaster
for descendants,” says Professor Sullivan. Meanwhile, agreement that ‘Government should redistribute income from better off to poorer’ dropped from 42 to 33 per cent (that said, the economically more left-wing 1958 cohort’s tendency to agree also fell with age, from 50 to 44 per cent). “In each case we can see how the hostile economic environment is likely to be shaping individuals’ answers to these questions,” says Professor Sullivan. But there are no major gender differences: men are slightly more likely than women to agree that ‘Government should redistribute...’ (36 per cent vs 31 per cent) which is suggestive of women’s economic conservatism in this context.

THE EFFECTS OF AGEING

Both cohorts’ attitudes to moral and social questions are more mixed. “It is not only that the historical context shapes attitudes, but individual life circumstances may have an influence too as people move through the life course. People tend to become richer as they get older, which may make them more economically conservative, but ageing effects on moral and social attitudes seem much less predictable. It’s possible that having children makes people more socially conservative in certain areas, but the pattern is far from consistent,” says Professor Sullivan.

By 2012 the 1970 cohort has shifted its attitudes on censorship and moral standards so they are much more in line with the 1958 cohort’s views at the same age (up to 65 per cent). Although there is still a gender difference, the gap between men and women has narrowed substantially.

By 2012 the 1970 cohort has become less racially tolerant (only 53 per cent said they would not mind if half the children in their child’s school were from another race, compared with 65 per cent 12 years earlier), and once again their attitudes shifted much closer to those of the 1958 cohort at age 42. “This raises a question about whether, once cohort members have children of school age, they answer this hypothetical question about a child’s classmates in a different way,” Dr Sullivan says.

In 2000, just over half (52 per cent) of the 1970 cohort felt that it was too easy to get a divorce. But by 2012 that proportion had fallen to a third (34 per cent). This may reflect a gradual process of social liberalisation, or it may be another cohort effect, in that they now have a less idealistic view of marriage. Baby boomers – who would have seen little divorce among their own parents – were more inclined to agree with the statement as they got older (47 per cent at age 33 but 51 per cent at age 42).

“By comparing data from different cohort studies, we can chart social change across different generations and start to untangle the reasons behind it,” Dr Sullivan comments. “The depth and breadth of these datasets make them one of the most valuable sources of information for social research, policy and practice.”

Diane Hopkins is a writer, editor, journalist and consultant with expertise in education and children’s issues.
COHABITING COUPLES HAVE FEWER RIGHTS IN ENGLISH LAW THAN THEY MIGHT IMAGINE

IN BRITAIN AND OTHER European countries, an increasing number of couples live together for extended periods of time without being married (referred to as cohabiting), and often raise children within these relationships. This rise has been one of the most striking family structure changes over the past few decades.

Starting in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the institution of marriage began to change in many parts of Europe and more couples began to live together outside of marriage. During this time, values and attitudes about sex, gender relations and women’s employment changed dramatically. At the same time, we saw greater state welfare protection for vulnerable individuals and increased state support for families. These developments resulted in different national and state approaches to the institution of marriage and cohabitation and the policies aimed at regulating relationships continue to evolve today.

So, what rights do cohabiting couples and families have under current English family law, and how do they compare with the rights of those in other European countries?

Research I am undertaking with Nora Sánchez Gassen as part of the ESRC Centre for Population Change highlights that, in England, cohabitation is much less regulated than marriage and that this differs from other countries. For example, married couples in England have automatic rights to inherit from each other and can receive financial assistance from the state in the form of a bereavement allowance. If a marriage ends in divorce, courts may redistribute the family property and financial savings and order that one partner pays maintenance (alimony) to the other. Cohabitants do not automatically have these rights. In the UK, many believe that cohabiting couples are part of a ‘common law marriage’ arrangement. They are unaware that this isn’t a recognised legal status, or that living together does not automatically allow them the same legal rights that they would have if they were married.

IT’S THE LAW, ISN’T IT?

This is a worrying misconception when you consider that in England in 2010, almost one third of all people aged 15–44 living with a partner were not married and around half of these couples were raising children.

Cohabitants who are financially dependent on their partner, for example because they raise children, are most at risk. These cohabitants may have no rights towards their partner’s property, savings or pension if the relationship ends, or if their partner dies. In other European countries, such as France, Sweden and the Netherlands, cohabitation is more widespread and extensively regulated. These countries provide more legal options for coverage and greater protection for cohabiting couples.

As cohabitation continues to increase in Britain, surely it must become a priority for the political agenda. Currently, relationships and families in the UK are primarily regulated through the institution of marriage, but this seems a somewhat outdated approach. On the other hand, it is still difficult to know whether the law should regulate these types of relationships, given the uncertain and fluid nature of cohabiting relationships and, indeed, the desire of many couples to have a relationship free from legal obligations.

With many of the same rights as marriage, cohabitation could lead to marriage becoming less valued and more ‘pointless’ in today’s society. But recent studies have shown that although marriage may be postponed, eventually most people marry and indeed most people want to marry, even in places with high levels of cohabitation, such as Sweden.

In the meantime, with cohabitation levels on the rise, and the rights and protection of families at stake, perhaps it is time to look to our European neighbours to take a more active approach in educating and protecting those who cohabit in the same ways as the married.

What are the rights of cohabitants in England and abroad?

DR BRIENNA PERELLI-HARRIS
ESRC Centre for Population Change, Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, University of Southampton

www.nonmarital.org
www.cpc.ac.uk
A woman’s work

The dramatic changes in work and families in Britain

BRITISH WOMEN’S WORK and family lives are becoming more similar to men’s but women are still more likely to take career breaks and work part-time. This is the finding of research by Dr Anne McMunigal and colleagues from the ESRC’s International Centre for Life Course Studies at University College London, along with colleagues at the University of Essex and the University of Toronto.

The research compared information on the work, partnership and family lives of people born in 1946, 1958 and 1970, using the 1946 Survey of Health and Development, the 1958 National Child Development Study and the 1970 British Cohort Study. The datasets allowed the authors to track the work and family lives of participants from age 16 to 42 to assess how the combination of work and family life has changed over time for men and women.

DECADES OF CHANGE

Great Britain, like many post-industrial countries, has seen dramatic changes in the work and family lives of men and women. In particular, declines have been witnessed in traditional social institutions, such as marriage and male-breadwinner divisions of household labour. Paid work is now a fact of life for the majority of women, including those with family responsibilities, fathers are more involved in childcare and family forms are more diverse.

Women’s work histories characterised by weak labour market ties – long periods of time out of paid work or in part-time employment – have decreased steadily from about two-thirds of women born in 1946 to a little over a third of women born in 1970. The vast majority of men in these three studies were working full-time but across time this was increasingly combined with cohabiting parenthood or single childlessness, rather than married parenthood.

Two striking trends highlighted in the research were increases in rates of long-term cohabiting parenthood as well as remaining single and childless among those born in 1970. Only two per cent of people born in 1946 had ever cohabited, compared to a little over half of those born in 1958 and nearly three-quarters of those born in 1970. Also, a quarter of men and nearly a fifth of women born in 1970 were in continuous full-time employment and had not lived with a partner or become a parent by age 42. Delays in starting a family and increasing diversity in partnership patterns over people’s lives were evident.

www.ucl.ac.uk/icls

The 1958 National Child Development Study and the 1970 British Cohort Study are funded by the ESRC. The 1946 Survey of Health and Development is funded by the Medical Research Council.

RELIGION

What is the state of religion in the United Kingdom?

RESEARCH BY PROFESSOR David Voas, Director of Research and Professor of Population Studies at the Institute for Social and Economic Research, finds that about half the people living in Britain regard themselves as having a religion, although for most the identity is purely nominal.

Religious organisations are still the most important voluntary associations in the country and they are also some of the most influential: the Church of England has 26 seats in the House of Lords, a large proportion of schools are managed by the Anglican and Catholic churches, and religion is typically involved in ceremonies marking important personal and national events.

Defenders of faith are more and more to be found among ethnic minorities

Only one in five people born since 1975 believe in God, even with doubts. Nearly half of younger adults in Britain qualify as atheists or agnostics, even if they would not use those terms themselves. Religion has certainly not disappeared, but for the white British (as for the populations of highly developed countries generally) it is becoming less and less relevant. Immigration and geopolitical tensions have partially revived the social significance of religion, but there are few signs that spirituality or anything else has replaced its personal significance.

Against this backdrop, the increasing proportion of Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs is particularly intriguing. According to the 2011 census of population, more than nine per cent of children aged 0-4 are Muslim. Even if immigration ceases to make a difference, at least one in ten people in Britain will be Muslim in the second half of this century. At least one in eight will belong to a non-Christian religion.

Our national heritage and main institutions are still profoundly marked by a Christian past, and yet the overt manifestations of religion will be increasingly non-Christian, and participation in Christian services will be increasingly non-white British. The Church of England bishops – all male and nearly all white – seem anachronistic even now as representatives of religion in Britain. The defenders of faith are more and more to be found among ethnic minorities.

www.iser.essex.ac.uk
THE PARENT TRAP

Read a book or go to the park, ignore or punish a naughty child? Is what’s best for your child that straightforward?

The impact of parents’ involvement and strictness on their children’s wellbeing and behaviour is a topic that has primarily interested psychologists. They have identified all sorts of significant correlations between socioeconomic factors, parenting style and children’s outcomes.

Starting with Baumrind in 1966, psychologists have advocated the benefit of the parents’ overall involvement and strictness. She defines authoritative parents as those who are more demanding, while being attentive to their children’s needs and showing affection. In this literature, children from authoritative parents are more independent and self-confident and show pro-social behaviour among others. The majority of studies in this field rely on small and observational samples, but what are the limitations of this type of studies?

There are several issues when trying to estimate the causal effect of maternal practices on children’s wellbeing. First, there is the problem of ‘reverse causality’: a mother is more likely to shout if her child is naughty, but the child might be more naughty if her mother shouts a lot. Simply looking at the correlations between the two does not permit to disentangle the one-way effect, that is, the causal effect.

The second issue is the ‘omitted variable’ problem: for example, mothers who are more educated may be more likely to reason with their naughty child, but might also be more likely to do many other things that benefit their children (healthier meals, more frequent physical activities, and so on). Therefore, when in this case education is not taken into consideration, one has the impression and could conclude that reasoning with a naughty child may be better than shouting at her. Much of the psychology evidence relies on small samples and a limited set of socioeconomic variables, and thus estimated correlations are likely to be disconnected from the actual causal effects due to the reverse causality and omitted variable problems.

In contrast, economists have generally focused on the socioeconomic determinants of children’s wellbeing without taking parenting style into account. For example, they tend to conclude that children from educated mothers and/or from wealthier families are generally better off. But from a public policy point of view, these results are not helpful to improve the worse off; the government cannot send mothers back to school, and has no guarantee that monetary transfers will be spent in a way that improves the child’s wellbeing. It is therefore important to better understand the impact of specific mothers’ practices with their children.

Hidden factors

Using a cohort survey and adopting an economics approach allows some of the problems due to selection and unobservable confounding factors to be addressed. Research by Dr Laure de Preux of the Centre for
It is important to understand the impact of specific mothers’ practices with their children.

Economic Performance at the LSE starts by proposing a simple behavioural model to explicitly illustrate that the mother’s overall involvement and strictness are affected by many observable and unobservable factors. She estimates the relationship between parenting style and the child’s wellbeing accounting for some of these previously omitted factors in order to identify a relationship closer to the causal effects, instead of mere correlations.

Dr Laure de Preux uses the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS), a national longitudinal birth cohort study following the lives of around 19,000 children born in the UK in 2000-01. It contains detailed information on the family socioeconomic characteristics, as well as the parents and the child’s health. In addition to numerous observable characteristics, she accounts for the unobservable factors that affect jointly the mother’s parenting style and the child’s behaviour and wellbeing. Finally, instead of aggregating the different parental practices into an arbitrary index, she studies them as such in order to better understand the specific parental practices that matter.

When comparing the evidence found in the psychology literature to the one where the two identification problems mentioned above are taken into account, it appears that the overall involvement is beneficial to the child, contrarily to strictness. As for involvement, literary activities are generally more beneficial to the child than artistic and physical activities. With regards to the strictness, the estimation approach reveals that punishing a child a lot when naughty, apart from reasoning with her, is harmful. In particular, excessive shouting, punishing, or ignoring a naughty child increases behavioural problems. These results are robust when accounting for the father’s involvement.

An important weakness in the results is that the mother reports all variables. This can be addressed with the MCS using the child outcome measures reported by the teachers. The effects of the mothers’ parenting style remain qualitatively the same but lose significance, probably due to the smaller sample for which teachers’ reported variables are collected.

Despite the fact that overall involvement and strictness are important determinants of parenting style, the role of socioeconomic factors remains almost unchanged. This result suggests that higher socioeconomic classes are able to create a whole environment that is not observed by researchers, but that clearly benefits the child. More research should be done to identify the possible pathways explaining these relationships.

**LANGUAGE**

**HEALTHY METAPHORS**

*How the language to describe cancer affects patients, family carers and health professionals*

"SHE LOST HER brave fight. If anyone matters those words after my death, wherever I am, I will curse them." This is how Kate Granger, a terminally ill doctor in her early thirties, rejects the 'fight' metaphor that is often used for cancer sufferers (the Guardian, 25 April 2014). With more than one in three people in the UK expected to develop some form of cancer in their lives, the language that is used for this disease affects everyone, directly or indirectly.

The ESRC-funded Metaphor in End-of-Life Care project at Lancaster University investigated the metaphors used by patients, family carers and health professionals to talk about cancer, especially in its terminal phase. The research shows that the members of all three groups still regularly use metaphors of 'fight' and 'battle'. The language used by many patients, in particular, supports Kate Granger's opposition to the idea that cancer sufferers should 'fight' their illness.

This metaphor can contribute to feelings of anxiety and vulnerability, and even generate guilt when treatment does not work, as when a patient says: "I feel such a failure that I am not winning this battle." On the other hand, some people with cancer find a sense of meaning, purpose and identity in the idea of being in a fight, as when they say: "My consultants recognised that I was a born fighter," or "I don't want it to beat me; I want to beat it."

**WHAT'S YOUR JOURNEY?**

Yet other patients prefer different metaphors, such as the cancer 'journey', where more experienced patients lead the way, or musical metaphors, where cancerous cells need to be made to 'sing in tune' with the rest of the body.

Overall, the study shows that metaphors are useful resources for making sense of sensitive and challenging experiences, such as having a life-threatening or terminal illness. But there is no 'one-size-fits-all' metaphor: different metaphors suit different people, or even the same person at different times. What matters is that each patient is able to talk about their illness in the way that suits them best.  

[ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/melc](ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/melc)

---

**SOCIAL INFLUENCES**

**Love thy neighbour**

*Do neighbours affect how your children do academically?*

NEW FAMILIES HAVE moved into your street. Should you worry about their kids making friends with your kids? What if they’re ‘a bad influence’? You’ve heard that the neighbourhood a child grows up in affects their behaviour and achievement – what if the new neighbours are ‘the wrong sort’?

It is easy to see a correlation between the kind of neighbours a child grows up with and their subsequent behaviours and educational achievement. This perception, and earlier research findings that supported it, have been very influential, for example in motivating policy to encourage ‘mixed communities’ in order to improve life chances. But recent academic research from the Spatial Economics Research Centre (SERC) and Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics suggests that the type of neighbours you have makes no difference at all to how well children do academically in school.

These studies from LSE looked at how a child’s achievement at school changes between age 11 and age 14. They first looked at the effects of moving into social housing, which is associated with lower test scores at school at age 14, given the many disadvantages faced by those in social housing. But the effects on test scores are the same whether the move occurred before or after the test was taken, so clearly this worse performance has nothing to do with the effect of the neighbours the child experienced when moving.

The second study (now published in The Economic Journal) estimated what happens to a child’s achievement as other children move in and out and change the local neighbourhood composition, but also found no effects. On the other hand, neighbours do seem to make some small difference to a child’s attitude to school and their propensity for anti-social behaviour.

**FIXING THE SOCIAL MIX**

Ongoing research at SERC suggests too that living in an area where people move in and out often slightly reduces a child’s performance at school, perhaps because high turnover of neighbours leads to weaker social ties. All investigations were carried out using a large administrative dataset on all state schoolchildren in England (the National Pupil Database).

An important role for academic research is in informing the design of effective policy. Here, policy aimed at improving life chances through social mixing does not appear to be justified by the evidence. And disadvantaged kids moving in next door isn’t, in itself, likely to spell trouble for your child’s education.

[eprints.lse.ac.uk/30797/1/sercdp0063.pdf](eprints.lse.ac.uk/30797/1/sercdp0063.pdf)
POVERTY

LOW STANDARDS

What do we really need to live? A look at standards of living in the UK today finds deprivation is rising

RESEARCH FROM THE Poverty and Social Exclusion (PSE) project examines what people think should be necessities - items and activities that everyone should be able to afford - and then investigates living standards, identifying those who can’t afford these necessities.

Over the last 30 years the proportion of the population who fall below the minimum standards as set at the time - those in ‘consensual deprivation poverty’ - has been rising. In 2012, 33 per cent of households lacked three or more of the items and activities identified as necessities in 2012. In the 1983 survey, 14 per cent lacked three or more items and activities seen as necessities at that time; in 1990 it was 20 per cent and in 1999, 22 per cent. So why have people increasingly been unable to afford these publicly identified necessities?

Between 1983 and 1999, the living standards of the poor did improve: fewer lacked an indoor toilet, for example, and more possessed consumer goods such as a washing machine, seen as necessities in 1983.

While these are important improvements, during this period inequality expanded sharply. The share of total net income taken by those in the bottom three tenths of the population fell during the 1980s, a loss that has not been recovered. While overall, general living standards were rising – leading to a gradual overall increase in what was set to be a minimum standard – the poor got left behind. Their standards failed to improve at a rate sufficient to enable them to keep up with the required standards for full participation in society. So while the poor of the 1990s were in some respects better off than those in the early 1980s, they were less a part of the society in which they lived.

Being in work is increasingly insufficient to keep a household above society’s minimum standards

The share of total net income taken by those in the bottom three tenths of the population fell during the 1980s, a loss that has not been recovered. While overall, general living standards were rising – leading to a gradual overall increase in what was set to be a minimum standard – the poor got left behind. Their standards failed to improve at a rate sufficient to enable them to keep up with the required standards for full participation in society. So while the poor of the 1990s were in some respects better off than those in the early 1980s, they were less a part of the society in which they lived.

HARDSHIP ON THE UP

The 2012 survey shows that overall levels of deprivation have risen sharply since 1999, not just on a relative basis – that is as measured by the standards of the day - but also using a fixed standard. Using the 1999 minimum standards, more people fell below that standard in 2012 than did in 1999.

This rise in deprivation is partly the result of the recession: the incomes of those in the bottom quarter fell by around nine per cent between 2004/5 and 2012/13, and overall were no higher than in 2001. This income squeeze has been further re-inforced by the above-average hike in the cost of living facing the poorest. But it also reflects other underlying changes during the last decade.

There is much greater income insecurity with not just a continuing spread of low pay but also with less guaranteed income. This makes more people more vulnerable to poverty as they are not only struggling to get by on their income but do not have the required stability to build up reserves to get them through harder times. The surveys find, for example, a rise between 1999 and 2012 in the numbers unable to make savings for a rainy day. And the surveys also find rising levels of personal debt that has left many more vulnerable to any fall in income.

The result of these trends is that over the last 30 years there has been a rise in the proportions of those who fall below society’s minimum standards who are in work. In 1983 under 40 per cent of those lacking three-plus necessities were in a household where the head of the household was in work rising to over 60 per cent by 2012. Being in work is increasingly insufficient to keep a household above society’s minimum standards.

www.poverty.ac.uk

The PSE project is a collaboration between these universities: Bristol (lead), Heriot-Watt, The Open University, Queen’s Belfast, Glasgow and York working with the National Centre for Social Research and the Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency.

Breadline Britain – The Rise of Mass Poverty by Stewart Lansley and Joanna Mack, will be published by One World early in 2015.

More families are unable to provide the publicly identified necessities of life
IN APRIL 2013, RESEARCH from the ESRC’s Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change (CRESCE) drew worldwide attention to and opened a vigorous debate on the nature and role of social class in the UK today. The cause of this attention was the publication of the preliminary findings of the Great British Class Survey (GBCS) in the journal, Sociology. The paper’s new seven-fold model of class attracted intense media interest, featuring on most major news programmes on radio and television in the UK, while beyond these shores the story had become the most read article on the New York Times website within two days. It also led to over 320,000 people, making it by far the largest of its kind. The resulting data is clearly skewed in terms of those who participated in the survey towards people who tend to be more affluent and better educated than the population at large, but this was controlled for by the addition of a smaller, representative sample conducted by public opinion company, GfK. Analysis of this data resulted in a new model of social class that identified seven distinct groupings ranging from ‘elite’ to ‘precariat’, all with differing compositions of the three capitals.

Elite The most privileged class has high levels of all three capitals – economic, cultural and social. High economic capital sets them apart from everyone else.

Established Middle Class Members of this gregarious, culturally engaged class have high levels of the ‘capitals’, but less than the Elite.

Technical Middle Class A new, small class, with high economic capital but less culturally engaged. Relatively few social contacts, so less socially engaged.

New Affluent Workers Medium levels of economic capital and higher levels of cultural and social capital.

A young and active group.

Emergent Service Workers A new class with low economic capital but high levels of emerging cultural capital and high social capital. Members are young, often found in urban areas.

Traditional Working Class Scores low on all forms of the three capitals, but not the poorest group. The average age of this class is higher than the others.

Precariat The most deprived class with low levels of economic, cultural and social capital. Everyday lives of members are precarious.


www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-22000973
www.cresc.ac.uk

NEW RESEARCH TOOLS MEAN WE WILL FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE ELITE CLASS IN GREAT BRITAIN

THE 7 GROUPS

ELITE ADVANTAGES

The GBCS is a resource that brings huge social insight because the level of detail permitted by its sample size means it provides a lens to focus upon the elite: the richest and most exclusive group in British society who, until recently, have been largely overlooked in sociological research. New analysis on the data to appear in the journal Sociological Review in 2015 will examine this under-studied group in great detail. Here, the GBCS team’s work has shed light on the profound spatial inequalities that exist in the UK and the concentration of the British elite in the southeast of England, reflecting broader public concerns about the primacy of London in the UK economy. It has also found that there exist high levels of social ‘closure’ into the elite, meaning that access to this class is very difficult for those from less privileged economic and educational backgrounds – and becoming progressively more so.

The research also points to the enduring power of ‘Golden Triangle’ universities in providing pathways into the best-paid jobs and most prestigious professions, echoing the recent findings of the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, which has discovered that elitism is so ingrained in British society it could be called ‘social engineering’. Clearly the GBCS offers important social scientific insights into these disturbing dynamics.
**VOCAL DIFFERENCES**

*Do women and men use language differently?*

**POPULAR WRITING** on men and women’s use of language tends to emphasise differences, often claiming that men are more rational, innovative and aggressive while women are more emotional, careful and co-operative in their language use. Are men and women really like that?

Research by Paul Baker, published in the book *Using Corpora to Analyse Gender*, examined ten million words of transcribed speech from British men and women and found that most men and women were a lot more similar to each other linguistically than different. The instances where men and women were found to be different were often due to the gendered roles they tended to be in – so a higher male use of numbers, along with political and scientific language, was a result of men being recorded while at work in certain jobs where such language was needed. Similarly, women made more reference to domestic and home-related words (kitchen, children, shopping) because many of them were recorded at home, while looking after children.

Some gendered words did not appear to be role-related, such as higher female use of ‘lovely’, ‘she’, ‘oh’ and ‘Christmas’ or male use of ‘yeah’, ‘er’, ‘right’ and the ‘f-word’. But many of these types of words, when examined more closely, were found to be due to small numbers of atypical speakers using them more than anyone else. For example, only about four per cent of the men in the corpus said the ‘f-word’, including one male speaker who managed to say it 274 times in 26,000 words of speech. Such men boosted the frequency of that word but were not typical of men in general.

**NOT SO DIFFERENT?**

As for ‘Christmas’, it was a female word and lots of women said it, but it turned out to be another ‘role’ word like ‘shopping’. When women talked about Christmas it was because they were doing most of the organisational work for it. As a recent advert said ‘Behind every great Christmas there’s Mum’. The corpus bears this out. Men and women – not so different after all perhaps – except in the roles society expects of them. [cass.lancs.ac.uk](http://cass.lancs.ac.uk)

---

**NEWS IN BRIEF**

**DIVORCE COSTS WOMEN**

New research suggests that the greater legal protection offered by marriage does not appear to translate into economic protection for women. When relationships fail, income loss for women who were married is greater than the financial loss experienced by women cohabiting.

“Cohabitees lose less even after taking into account characteristics such as age and the value of assets,” says researcher Professor Hamish Low. But it’s not access to benefits or employment after separation that explains the variation. Rather, divorced women do not return to living with their extended families. “The change arises because of differences in access to family support networks,” he says. “Cohabitees’ household income falls by less because following separation they are more likely to live with other adults, such as family.”

Professor Hamish Low,
University of Cambridge

**AGE-OLD EXPERIENCE**

Over-emphasis on the costs of Britain’s ageing population rather than fully valuing older people’s contribution to society shows a widespread failure to understand the experience of ageing, concludes a major research project. Drawing upon mass observation diary-keeping and reflective reading diaries kept by volunteer group members from the Third Age Trust, a team of Brunel University researchers examined how 300 older people judged their lives, treatment and how they were viewed, and their reaction to policies affecting older people. No one either raised fear of crime as an issue, or appeared disproportionate to feelings of isolation and loneliness. Many were positive about ageing as a phase of confidence and self-acceptance, but presented emphasis on the costs of an ageing population while ignoring the contributions of older citizens, such as acting as carers for young and old. [demos.co.uk/projects/comingofage](http://demos.co.uk/projects/comingofage)

Professor Philip Tew,
Brunel University
The professional group themselves at age 42

A huge part of the private school advantage was totally non-meritocratic

Professor Alice Sullivan
Professor of Sociology at the Institute of Education, University of London, Director and Principal Investigator of the 1970 British Cohort Study

Two new studies have used data gathered by the ‘age 42 survey’ of the 1970 British Cohort Study (BCS70) to provide some answers to these important questions. This 2012 survey attracted responses from more than 9,800 cohort members. The first study looks at the cohort members’ social origins and secondary schooling and examines how these two factors affected their chances of attending an elite (Russell Group) university. The second study asks whether the BCS70 members received help from parents and friends to get a job, and whether this influenced incomes in mid-life and enabled them to become upwardly mobile.

When it comes to getting ahead, it matters not just whether someone has a degree, but which university they attended. The first study found that, controlling for social background factors and cognitive scores at age five and ten, those who attended private schools were 1.7 times more likely than former comprehensive school pupils to graduate from a non-elite university and 3.4 times more likely to gain an elite degree. But there was no advantage associated with having been to a grammar school. Does the private school advantage simply reflect better teaching and results at independent schools? Even controlling for cognitive scores at 16 and O- and A-level results, people who had been to private secondary schools were still 2.5 times more likely than ex-comprehensive school pupils to have an elite degree, so a huge part of the private school advantage was totally non-meritocratic.

Professor Alice Sullivan

The study is managed by the IOE’s Centre for Longitudinal Studies, an ESRC Resource Centre
HOW ELITE IS OUR SOCIETY?
The concept of class is still alive and kicking in Britain today

TOP DOG vs JOE PUBLIC
WHAT ARE THE BACKGROUNDS OF PEOPLE WHO INFLUENCE OPINIONS IN THE UK? THE MOST - POLITICIANS AND MEDIA PROFESSIONALS? WITH 7% OF THE PUBLIC AS A WHOLE GOING TO AN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL AND LESS THAN 1% GOING TO OXBRIDGE, IT SEEMS CLEAR WHO’S COMING OUT TOP DOG...

POLITICS
There are 650 MPs at Westminster. Out of this group...

- Around 1/3 went to independent schools compared to 7% of the public as a whole (33%)
- Nearly 1/4 attended Oxbridge compared to 1 in 100 of the public (24%)
- Around 33% of Conservative MPs, 1/5 of Labour MPs and 1/4 of Liberal Democrats attended Oxbridge
- Half of the Lords in the House of Lords attended independent schools, seven times more than the UK population as a whole (50%)

THE MEDIA
Includes professionals based on newspaper editors, columnists and broadcasters

- 54% of media professionals went to independent schools
- 45% of media professionals went to Oxbridge
- 38% of tabloid columnists attended independent schools compared to 45% of broadsheet columnists
- 26% of BBC executives went to an independent school, although 33% graduated from Oxbridge

PUBLIC SECTOR
Judges have the most advantaged educational background

- Of senior judges, nearly 3/4 attended independent schools (71%)
- Around 3/4 of senior judges went to Oxbridge (75%)
- Senior armed forces officers are second only to judges in having the most advantaged educational background
- Nearly 2/3 of senior armed forces officers attended independent schools (62%)
- Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables in England and Wales are more representative of the country
- Just over 1/5 went to independent schools (22%)
- Nearly 2/3 attended university but just 8% went to Oxbridge (62%)

BUSINESS

- 44% of those on the Sunday Times Rich List went to an independent school
- 43% of FTSE 350 CEOs attended a Russell Group University
- 29% on the Times Rich List did not attend a university

THE OTHERS

- 35% of the national rugby team and...
- 33% of the England cricket team attended an independent school
- 13% of the England national football team went to independent schools and 83% were educated in comprehensive schools
- 22% of pop stars attended an independent school, but 62% did not attend university