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IS IT A DIFFERENT WORLD TO WHEN YOU WERE GROWING UP? *GENERATIONAL* EFFECTS ON SOCIAL...

In this paper, I explore the way in which people view how the world has changed since they were growing up. This is done both quantitatively and qualitatively, using open-ended responses from the British Household Panel Survey. The theoretical perspective draws on Mannheim's insight that *generational* location predisposes individuals to characteristic modes of thought and experience and Moscovici's contention that generations may have distinctive social representations. The data largely support the *generational* hypothesis. The ten most frequent changes mentioned are unemployment, lack of safety, lack of discipline, increased pressure, moral decline, increased crime, drugs, environmental problems, and family breakdown. These social representations of how the world has changed are significant predictors of child-rearing *values*, especially for women. More generally, I argue that despite the broad consensus concerning the problems facing children born today, the social representations of men and women who grew up in different epochs exacerbate the value clash between generations.

ABSTRACT

KEYWORDS: Generation; social representations; collective beliefs; child-rearing *values*; Mannheim; moral panic

INTRODUCTION

Concerns about the sort of society we are creating for our children is not just an image politicians evoke when they want to encourage the public to forgo immediate benefits for the longer term good. People, regardless of whether they have children or not, have views about the way society is changing. The person's own lifetime is often used as a measure by which change is evaluated. The older generations may reminisce about the stringencies of life when they were young and deplore the way the younger generations take for granted things that took them a life-time to achieve. Worse still, what one generation has struggled to achieve may be regarded by subsequent generations as irrelevant and unimportant and this results in 'many clashes between systems of aspirations formed in different periods' (Bourdieu 1993: 99).

The idea that generation is a social and not a biological creation and that shared experience of specific historical conditions can result in distinctive ideologies or structures of beliefs is most often associated with the name of Karl Mannheim (Bengston et al. 1974; Pilcher 1994). The concept of generation was first elaborated as a viable addition to the analysis of social stratification in the essay 'The Problems of Generations' (Mannheim 1952 [1928]). The concept was formulated as part of a broader programme for a sociology of knowledge and was an element of Mannheim's theoretical strategy to understand the 'existential basis of knowledge' by use of concepts other than social class (Turner 1998). In the case of class location, an individual's or group's position emerges from the existence of an economic and power structure within society; whereas the structure from which generation emerges is the 'existence of biological rhythm in human existence-the factors of life and death, a limited span of life, and ageing' (Mannheim 1952: 290). Although recognizing the importance of biological factors, Mannheim stresses the overriding and ultimate importance of social factors: 'If it were not for the existence of social interaction between human beings-were there no definable social structure, no history based on a particular sort of continuity, the generation would not exist as a social phenomenon: there would be merely birth, ageing and death' (op.cit.: 291).

In this paper the concept of generation is being employed to understand the way in which ideas or beliefs about

contemporary society are structured, in part, according to the experiences people had in the formative years of their own childhood. For Mannheim, just as shared class location limits individuals to a particular range of experiences and predisposes them to a characteristic mode of thought and experience, so too does **generational** location set the parameters of experience, in that it points towards 'certain definitive modes of behaviour, feeling and thought' (op.cit.: 291). Thus, those born at the same time, may share similar formative experiences that coalesce into a 'natural' view of the world. This natural view stays with the individual throughout their lives and is the anchor against which later experiences are interpreted. People are thus fixed in qualitatively different subjective eras.

Mannheim did not define generation with any precision, but it is clear that only when events occur in such a manner as to demarcate a cohort in terms of its 'historical-social' consciousness should we speak of a true generation. Otherwise, it is more appropriate to use the term cohort to refer to the aggregate of individuals in a population who 'experienced the same event within the same time interval' (Ryder 1965: 845). Operationalizing the concept of generation is, therefore, quite problematic because it involves qualitative experience that map on to the quantitative measures of age and historical time. Perhaps for this reason, empirical studies that have attempted to use generation as a variable to predict attitudes or behaviour have met with limited success (Schuman and Scott 1987). However, too often the attempt to go directly from the quantitative delineation of cohorts in terms of age to the prediction of later thought or action misses an important step: that of identifying the way a cohort's earlier experience is used in their qualitative assessment of a situation. A key goal of this paper is to investigate the degree to which generations differ in their appraisal of how it is a different world to when they were growing up. Thus an initial aim is to see whether cohorts, defined in arbitrary age terms, can be redefined generationally by the qualitatively distinctive terms in which they assess contemporary society.

One specific hypothesis that will be examined is whether the Baby Boom generation, born since the end of the Second World War, are really as different from earlier cohorts in their beliefs and outlooks as has often been claimed (Mead 1978; Dowd 1986; Alwin 1998). The 1945 cohort has been described as the 'lucky generation', missing both world wars and experiencing peace, full employment and mass consumerism (Turner 1998). By contrast, subsequent generations, who entered the labour force in the 1980s and 1990s, have been faced with a much more difficult labour market characterized by flexibility and casualization. Moreover, the 1945 cohort reached adulthood during the 1960s and were the 'beneficiaries', for want of a more neutral term, of the 1960s sexual revolution. The availability of the Pill, the legal liberalization of divorce and premarital sexual experience resulted in this generation having somewhat different expectations than cohorts born before 1945 as to what constitutes an acceptable lifestyle. The representation of the 1960s as a time of revolutionary change can be overstated and it is important not to underestimate the persistence of traditional beliefs (Scott 1998). Nevertheless, the moral climate has undoubtedly become more liberal over the last few decades and the range of acceptable choices in sexual behaviour, family life and gender roles has expanded enormously. Older generations may view such societal change in rather negative terms, as moral 'decline' or family 'breakdown'. This is not because old people are anti-youth, but rather because they are unlikely to easily abandon the **values** and beliefs that have shaped their lives.

One of the limitations of Mannheim's work is that it does not contain an empirical model or any guidelines as to how the investigation of **generational** phenomena is to proceed, aside from stressing that recognition of social and cultural factors in the production of social generations should be paramount in terms of their investigation (Pilcher 1994). Mills is explicitly critical of Mannheim's theory for its inadequate conceptualization of the socio-psychological connections that link consciousness with social factors (Mills 1967: 424). Mills' own solution is to pay more attention to the social dimensions of language and the fundamental role of language in thought. Thus he argues we may 'locate' a thinker among political and social co-ordinates by ascertaining what words his functioning vocabulary contains and what nuances of meaning and value they embody (op.cit.: 434). Linguistic analysis however is too specialized a tool for investigating the way **generational** experience differentiates the widespread beliefs of the general public. In recent years, the study of widespread beliefs as social representations has attracted considerable attention among European social psychologists (Fraser and Gaskell 1990). This seems a useful, but underutilized, approach for bridging the way socio-historical factors and social experiences interconnect.

An early elaboration of the theory of social representations is provided in a collection of essays by Farr and Moscovici (1984). The interest in social representations stems directly from the sociological concern of Durkheim with collective representations. Moscovici's preference for using 'social' rather than 'collective' reflects his interest in understanding modern societies which are much more dynamic and fluid than the sorts of society that had been of interest to Durkheim (Farr 1990: 61). It has been pointed out that the distinctly social nature of 'representations' is not at all clear from the way Moscovici first introduced the idea to the English-speaking world

If he had used Durkheim's term or had referred to Durkheim's publications on individual and collective representations it would have been evident that what is social about social representations is not that such representations are representations of social reality, or that they are social in origin, but that they are social because they are shared by many individuals and as such constitute a social reality which can influence human behaviour. (Jaspars and Fraser 1984: 104)

There are two aspects to the theory that are important to note, firstly representations conventionalize or categorize the objects, persons and events we encounter. Thus the theory embraces the epistemological perspective of constructivism, rather than empiricism, and accepts Lewin's assertion that 'Reality for the individual is, to a high degree determined by what is socially accepted as reality' (Lewin 1948: 57). Secondly, representations are prescriptive and impose a structure not only on what we perceive but also on what we should think. If lone parents, for example, are represented as 'benefit

scroungers' then that has far more significance than conveying an individual attitude. It becomes part of what is collectively thinkable. More generally, the social representations that people hold matter because the way people represent society carries implications about the way society should be.

Moscovici implies that generations may have distinctive social representations and that 'what is unfamiliar and unperceived in one generation becomes familiar and obvious in the next' (Moscovici 1984: 37). One can imagine social representations that might fall into this category, for example environmental concerns were perhaps no less 'real' for earlier cohorts, with certain types of pollution (e.g. smog) even more commonplace than they are today. Nevertheless, more recently, environmental issues have been 'objectified' with concerns about endangered species, the ozone layer and the like. A similar argument could be made about technology. Technological innovations have been plentiful throughout the twentieth century, however, since the invention of the micro-chip, the impact of technology on everyday living has become far more visible. Thus, for these reasons, I would expect environmental concerns and technological change to figure more prominently in the way that more recent cohorts depict how the world has changed.

Moscovici's insight could be extended further. It is also true that the absence of what is familiar and taken for granted by one generation will be indiscernible to the next. Regarding society today, what might strike older generations as worthy of comment is the reputed lack of discipline or respect for authority figures. Or perhaps older generations will lament the decline of participation in community and volunteer activities that were once the hallmark of good citizenry and social capital (Coleman 1988; Putnam 1995). An alternative hypothesis is that the decline of community, the lack of faith in authority figures, the increase in drugs and crime and similar concerns will be so pervasive that they will figure prominently in all age-groups depictions of the way the world has changed. In other words, the collective belief could be one of moral panic.

Using preliminary findings from the British Household Panel Survey that are analysed in more detail in this current paper, Pahl and Spencer (1997) claim that the British public are beginning to subscribe to such a moral panic. In response to a question 'Do you think children born today will face a very different world than you did when you were growing up', the overwhelming majority thought the future would be different. Although there is some optimism about greater freedom and opportunity for the young, this is outweighed by pessimism about social change and about the pressures and uncertainties of the modern age. Concerns were expressed about the state of collective morality, in particular the lack of discipline and respect found among young people, the perceived increase in violent crimes, the decline in religious belief, and the breakdown of family life.

As Hunt (1997) has pointed out, it seems unhelpful to conflate concern about morality and panic, as concerns about societal dangers such as increased drugs and crime are rational, not panic-stricken. In the past, studies of moral panic have focused more on the utterances of elites or interest groups, than beliefs of the general public. Moreover, even when the concern is with 'grassroots' or cultural phenomena, there is little interest in the way certain segments of society do or do not subscribe to such beliefs. Thus moral panic is not a term that invites the sort of investigation that will be guiding my analysis of the way **generational** location shapes people's beliefs. Nor does the term raise any concern with the prescriptive quality implied by social representations. Here, however, I am interested not only in what people believe about how society has changed since they were growing up, but also how their representations relate to prescriptions about the appropriate **values** to inculcate in a child to prepare him or her for future life.

There is quite an extensive literature, both in the USA and Europe, on how socialization **values** have changed over time with an increasing importance being placed on independence or autonomy in children and declining importance given to the obedience of children to traditional institutional authority (Lynd and Lynd 1929; Kohn 1977; Caplow et al. 1982; Lesthaeghe and Surkyn 1988; Alwin 1990). One of the common explanations for this social change has been the role played by **generational** effects and the distinctiveness of socialization experiences in youth for shaping people's orientations towards child-rearing. Thus Lesthaeghe and Surkyn (1988) lay great stress on the way that changes in beliefs about the appropriate qualities to be transmitted through education or family socialization are part of a much wider trend in ideational change that differentiates the 'baby boom' generation (referring to those born after 1945) from earlier generations. Thus, like Mannheim, they argue that cohorts develop 'distinctive meaning-giving universes' early in life and maintain them throughout adulthood. Yet the way in which early life experiences affect adult perceptions is not specified. It is quite clear that cohorts differ in their child-rearing **values** but whether this is, in part, due to the way early life experiences shape adult perceptions of the sort of society in which children are being raised has not previously been examined.

The socialization literature has paid surprisingly little attention to how perceptions of social change influence child-rearing **values** and, therefore, this aspect of our analysis is somewhat exploratory. Yet the theory of anticipatory socialization (Merton 1957), implies that people's perceptions of how the future will be different will affect their conceptions of appropriate socialization strategies. Furthermore, it seems likely that men and women will differ in the way their representations affect child-rearing **values**. For example, perceptions of how the world has changed may be more strongly related to child-rearing **values** for women, than for men, because child-rearing is still predominantly seen as the woman's responsibility (Alwin et al. 1992; Scott et al. 1998).

The structure of this paper will proceed as follows. First, after identifying in an open-ended manner the way in which people view how society is changing, I explore, both quantitatively and qualitatively whether these representations are structured by age in a way that points to **generational** differences. In particular, in accordance with the preceding theoretical discussion, I hypothesize that older generations will be less likely than recent cohorts to mention technology and environmental concerns but will be more likely to mention lack of discipline, moral decline and Family breakdown. Second, I investigate the relative influence of age in comparison to other stratification Factors and I predict that, because of the difference in **generational** experience, age will be more strongly associated with representations of how the world

is changing than either gender or education. Third, I examine the extent to which such representations inform socialization **values**. Here, in accordance with the idea of anticipatory socialization, I expect certain representations to predict child-rearing **values**, even when age and other stratification factors are controlled. To the best of my knowledge, this type of empirical investigation of how generations can be distinguished in social representations is novel in the sociological literature.

METHODS AND DATA

In the subsequent analysis, I use open-ended data from the British Household Panel Survey to explore people's representations of how the world is different to when they were growing up. The British Household Panel Study is an annual survey of all members of more than 5000 panel households drawn from a proportionate stratified sample using the Postal-code Address File. The data are collected by the ESRC Centre on Micro-social Change at the University of Essex, with interviewers from the National Opinion Polls (NOP). In the first wave of the survey in 1991, the response rate was 74 per cent of the eligible households yielding 5512 households with 9912 individual interviews carried out. In 1996, 9135 full interviews were conducted.^[1] This represents a response rate of 97.5 per cent of the eligible sample members from the previous year. Weighting is applied in this analysis to adjust for non-response at Wave 1 and subsequent attrition and thus the weighted data provide a good representative sample of adults in Britain, as compared with the 1991 Census and later large-scale Government Surveys. For technical details, see British Household Panel Survey User Manual Documentation 1997.

The open-ended question on which our analysis focuses was asked at the end of a face-to-face individual interview that had covered a broad range of structured questions concerned with issues such as employment, income and health. The final question from the 1996 British Household Panel Survey asked respondents (aged 16 and over) 'Do you think children born today will face a very different world than you did when you were growing up?' Out of the 9135 who were asked the question, only 9 volunteered 'Don't know' and an overwhelming majority (95 per cent) said 'Yes' and were then asked 'What do you have in mind?' Not surprisingly, the majority of those who answered 'No' to the original question and who were, therefore, not asked the subsequent probe are under the age of 25. Nevertheless, even among this youngest age-group, a sizeable majority (85 per cent) thought that the world was different to when they were growing up and go on to explain what they have in mind.

The measure of child-rearing **values** asked respondents to rank five qualities according to their importance for the child's preparation for his or her life: to obey parents, to be well-liked or popular, to think for himself or herself, to work hard, or to help others when they need help. The ranking measures have high individual stability and are not repeated in every wave. Therefore, I have had to use child-rearing measures from the previous year in conjunction with the 1996 open-ended data.^[2] For each quality, a ranking score is computed that ranges from 1 (least important) through to 5 (most important). These are then used to construct a composite measure that contrasts those who favour thinking for oneself rather than obedience, by subtracting the rank score for obedience from the rank score for autonomy. This item has been used extensively in analysis of socialization **values** and was first developed by Lenski (1961).

In evaluating the extent to which generations inform social representations, I use content analysis of the verbatim responses, graphic presentations of response by age-group (and implicitly by cohort), and logistic regression using age and other stratification variables. In addition, I use logistic regression to explore the way that people's representations of how the world is different predicts whether or not they favour obedience over autonomy as the quality that best prepares a child for life.

REPRESENTATIONS OF SOCIETAL CHANGE

The latter part of the twentieth century has certainly been one of momentous social change in Britain. Britain, like most other industrial countries, has seen great changes in family and work life, the urban environment and the way the global community affects national policies and prosperity. In just one generation, the numbers marrying have halved, the numbers divorcing have trebled, and the proportion of children born outside marriage has quadrupled (Pullinger and Summerfield 1997). Women's participation in the labour force has risen markedly over the last half century, in part, reflecting the different demands imposed by the service industries and, in part, representing a shift in gender roles. The structure and expectations of employment have changed, with increasing casualization and flexibility in the workforce, making job insecurity rife. Technology has changed not only employment but also everyday living to an extent unimaginable just a few decades ago. In particular, new technology has revolutionized transportation, communication and information. Violent crime has risen dramatically and drug use has become more pervasive. Yet life-expectancy has continued to increase and material standards, especially in terms of the consumer goods enjoyed by the majority of the population, have risen.

When asked what they had in mind about why children born today would face a different world, most respondents answered quite readily and gave sufficiently elaborate answers to necessitate the coding of up to four different mentions.^[3] The broad categories of response can be seen in the first column of Table I. Unemployment overwhelmingly dominates people's responses about the way the world is different today, with 38 per cent of respondents mentioning increase in unemployment which includes job insecurity and the loss of job opportunities. The table shows both the percentage and numbers of first mentions in columns 1 and 2 for the 8625 respondents who answered this question. In column 3 the same base is used but the percentage, in each row, represents those who mentioned each category at all in their response (whether as first, second, third or fourth mention). Thus, 38.1 per cent of the respondents mention employment concerns and 61.9 per cent do not. The percentages of this third column are not exclusive and do not add to

100 per cent.

Following unemployment, the major ways in which society is seen to have changed concern lack of safety, technological change and improvements, lack of discipline, increase in drugs, more pressure (including pressure to achieve educational qualifications), the increase in crime, moral decline (including loss of religion), environmental problems and family breakdown. Each of these ten categories are mentioned by 10 per cent or more of our sample and altogether 88 per cent of the 8625 respondents who mention any societal change mention at least one that falls into these 10 categories. I therefore concentrate my analysis on these ten major ways in which the world is considered to have changed during the lifetimes of our respondents. Since there is a high correlation between an event or change being mentioned at all and it being mentioned first, each category is considered dichotomously: mentioned at all or not mentioned. Analysis using first mentions only are consistent with the findings shown here on how generation structures people's representations of the way the world has changed. Before focusing on the 10 major categories it is worth noting changes that are not as salient to the British public and also the degree to which the public are negative in their evaluation of societal change.

Minor Mentions of Change

Education or schools do not figure as prominently as might have been expected but of those who do mention education, 60 per cent are concerned about declining standards whereas only 40 per cent see educational standards or educational opportunity as having improved. Mentions of technological change with negative consequences are quite rare but tend to be specific, for example the claim that calculators make children less self-reliant. The miscellaneous 'other negative' category consists of a wide range of responses none of which are mentioned by enough respondents to merit a separate category. These include some mentions that might have been expected to figure more prominently like lack of community spirit and too much individualism, as well as a wide range of other negative concerns such as the harmful effects of the media, the decline in the welfare state, AIDS and other health risks, harmful consequences of urbanization, global conflicts and the general sentiment that life is harder.

Evaluation of Change

This brief review of people's responses makes it clear that, overwhelmingly, the public have a negative evaluation of societal change. With multiple answers, respondents could mention both positive and negative changes. However, negative mentions dominate and, in all, about four out of five responses about ways in which the world is different for children growing up today have a clear negative orientation. A couple of examples will suffice to show the miserable conditions that respondents claim characterize today's world. The first example shows a specific concern for children in the respondent's own family, whereas the second gives a more general response about the way the world is different

My sister's children are going to find it very very tough. Their dad is in and out of work-the family's life isn't the same. Families don't stick together - children go out and parents are never there half the time. They get into trouble because there's no-one there to keep an eye on them. These days the parents have got to work, but they go to work and leave the children when they're too young. (Woman aged 50)

It's more crowded, more angry, more competitive, more commercialized, more polluted, more insecure and so more dangerous on a local and global scale. I feel very pessimistic about it and I'm glad I haven't got any children. (Woman aged 50)

Of course not all respondents are so negative and some emphasize the positive benefits of growing up in today's world, whereas others take a more judicious view of the pros and cons of contemporary society

They are better off, clothing, diet and things, pocket money - getting more. Things come easier, they don't have to earn their pocket money like we did. All families have a car, when we were young you had to be well off. Education probably, they have more opportunities for further education. The average family was 4 children and now it's just 2 and that is why they may be better off. (Woman aged 48)

Better educational facilities - better leisure facilities and more choice. More pressure to do well in life - Well, I think nowadays you have to compete for everything. Jobs for life no longer exist and there is more pressure to gain a job and to keep it. (Woman aged 28)

GENERATIONAL EFFECTS

As can be seen in Figure I there is a strong, linear relationship between age and mentions of lack of discipline, with older people far more likely to cite discipline concerns than are the young. This supports our hypothesis that the absence of what once was once taken-for-granted is striking to older generations but indiscernible to younger age-groups. No pun was intended, but often concerns about the lack of discipline explicitly cite the absence of corporal punishment

It's a lot less strict now than what it was-if they do anything now they can get away with it ... You're not supposed to hit kids these days. They should bring back punishment in schools to put them on the straight and narrow, so if they do anything wrong then they don't do it again. (Man aged 52)

The way things are you are not allowed to chastise children. As a kid if I did something wrong the copper came and clipped me round the ear. (Man aged 52)

The association with age and moral and family breakdown is less pronounced, but still discernible. For family breakdown, mentions correlate with demographic trends and are highest among those aged fifty and above, who grew up in an era when single parents, cohabitation, and divorce were less common.

If Putnam's thesis is correct-that social capital has declined steadily in recent generations (Putnam 1995), then we might expect older generations to be more concerned than the young about the disintegration of community, with lack of safety being a prominent concern (see also Hall 1997). However, our data show the reverse. It can be seen in Figure II that unsafe communities are most salient for young people, especially those in their late twenties and early thirties and mentions fall off markedly in mid-life and older age. A closer examination of responses shows why this pattern might occur, as many of the younger responses are by women, concerned about their own children's welfare. For example

We used to go and play on the cricket field. I wouldn't let Olivia go and play on her own nowadays. There are drugs and such nowadays. Children grow up quicker these days and look older. (Woman aged 29)

The fact that people reminisce about their own childhood experience when expressing concerns about the lack of safety today, makes the reversal of our **generational** prediction even more surprising. The marked increase in societal dangers is perceived as quite recent and, presumably, parental responsibility heightens the salience of safety concerns.

This same explanation is likely to apply for mentions of increased crime and drugs. If people are thinking back to when they were growing up, then such mentions should be most prevalent among older respondents. Instead, we find that respondents of all ages show similar concern about the dangers posed to children by crime and drugs

Lot worse crime - violent crime - drugs and things like that are a lot easier to get hold of. Education is worse with more people in class and less teachers. There's pollution and things like that and diseases like Mad Cow diseases and AIDS - it puts you off having kids. (Man aged 23)

It will be a lot harder - there is a lot more violence - and drugs. Also more unemployment - I don't really know what work there will be for them when they grow up. If I were younger, I'd not have any children in this day and age. (Woman aged 45)

Mentions of both technological change and environmental concerns are far more common among younger than older age-groups, as can be seen in Figure III. Environmental and technological issues are so prominent in society today that it is hard for younger people to ignore their presence. Although there were environmental concerns and technological innovations in the era when the pre-war cohorts were growing up, they did not figure as prominently in the media and public discourse as they do now.

Figure IV shows that both mentions of unemployment and the increased pressure facing children growing up today show a curvilinear relationship with age. Mentions of unemployment peak in the mid thirties and stay high until the age of retirement, when they decline sharply. It is also important to note, however, that even among the oldest age-group (over 75), one in five indicate concern about changes in job security and employment opportunities. As Gallie and Marsh (1994) point out, an intriguing mythology has grown up around unemployment as a political issue. Unlike inflation, it is argued, the burden of unemployment falls on the shoulders of relatively few people and is therefore tolerable politically to

the vast majority. Our data show quite the reverse: employment issues are a dominant concern of the British public.

A very similar pattern, although on a smaller scale, is apparent for mentions of pressure. This includes the need for more educational qualifications, which still carry no guarantee of a job. Some of the mentions highlight how increased pressures are putting intense psychological strain on children. One elderly female talks of children requiring psychiatric treatment by the age of ten. Another worries that parents are putting too much pressure on their children

Very worrying – the way everything is going – morals are worse. Some parents hound their children to pass exams and make them become repressed. Too much pressure on them. They have to get to university now to get a job so they have a lot of pressure on them to pass exams. (Woman aged 74)

Such responses make clear that beliefs about how society has changed have implications for the way children should be raised. But before investigating child-rearing **values**, I examine the impact of different stratification factors on representations of societal change.

Other Stratification Factors

In the above figures we saw that, at least in the bivariate relationships, the association between age and mentions of different concerns is striking. Another stratification variable that is likely to be crucial in structuring people's experience of change is gender. Thus, in order to determine the relative importance of age and gender and also to control for whether age effects are predominantly a matter of older respondents having less formal education than the young, I show, in Table II, the significant t-ratios from logistic regressions that include, gender, education and age.^[4] For unemployment and pressure I also include the quadratic age term in order to capture the observed curvlinearity.

Gender is associated with only five out of ten mentions, with women more likely than men to be concerned about lack of safety, family breakdown and drugs. Men are more likely than women to mention technological change and environmental concerns. Education is significantly related to all ten mentions, with those with higher educational qualifications more likely to discuss change in terms of technology, moral decline, family breakdown, increased pressure, and the environment, but less likely to mention lack of discipline, drugs, crime, unemployment and unsafe communities. Even with education controlled, the age effects are still sizeable, with older people much more likely than the young to be concerned about lack of discipline, moral and family breakdown, but less likely to be concerned about lack of safety in communities, crime, drugs, the environment and technological change. For unemployment and pressure, as in the bivariate relationships, mentions rise and then decline with age.

CHILD-REARING **VALUES**

Our measure of child-rearing **values**, the Lenski item, asks people to rank five socialization **values**. The highest rank is given to think for himself or herself (mean score 3.95), next is helping others (3.42), working hard (3.41), obedience to parents (2.75) and least important is to be well liked or popular (1.52). The age or cohort impact on the child-rearing **values** concerned with autonomy or obedience can be seen in Figure V. The importance given to thinking for himself or herself is much higher than that for obedience until the age of fifty, when the ranking given for the two **values** starts to converge. Interestingly, the importance attached to 'working hard' is unrelated to age and, for the most part, pitched in the middle of the other two **values**.

The reasons for expecting people's representations of societal change to help shape their child-rearing **values** are elaborated below. The belief that children born today are growing up in a world that lacks discipline has an obvious and direct link to socialization **values**, implying that the most important quality a child needs to prepare him or her for life is obedience rather than autonomy. In contrast, those who are concerned about too much pressure may feel that parents should make less demands on their children and encourage them to be more independent. With the exception of the pressure that follows from high unemployment and job insecurity, there is no obvious reason for supposing that employment concerns will result in particular child-rearing preferences. Therefore, I exclude employment mentions from the subsequent analysis. I also exclude mentions of technological change, as this is too eclectic a category on which to base predictions about child-rearing preferences. The more specific mentions of moral decline and family breakdown are likely to be positively associated with the preference for obedience over autonomy, because scant regard for authority is often seen as a major factor in undermining morality and traditional family life. The same argument would apply to concerns that society is less safe and also to the conceptually related concerns about the increase in drugs and crime. Mentions of environmental problems, however, are likely to have the reverse association and be negatively associated with obedience. This is because Inglehart (1990) has shown that environmental concerns co-exist with an emphasis on individual freedom in the configuration of **values** described as 'post-materialist'.

In the analysis that follows I explore how people's representations of the way the world will be different for children born today shape their preference for obedience over autonomy as the most important quality for preparation for life. Table III shows the effects that men and women's social representations have on the log odds of people favouring obedience over autonomy, controlling for education and age. The composite measure of the rank score of obedience subtracted from the rank score for think for self is dichotomized and the resulting measure has 29 per cent favouring obedience over autonomy. The Hosmer and Lemeshow goodness-of-fit measures suggest that the models for the total sample and for men and women separately are a reasonable fit. The pseudo R squares are quite modest, although somewhat higher for

women than for men. As expected, higher educational qualifications have a negative association with obedience and age a positive one. Lack of discipline is a strong predictor of a preference for obedience, in both men and women but, contrary to our prediction, mentions of family breakdown and moral decline are not significantly associated with child-rearing **values**. As predicted, perceptions that children are facing increased pressure is negatively associated with obedience, although only for women, not men. Also as predicted, concerns about lack of safety, crime and drugs are positively associated with obedience, but only for men and not women. Environmental concerns decrease the odds of preferring obedience rather than autonomy, but again the relationship is significant only for men and not women. Thus, it is clear that how people represent social change does influence their child-rearing **values**, even when controlling for age and education. However, the nature of the association differs for men and women.

CONCLUSIONS

How people represent the contemporary world is likely to have real consequences for what they believe and the way they act. This is not just because such representations are shared by many individuals, but also because they constitute a social reality which can influence human behaviour. In this paper we have seen that if people perceive society today as lacking discipline they are more likely to favour obedience than autonomy as the most important lesson a child can learn to prepare him or her for life. On the other hand, if people perceive children as facing increased pressure that can threaten psychological well-being, they are more likely to endorse autonomy as the most important socialization value.

The British public report a surprisingly limited range of representations of how the world is different, given the extensive changes that have occurred in the latter part of the twentieth century. There have been vast changes in family and work life, the urban environment, and the way the global community affects consumption habits and national prosperity. Yet, almost 90 per cent of our sample stress at least one of ten main ways in which contemporary society is perceived to be different. Overwhelmingly, the most frequent concern is with jobs, or rather with the lack of jobs and increased insecurity in the workplace. The belief that unemployment is a minority concern is unsupported by these data. Other concerns include lack of safety, lack of discipline, increased pressure, moral decline, increased crime, drugs, environmental problems, and family breakdown. The only positive mention in this representation of doom is technological change and advance.

The pessimism of responses is pervasive with four out of five mentions having a clear negative orientation. Despite the prevalence of modern-day Jeremiahs, I do not interpret this as evidence of moral panic. Such a depiction would be misleading for two reasons. First, moral panics are usually seen as externally generated whereas the representations shown here are often rooted in people's own experiences, or the experiences of their families. Second, the form of representations are very different for different age-groups, in ways that seem to reflect the shared life styles and **values** of the era in which they were raised.

The **generational** hypothesis that guided our analysis suggests that ideas or beliefs about contemporary society are structured, in part, according to the experiences people had in the formative years of childhood. This hypothesis is largely supported by our data, although with cross-sectional data it is impossible to disentangle **generational** and ageing effects and results have to be interpreted with due caution. Moscovici suggested that what is unfamiliar and unperceived in one generation becomes familiar and obvious to the next. This contention is born out with respect to technological mentions and environmental concerns, both of which are disproportionately mentioned by the young. It is not that environmental problems or technological innovations were not present when older people were young, rather it is that these issues were not given the same prominence as they are today. Moscovici's contention can also be extended to suggest that what is familiar and taken for granted by one generation will be indiscernible to the next. This is clearly the case with the older generation's concern with lack of discipline, which is hardly mentioned at all by the more recent cohorts. However, not all our **generational** predictions were confirmed. In particular, mentions of lack of safety, crime, and drugs, are disproportionately mentioned by younger people. Yet, even younger people draw on their own childhood experiences of being able to roam in safety, in away that implies that the increase in societal dangers is perceived to be recent.

The importance of age in these representations of how society has changed is striking. Age is far more important in determining people's beliefs about societal change than gender, although gender is important in shaping how people's representations influence their child-rearing preferences. Our data lend support to the depiction of the Second World War as marking a value-divide. Pre-war cohorts are far more likely than those born after the war to deplore the lack of discipline and to endorse obedience over autonomy as the most important child-rearing quality. Bourdieu suggested that generations may result in 'many clashes between systems of aspirations formed in different periods'. His observation is true for the contentious area of socialization. However the evidence in support of a **generational** divide in beliefs and **values** must be interpreted in the light of the broad consensus about the problems facing children born today and the shared concerns for the well-being of coming generations.

NOTES

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2. A further 301 proxy interviews were conducted, but these are not included here as the proxy interview

- necessarily excludes all subjective questions, of the type used here.
3. Because the measures were carried for three waves of the panel study — 1993, 1994 and 1995 — it is possible to estimate the stability of these child-rearing orientations, using the Heise (1969) approach. The stability estimates for the 1993–1995 were .96 for obedience, .92 for being well-liked, .96 for think for self, .90 for work hard and .84 for helping others. For a fuller discussion of the measurement of individual stability and change see Alwin and Scott 1996.
 4. Coding was done by postgraduate students of the University of Cambridge. A blind recode of 685 responses showed an inter-coder reliability of 88%.
 5. Unfortunately, the sample does not allow for the exploration of race effects. Also, I have not included occupational status as, unless last occupational status is included which can introduce bias, the sample would be too restricted in age.

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TABLE I: Highly mentioned responses to the question: 'Do you think children born today will face a different world than you did when you were growing up?' (1996 British Household Panel Study)

Legend for Chart:

- A - Changes
- B - % 1st Mentions
- C - Number of 1st Mentions
- D - % Total Mentions
- E - N Total Mentions

A

	B	C	D	E
[1] Unemployment increase	18.3	1575	38.1	3287
[1] Society less safe	10.8	929	22.5	1937
[1] Technological change (neutral/improvement)	11.4	982	18.7	1613
[1] Lack of discipline	6.1	527	18.2	1567
[1] Drug increase	3.7	323	14.5	1249
[1] More pressure	5.8	499	13.9	1203
[1] Crime increase	3.7	323	11.8	1021
[1] Moral decline (loss of religion, more promiscuity etc.)	4.1	351	11.1	962
[1] Environmental problems	2.5	219	10.5	906
[1] Family breakdown	2.6	223	9.7	840
Other Negative economic changes	2.0	176	8.5	735
More individual opportunities/freedom	2.8	242	8.1	697
Societal & social value change	2.9	248	7.6	656
Education decline	1.8	157	7.0	602
Life too easy	2.8	241	6.9	595
Kids grow up too fast	2.1	178	6.4	553
Technological change – negative	2.1	183	6.4	552
Too materialistic	1.6	139	5.6	483

Better employment/more money	1.8	175	4.8	418
Education improvements	1.3	109	4.8	411
Life faster	1.1	92	2.0	170
Other neutral/positive	2.9	250	8.3	715
Other negative	5.6	484	24.1	2082
Total	100%	-	-	-
Base N	(8625)	(8625)	(8625)	-

Note: 1 Major ways in which society is seen to have changed

TABLE II: Representations of how the world has changed by gender, education and age (Significant t-ratios)[a]

Legend for Chart:

- A - Unemployment
- B - Society less safe
- C - Technological change
- D - Lack of discipline
- E - More pressure
- F - Moral decline
- G - Crime increase
- H - Drug increase
- I - Environmental problems
- J - Family breakdown

	A	B	C	D
	E	F	G	H
			I	J
Gender	-	-9.6	9.4	-
	-	-	-	&minus4.0
			5.1	&minus7.1
Education	&minus4.7	&minus2.5	12.5	&minus8.3
	4.7	8.4	&minus5.1	&minus7.9
			3.2	7.5
Age	12.3	&minus9.4	&minus4.5	11.7
	9.2	7.3	&minus8.2	&minus6.6
			&minus7.1	9.6
Age[2]	&minus13.6	-	-	-
	&minus9.4	-	-	-
			-	-

Notes:

a Based on logistic analysis of each mention of change using three predictors: age (years as of 1st December 1996), the quadratic term is also included for unemployment and pressure to capture curvilinearity; education (educational qualifications recoded from high to low as higher degree, first degree, HND/HNC or teaching, A-level, O-level (or equivalent), CSE (or equivalent) or none; and sex (1 = male 0 = female).

Nominal two-tailed statistical significance levels for this table are $t = 1.96, p < .05$; $t = 2.58, p < .01$; $t = 3.29, p < .001$.

TABLE III: The effects of representations of social change on child-rearing *values*, controlling for age and education[a]

Legend for Chart:

- A - Independent variables
- B - B
- C - Total sample: Wald
- D - Total sample: Sig
- E - Exp (B)
- F - B
- G - Men: Wald
- H - Men: Sig
- I - Exp (B)
- J - B
- K - Women: Wald
- L - Women: Sig
- M - Exp (B)

A

	B	C	D	E
	F	G	H	I
	J	K	L	M
Lack of discipline				
	.48	57.62	<.0001	1.62
	.37	14.61	<.001	1.44
	.58	44.59	<.0001	1.79
Too much pressure				
	-.29	12.52	<.001	.75
	-.04	.16	ns	-
	-.55	20.15	<.0001	.58
Moral decline and family breakdown				
	-.13	3.55	n.s.	-
	-.04	.16	ns	-
	-.17	3.49	ns	-
Society less safe; crime and drug increase				
	.06	1.38	n.s.	-
	.21	7.32	<.01	1.24
	.01	.02	ns	-
Environmental problems				
	-.24	6.74	<.01	.78
	-.30	5.93	<.05	.74
	-.22	2.36	ns	-
Education				
	-.36	343.29	<.0001	.70
	-.32	151.78	<.0001	.73
	-.42	201.04	<.0001	.65

Age

.01	55.98	<.0001	1.01
.01	22.02	<.0001	1.01
.01	31.96	<.0001	1.01

Constant

-.65	31.52	<.0001	-
-.59	13.93	<.001	-
-.62	13.95	<.001	-

Goodness of fit test

4.6 df = 8 p.80
 10.5 df = 8 p = .23
 9.26 df = 8 p.32

Pseudo R

.107
 .089
 .133

N

7739
 3512
 4227

Note:

a Based on logistic analysis of preference for obedience over autonomy with predictors including age (years as of 1st December 1996) and education (educational qualifications recoded from high to low as higher degree, first degree, HND/HNC or teaching, A-level, O-level (or equivalent), CSE (or equivalent) or none.

GRAPH: FIGURE I: Mentions of lack of discipline, family breakdown and moral decline by age

GRAPH: FIGURE II: Mentions of less safe society, increase in crime and drugs by age

GRAPH: FIGURE III: Mentions of technological change and environmental problems by age

GRAPH: FIGURE IV: Mentions of unemployment and too much pressure by age

GRAPH: FIGURE V: Child-rearing *values* by age

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