

The Great British Class Survey



**CLASS DIVISIONS IN CONTEMPORARY
BRITAIN: LESSONS FROM THE GREAT
BRITISH CLASS SURVEY AND THE
NATIONAL CHILD DEVELOPMENT STUDY**

The Great British Class Survey

- Developed by BBC Lab UK as part of their concern to develop 'public value' and respond to digital journalism.
- BBC approached us to assist with a survey specifically on cultural, economic and social aspects of class which they thought would have current affairs as well as 'scientific' interest
- Survey launched in January 2011 and generated 161,000 respondents by that summer. The survey designed to be 'interactive'
- Indicates the extent of polarisation at the top and bottom of British society

A new approach to class?

- At the centre of our analysis was seeing class not as a ‘bundle of occupations’ groups but as the product of three forms of ‘capital’.
 - The questions on cultural capital, following in the spirit of *Culture, Class, Distinction*, (Bennett et al 2009) were unusually sophisticated and have not been fully elaborated
 - The ‘position generator’ question for social capital is the most wide ranging ever conducted (whether you know people in 37 different occupations....).
 - Questions on economic capital examine income, savings and house price..... .

2: New class fractures: 'elite' and 'precariat'

	Elite	Established middle class	New affluent workers	Technical middle class	Traditional working class	Emergent service workers	Precariat
Household income	£89 082	£47 184	£29 252	£37 428	£13 305	£21 048	£8 253
Household savings	£142,458	£26 090	£4 918	£65 844	£9 500	£1 138	£793
House value	£325 000	£176834	£128 639	£163 362	£127 174	£17 968	£26 948
Social contact score	50.1	45.3	37.8	53.5	41.5	38.3	29.9
Social contact number	16.2	17.0	16.9	3.6	9.8	14.8	6.7
Highbrow cultural capital	16.9	13.7	6.9	9.2	10.8	9.6	6.0
Emerging cultural capital	14.4	16.5	14.8	11.4	6.5	17.5	8.4

	Elite	Established middle class	New affluent workers	Technical middle class	Traditional working class	Emergent service workers	Precariat
Household income	1	2	4	3	6	5	7
Household savings	1	3	5	2	4	6	7
House value	1	2	4	3	5	7	6
Social contact score	2	3	6	1	4	5	7
Social contact number	3	1	2	7	5	4	6
Highbrow cultural capital	1	2	6	5	3	4	7
Emerging cultural capital	4	3	2	5	7	1	6

Age

Elite



57

Established m c

46



New affluent workers



44

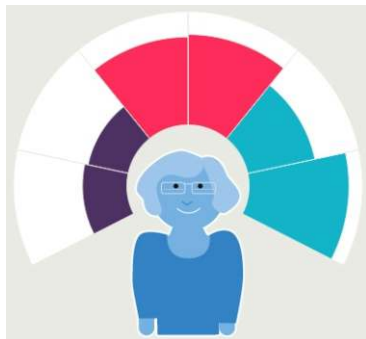
Technical mc



52

Traditional w c

66



Emerging service workers



32

Precariat



50

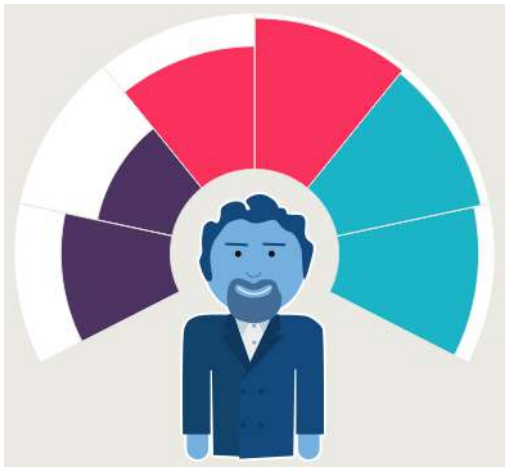
% ethnic min

Elite



4

Established m c



13

New affluent workers



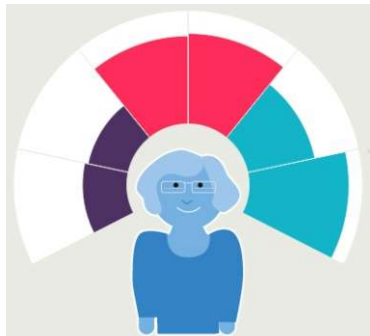
11

Technical mc



9

Traditional w c



9

Emerging service workers



21

Precariat



13

% female

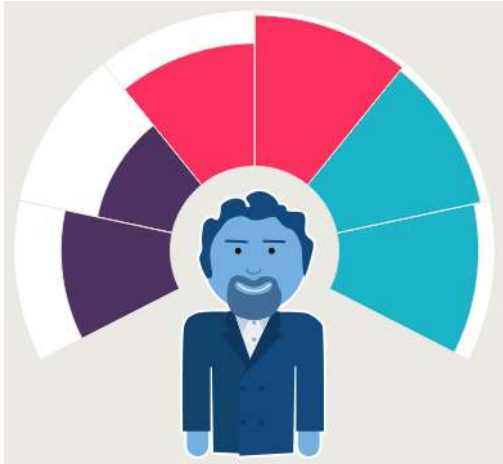
Elite



50

Established m c

54



New affluent workers



43

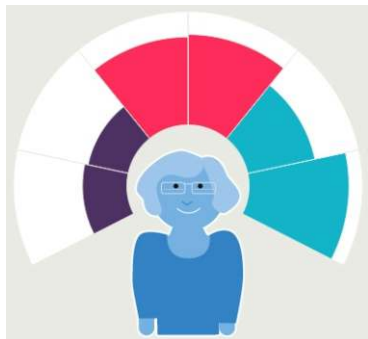


Technical mc

59

Traditional w c

62



Emerging service workers

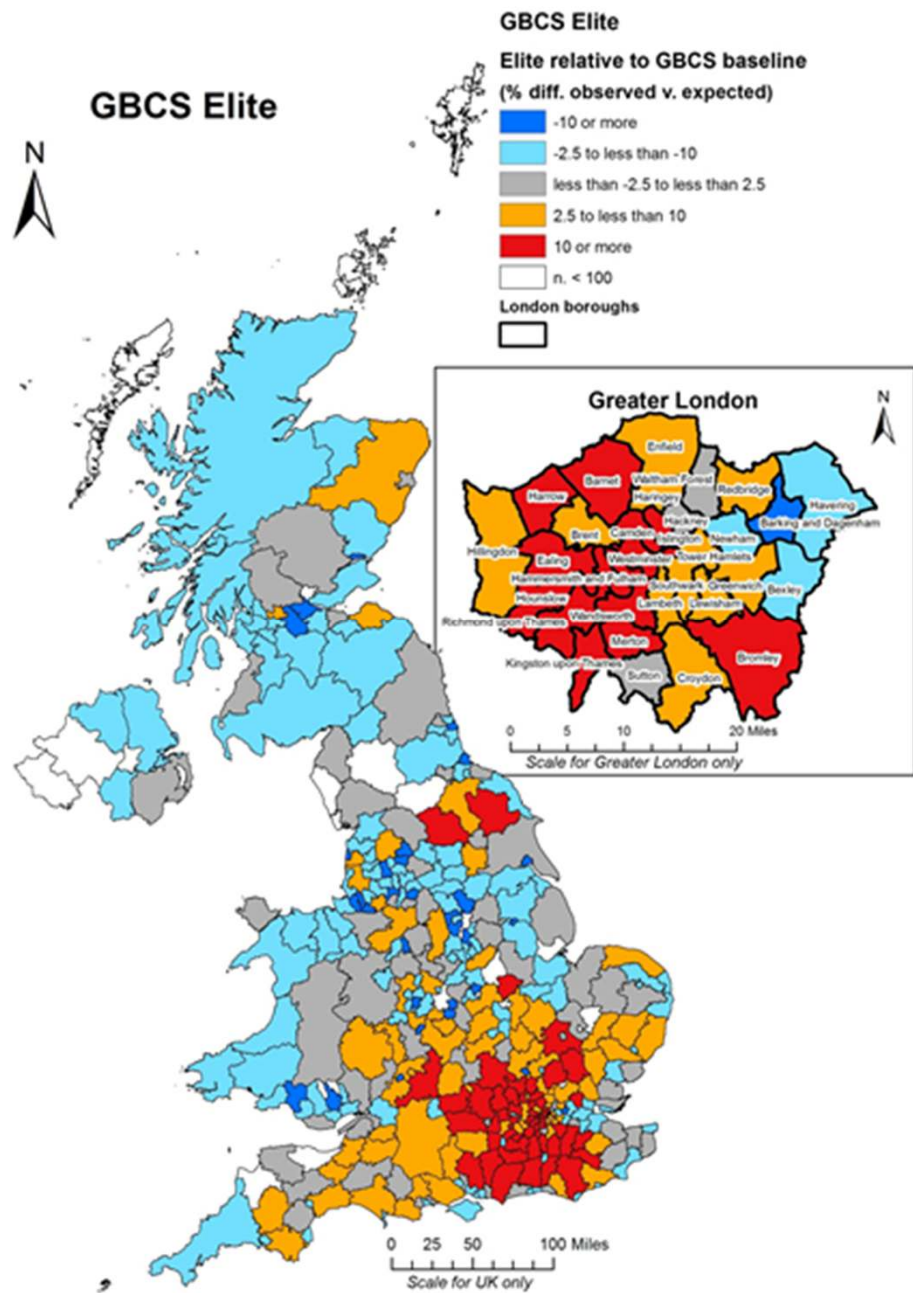


55

Precariat



57



GBCS Social Capital: Status

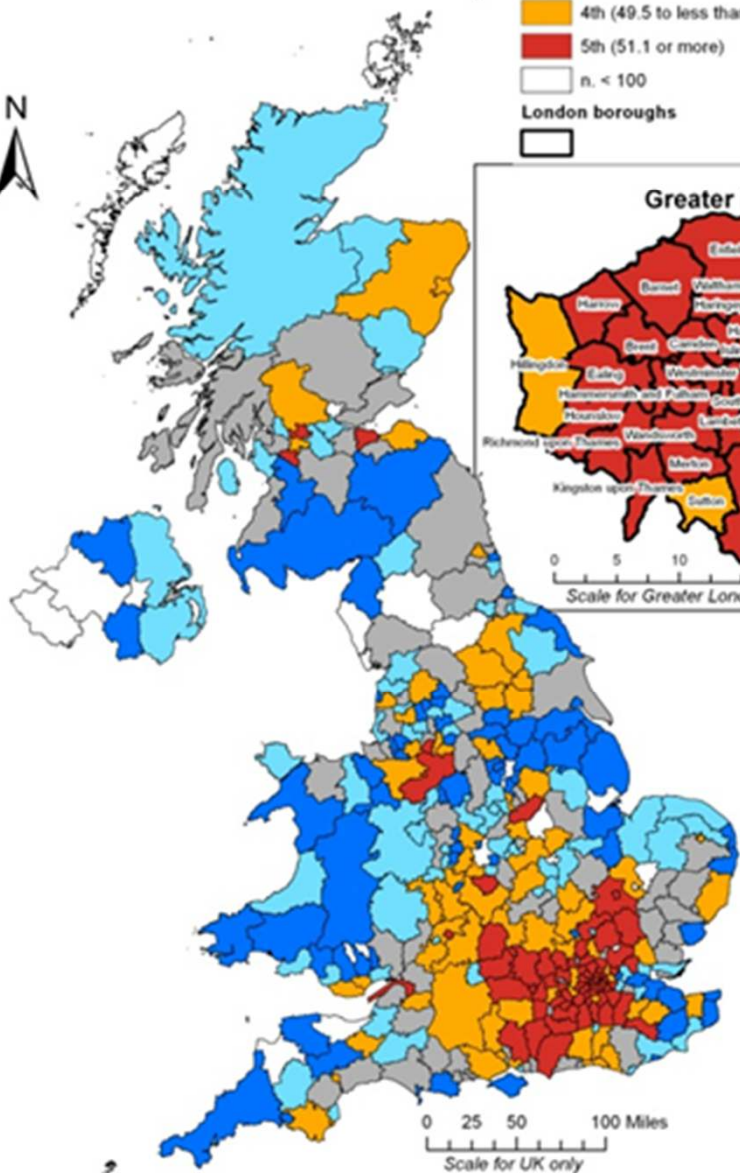
GBCS Social Capital

Mean Ave. Status of Social Contacts score (quintile breaks)

- 1st (less than 47.1)
- 2nd (47.1 to less than 48.3)
- 3rd (48.3 to less than 49.5)
- 4th (49.5 to less than 51.1)
- 5th (51.1 or more)

n. < 100

London boroughs



Greater London



Implications....

- The GBCS suggests the power of a 'voracious' and reflexive corporate elite, attuned to methodological novelty, for which London is a magnetic force and which is subject to (partial?) elite reproduction
- And within this framing, how do we understand the situation of those at the bottom?

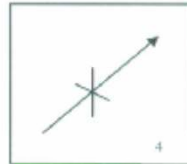
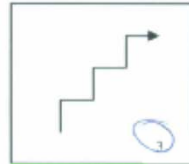
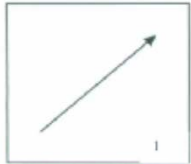


PRECARIOUS LIVES: ACCOUNTS FROM QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS...

Life Trajectories

Project specific serial number: 1307

Date: 13.1.10



If you had to represent your life through a diagram, which of these would it be?

Narratives of the 'precarariat'

	Male	Female
Occupations	Administrative officer; archivist; electrician; decorator; road sweeper; no occupation	Bookkeeper; administrator; catering assistant; civil servant; courier; account executive; supervisor; no occupation (2)
Net pay per hour	Under £5; £5-7.50 (2); £10-12.50; missing (2)	Under £5 (2); £5-7.50; £7.50-10; £10-12.50; Over £20.
Highest educational qualifications	None (2); NVQ1; NVQ2; NVQ3 (2)	None; NVQ1 (3); NVQ2 (5).
Housing tenure	Owens outright; owns with mortgage (3); rent (2)	Own outright (5); own with mortgage (3); rent.

Telling an 'abject' story

- 13 of the 15 offer accounts of their lives which articulate dealing with 'trauma' which is known to be shaming
 - Unemployment
 - Dealing with criminality and living in disreputable area
 - Ill health and inability to work
 - Severe family/ relationship abuse
- Most of these accounts mobilise motifs of the 'sequestration' of shame through placing it into a narrative

The appeal of class identity

- definitely working class I think.
- Working class, [actually] somebody who actually goes to work
- I just class myself as a working class, get on with anybody, if I like them....
- Working class ain't it? [laughs] I'll never grow out of working class, I won't be middle class.
- I would say working middle..... I see myself as a working hard person, trying to provide for a family, because I come from a working background..... I would say that I'm--, definitely I'm working class, down to earth if I'm honest.

Conclusions

- Focus on outlying classes and move away from ‘the problematic of the proletariat’
- Need to develop a new understanding of elites not as ‘gentlemanly’ status groups, but an expert, knowing and corporate class, fully implicated in ‘Knowing Capitalism’.
- Need to recognise the significance of cultural politics for class analysis, where the stakes of engagement and visibility itself is central.

And finally....

- I am delighted to be involved – with colleagues from many Departments – in developing LSE initiative for an international centre on inequalities
- Watch this space!