

Institution: The University of Manchester
Unit of Assessment: 23 (Sociology)
Title of case study: Socio-cultural Change and Social Class: Influencing Organisational, Public and Policy Understandings of Participation and Inequality
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>University of Manchester (UoM) sociologists have responded to escalating policy interest in the cultural and creative industries as generators of social and economic value; developing a more complex analysis of the significance of these sectors for understanding social inequality. Through a distinctive form of ‘cultural class analysis’ (CCA), three key impacts are generated. Firstly, co-producing the BBC ‘Great British Class Survey’ (GBCS) as a major public sociology intervention on understandings of ‘class’. Secondly, influencing new market research frameworks. Thirdly, applying CCA within the cultural sector, challenging policy understandings of how class inequalities are bound up with cultural participation. In a period of austerity and sharply increasing social, cultural and economic inequality, these impacts have successfully provoked renewed media and public engagement with issues of class division.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The research was undertaken at UoM’s ESRC Centre for Research on Socio-cultural Change (CRESC) by: Professor Mike Savage (1995-2010); Professor Fiona Devine (1994-); Professor Alan Warde (1999-); Dr Andrew Miles (Senior Research Fellow, now Reader, 2004-); and Niall Cunningham (Research Associate, 2010-).</p> <p>The distinctive contribution of the research is its challenge to orthodox models of stratification and inequality [A][D][E]. Demonstrating that cultural processes are not simply the product of social class divisions, but rather inform their very definition and meaning [A][E], the research has significantly reframed understandings of cultural participation and engagement [B][C], and developed a distinctive UoM approach to ‘cultural class analysis’ (CCA). More specifically, the research has generated a novel mixed methodological approach in order to analyse and represent the complex nature of contemporary social divisions; and has sought to ‘rethink’ processes of (dis)engagement, in order to better understand participation within the cultural sphere. In brief, this involves a number of related threads:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influenced by Pierre Bourdieu’s sociology, and drawing on findings from CRESC’s pioneering ‘Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion’ Survey (CCSE) [C], the CCA approach developed at UoM stresses the range of ‘capitals, assets and resources’ at play in class processes, and highlights the powerful discriminatory effects emanating from the ‘cultural sphere’ [A][D][E]. • The CCSE, the most detailed national survey of cultural taste and participation to date, demonstrates the role of age and life-stage differences, alongside class inequalities, in defining socio-cultural participation [C]. • It was the promise of the CCA approach for conveying a more sophisticated understanding of social inequality – in a period of crisis and uncertainty – that led Savage and Devine to formulate the Great British Class Survey (GBCS), the world’s largest survey of social class (with 160,000 participants in the first wave). It resulted in a novel seven-class map of contemporary Britain, challenging forty year old academic orthodoxies about British social structure [A]. • The CCA approach employs rarely used ‘multiple correspondence’ methods for analysing the field of participation. Using descriptive clustering techniques, it provides a unique visual perspective on different taste and participation communities, making it easier for non-specialist audiences to engage with research outcomes. The sensitivity of CCA to the analysis and presentation of cultural processes and social change has also interested market researchers; in particular those who wish to explore its advantages over traditional socio-economic classifications for an understanding of consumer decision-making and practices. • In parallel, CRESC has sought to rethink processes of cultural ‘disengagement’ [B][C]. The research has generated new insights into the ‘non users’ of traditional cultural venues (such as museums etc.), a grouping generally rendered as ‘disengaged’ by official statistics, resulting in their subsequent targeting for ‘social inclusion’ by policymakers [B]. • In revealing extensive hidden forms of everyday engagement and cultural value, the research

challenges the deficit model of participation in cultural policy, and shows the limitations of cultural policy initiatives to 'widen access' (which attach particular significance to formal, established cultural participation, and so reinforce the expressions of social exclusion they purport to overcome).

3. References to the research (all references available upon request - AUR)

Research outputs derive from three projects co-ordinated from UoM: 'Understanding Everyday Participation – Articulating Cultural Values' (2012-2017, AHRC, £1.5 million); 'Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion: A Critical Investigation' (2003-2006, ESRC, £428K); and 'Researching Manchester's Cultural Institutions' (2004-2006, HEFCE/ NWDA, £90K)

- [A] (2013) Savage, M., Devine, F. Cunningham, N. Taylor, M., Li, Y., Hjellbrekke, J., Le Roux, B., Friedman, S. Miles, A. "A New Model of Social Class. Findings from the BBC's Great British Class Survey Experiment" *Sociology* 47(2) 219-250 (REF 2014)
doi:10.1177/0038038513481128
- [B] (2012) Miles, A. & Sullivan, A. "Understanding Participation in Culture and Sport: Mixing Methods, Reordering Knowledges" *Cultural Trends* 21(4) 311-324 (REF 2014)
doi:10.1080/09548963.2012.726795
- [C] (2009) Bennett, T., Savage, M., Silva, E.B., Warde, A., Gayo-Cal, M., Wright, D. *Culture, Class, Distinction* (London: Routledge) (REF 2014) (AUR)
- [D] (2005) Savage, M., Warde, A., and Devine, F. "Capitals, Assets, and Resources: Some Critical Issues" *British Journal of Sociology* 56(1) 31-47 (RAE 2008)
doi:10.1111/j.1468-4446.2005.00045.x
- [E] (2004) Devine F., Savage, M., Scott, J. and Crompton, R. (eds.) *Rethinking Class: Cultures, Identities and Lifestyles* (London: Palgrave) (AUR)

4. Details of the impact

Pathways: Taken together, the impacts documented below have developed with respect to UoM's reputation as a centre of research excellence in the area of class and cultural participation, resulting in a series of collaborative research relationships and consultancies with stakeholders. There are three main sets of engagement:

1. A cooperative **partnership with the BBC**, framed both to challenge and extend public understandings of 'class' (and of how class inequalities work), as well as to augment the corporation's public service remit.
2. A reworking of class measurement within **mainstream market research**.
3. A range of engagements with governmental and third sector bodies, developing and refining organisational, public and policy understandings of how class inequalities are bound up with **cultural participation**.

As one collaborator observes: "*CRESC's work has been responsible for the widespread deployment of a more sophisticated approach to evidence-based policy in the cultural sector*" [1]. The CRESC approach is able to unpack the ways in which survey methods construct particular and limited understandings of 'class' and 'participation', with the partnerships outlined below each utilising the conceptual innovation and methodological strengths of the CCA approach.

1: The BBC and Public Sociology: CRESC's work on culture and stratification led to a public sociology partnership with the BBC in the 'Great British Class Survey'. Its success resulted in an unprecedented public interest in class and inequality, and has had a major impact on the BBC's public engagement and network data journalism work. As an innovative online survey, the GBCS took advantage of the BBC's high profile Lab UK web site to generate unusually large samples. According to the BBC producer responsible for the GBCS, the research provided '*a forum for new types of audience engagement*' creating '*valuable interactive content for BBC audiences*' as well as an '*editorial platform for many different BBC outlets to discuss social class*'. He concludes that: "*The research was of particular interest to the BBC, because it allowed the BBC audience to reflect on their own position in the new seven part class system and think about the way class has changed since the industrial revolution and the social changes of post-war Britain... Working with a team of academic sociologists has been a positive and productive experience for the BBC, and is*

something we intend to build upon, long term” [2].

The results of the survey were publicised through the simultaneous online publication of an academic paper in the journal *Sociology* [A] alongside a BBC news campaign [6], and led to over 6.9 million unique visits to the story on the BBC web pages – which became its most popular in 2013 – and a huge volume of exchanges on social networking sites such as Twitter (8,000 in 24 hours, from a search of just four hash-tags). A large proportion of these 6.9 million visits were to the ‘Great British Class Calculator’, an interactive web device drawing on the GBCS which allowed users to find out to which of the new social classes they were most closely matched. The research also featured prominently on frontline TV and radio programmes (28 outlets in total) ranging from Radio 4’s ‘Today’ programme to ‘The One Show’ on BBC 1. The story was also taken up across the national and regional print media (36 titles on 3rd April alone), as well as internationally – it was the most emailed New York Times ‘World News’ story of the year. As the BBC GBCS producer recognises: *“Occurring at a time of increasing concern about the intensifying effects of the recent economic crisis on social cohesion, the GBCS has encouraged a more nuanced discussion around the themes of class and mobility... the GBCS presents numerous prospects for future collaboration, and this collaboration has also represented excellent value for the licence-fee payer”* [2].

The resulting public discussion continues in print and on social media, including a special edition of Radio 4’s ‘Thinking Allowed’ (1st May 2013). The research team have also been approached by groups, such as The Hindu Association, wanting to find out more about specific aspects of the new class model. Indeed, in the wake of publicity garnered, an additional 200,000 individuals have completed the online survey, more than doubling the sample size to 366,000. Moreover, the GBCS promises a new form of ‘public sociology’, and *“has helped to revitalise the BBC’s web science presence... [with] plans to link this valuable collection of responses on social class to a series of other prominent BBC Lab UK experiments (e.g. ‘The Big Personality Test’, ‘The Stress Test and ‘Test Your Morality’) in order to generate further outputs of value to both ourselves and CRESC. This is particularly important and timely as the BBC wishes to be part of the scientific community and as such the large meta dataset can be a valuable resource for social scientists and psychologists”* [2]. In 2013, as a result of the GBCS collaboration with CRESC, the BBC won the Global Editor’s Network International Data Journalism Award, for their work on the interactive ‘Great British Class Calculator, with the award recognising ‘outstanding work and editorial excellence in the field of data journalism’ [7].

2: Re-orienting Market Research: CRESC’s cultural class analysis approach, including insights gained from the GBCS, has been applied to endorse a reworking of class measurement in market research. Though repeatedly discredited by sociologists, since the 1940s market researchers have used the social grades (A to E) as class proxies. However, over the past two years Kantar Media – who run the Target Goods Index, the largest market research survey in the UK – have been seeking new measures for social groups. Their ‘TGI Why Code’ now includes: *“The ‘Social DNA’ classification, highlighting nine segments, developed on the basis of the individual’s cultural and economic capital.”* As Kantar note, *“work undertaken by CRESC – particularly utilisation of the work of Pierre Bourdieu to re-consider the structuring of social divisions – parallels our own work on the Social DNA... CRESC’s work has been both timely and an inspiration... and alongside the CRESC/BBC collaboration... has confirmed that this path is both intellectually fruitful as well as substantively worthwhile.”* Savage, Miles and Warde have been invited to further collaborate on the development of this model by Kantar, who see working with CRESC academics as a long term proposition and *“vital, particularly as engaging with robust and up-to-date research, as provided by CRESC, clearly enhances our credibility with clients particularly in the media sector”* [3].

3: Cultural Sector Research and Policy: CRESC’s work has been responsible for the deployment of a more sophisticated approach to evidence-based policy in the cultural sector, an area previously characterised by largely informal, *ad hoc* judgements. At the **national level**, interest in CRESC’s empirical focus and methodological innovation has resulted in strategic relationships with the Arts Council England (ACE) and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

- **Savage provided ongoing advice to the DCMS on the design of ‘Taking Part’, the first integrated national government survey of cultural participation.** The survey began in 2005, and is still run to this day. As the (former) head of DCMS research notes, the CRESC team were influential in shaping the survey with *“impacts...both in terms of conceptual and policy thinking (such as how we defined our targets for cultural engagement), as well as organisation practice (such as the recent move towards collecting more longitudinal data)... the team have continued to strive to bring the latest thinking in sociology to bear on current and important policy issues. They have been a rich source of challenge and support to me as a social scientist in government.”* [4]
- Miles’ six-months as an ESRC Placement Fellow in the DCMS ‘Evidence and Analysis Unit’ (2009-10), **helped shape the Department’s flagship ‘Culture and Sports Evidence’ (CASE) programme**, leading to *“key recommendations regarding the development of the DCMS ‘Taking Part’ questionnaire, utilising insights and conceptual frames from... (CCSE), for example around cultural capital and consumption, cultural ‘omnivorousness’ and ways of thinking about cultural consumption in a policy context. This provided an effective conceptual vocabulary upon which to frame the CASE research, and led us to take seriously the issues of methodological pluralism, and the deployment of longitudinal qualitative tools to unpack categories and meanings of participation – many of which are subsequently documented in...[B] and internal papers and presentations [e.g. 8] written for and given to staff at DCMS.”* [4]
- The methodological aspects of this research in turn *“chimed with and helped to inform the design of”* **Arts Council England’s ‘Creative People and Places’ programme** (£37 million, 2012-14). The Arts Council confirm the significance of CRESC’s input noting that it: *“facilitated [them] towards a greater understanding of strategies and programmes to encourage interest in the arts. It has done this by stressing the need to clearly foreground the interests and practices of those individuals who do not generally engage in formal or mainstream culture.”* [5]
- **Engagement at regional level**, with a programme of work on cultural institutions (2005-08) led to a strategic partnership with Culture Northwest through its Culture Observatory, designed to influence the development of evidence-based policy at the regional level [9]. This work subsequently generated a knowledge transfer network involving 54 non HEI organisations and businesses that directly impacted on the regional Cultural Olympiad (2009-12), with Miles **co-developing and writing the reporting and evaluation framework for the Cultural Olympiad programme for ACE and the Olympic Legacy Trust.** This CRESC contribution – the programme manager notes – enabled the Olympiad *“to show important headline outputs, such as the fact that...30% of the audience (1/4 million people) were from areas of no or limited engagement ... The specific value of the CRESC approach is an integrated approach to the evaluation of cultural activity which synthesises different approaches and practices into a coherent approach and robust measures which enable the cultural sector to demonstrate its contribution at many levels and specifically to social and community development, place making and cultural and non cultural sector innovation as well as to employment and tourism development”* [1].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (all claims referenced in the text)

- [1] Testimonial from (former) Programmer, ‘We Play’: The Olympic Legacy Programme in the North West, Arts Council England (10th June 2013)
- [2] Testimonial from Producer, BBC Learning and Knowledge (28th June 2013)
- [3] Testimonial from Director, TGI Insights and Integration, Kantar Media (10th June 2013); (letter refers to) Kantar Media ‘Solutions: The TGI Why Code’ (webpage)
- [4] Testimonial from (former) Head of Research, DCMS (3rd June 2013)
- [5] Testimonial from Senior Officer, Engagement & Participation / Director of Research (2005-13), Arts Council England (5th August 2013)
- [6] (2013) BBC News ‘Huge survey reveals seven social classes in UK’ (3rd April)
- [7] (2013) BBC News ‘BBC class calculator wins data journalism award’ (20th June)
- [8] (2010) Miles, A. and Sullivan, A. ‘Understanding the relationship between taste and value in culture and sport’, DCMS
- [9] (2007) Miles, A. ‘Taking Part in the Northwest: Understanding Engagement & Participation in Culture’ Culture Northwest