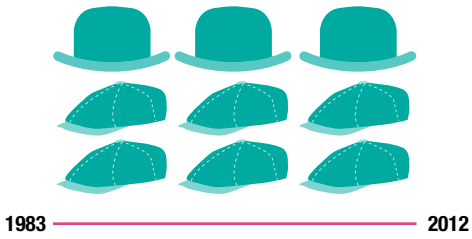
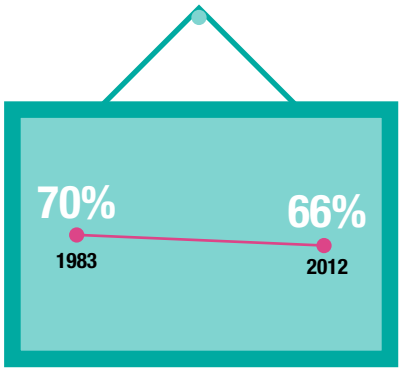
Social class
The role of class in shaping social attitudes

The last 30 years have seen profound political, economic and social changes in Britain. What it means to be in a particular social class now is not necessarily the same as it was three decades ago. How do the British public's attitudes and values differ according to the social class they are in? And how similar is the relationship between attitudes and class to that which existed in the early 1980s?

Subjective class and opportunities

The proportions of people identifying as working and middle class, and the perception that a person's class affects their opportunities have remained stable since the early 1980s.





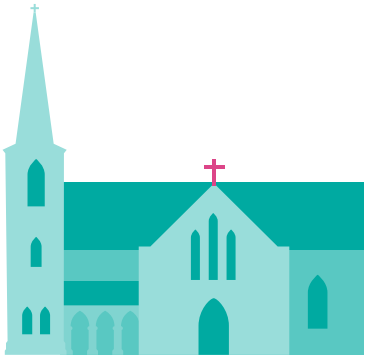
In 2012, six in ten people in Britain **think of themselves as 'working class'** while a third think they are '**middle class**'; the proportions were the same in the early 1980s.

66% of people say that **a person's class affects their opportunities** "a great deal" or "quite a lot". This proportion has not changed substantially since 1983 when 70% thought class affected an individual's opportunities.

A declining importance of social class

Over the last 30 years, the attitudes of the British public have become less strongly linked to their social class.

1984



2012

In 1984 measures of social class such as economic status, socio-economic group and income level had **strong correlations with both welfare and liberal attitudes**. For example, lower socio-economic groups were more likely to support increased government taxation and spending, and to be less liberal on issues such as sex before marriage.

In 2012, although there is a relatively high continuity, there are **some indications that class has declined in importance**, particularly around liberal issues such as sex before marriage. Ethnicity and religiosity are now more salient than class in affecting liberal attitudes – notably on sexuality and household relationships.

Introduction

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This chapter addresses the question of how far British people's attitudes and values differ according to the social class they are in, and whether the relationships we see now between someone's attitudes and their class are the same as we saw 30 years ago, when British Social Attitudes began in 1983.

The last 30 years have seen profound political, economic and social changes. The context in which the British public forms its views has altered. Moreover, as a result of some of these changes, what it means to be in a particular social class now is not necessarily the same as it was three decades ago.

In the early 1980s, Britain was in a deep recession, where unemployment hit traditional industrial and manual jobs especially hard. In these early years of Margaret Thatcher's first Conservative government, class politics were clearly evident, with the Labour Party moving dramatically to the left and the trade union movement seeking to resist government policy, as became apparent in the miners' strikes in 1984 and 1985. A sign of the times was that, in 1981, nearly 20 per cent of the British population thought there was a "need for revolutionary change", the highest proportion in Europe (Ginsbourg, 1990: Table 30, p445).

In 2012, Britain is once again in recession, but this time the focus is on the financial sector and the services rather than on manufacturing, and there is little overt sign of class polarisation between the political parties. In the intervening period between the early 1980s and 2012, there has been notable deregulation of the economy and of welfare provision. The radicalism of the trade union movement has become more muted and New Labour plays down any specific links it might claim to the working class.

What was a strong relationship in the early 1980s between someone's social class and their identification with a particular political party is now a weaker one

What was a strong relationship in the early 1980s between someone's social class (measured according to someone's socio-economic group) and their identification with a particular political party is now a weaker one (Tables 7.1 and 7.2). In 1984, managers and professionals were twice as likely to support the Conservatives as to support the Labour Party (around a half compared with around a quarter did so). By contrast people in the manual working classes were twice as likely to identify with Labour as with the Conservatives (again, around a half compared with around a quarter). In 2012, the professional and intermediate classes are actually more likely to support the Labour Party (38 per cent) than to support the Conservatives (29 per cent). The identification of the manual working classes with the Labour Party has shrunk considerably (to around 40 per cent), although it remains well ahead of their identification with the Conservatives (which is around 20 per cent). Perhaps most strikingly of all, the proportion of all classes who do not identify with any party had risen substantially since 1984: for instance, in 2012, a third (31 per cent) of people in the semi or unskilled manual working classes does not identify with a particular party, compared with seven per cent in 1984.[1] The Politics chapter includes more detailed analysis of trends in party identification.

Table 7.1 Party identification, by socio-economic group, 1984

		Party identification						
		Conservative	Labour	Alliance	Other	None	*Weighted base*	*Unweighted base*
Socio-economic group								
Managers	%	61	23	11	2	3	*166*	*168*
Owners and the self-employed	%	69	17	11	–	3	*36*	*38*
Professional and intermediate	%	52	25	18	2	3	*250*	*259*
Junior non-manual	%	50	23	18	*	8	*273*	*272*
Skilled manual	%	29	52	11	1	7	*287*	*299*
Semi and unskilled	%	25	54	12	3	7	*379*	*385*
Difference (managers – semi and unskilled)		+36	-31	-1	-1	-4		

Table 7.2 Party identification, by socio-economic group, 2012

		Party identification						
		Conservative	Labour	Liberal Democrat	Other	None	*Weighted base*	*Unweighted base*
Socio-economic group								
Managers	%	40	32	6	6	16	*395*	*391*
Owners and the self-employed	%	33	30	4	16	18	*196*	*176*
Professional and intermediate	%	29	38	10	10	14	*934*	*912*
Junior non-manual	%	31	26	8	10	25	*405*	*455*
Skilled manual	%	24	40	3	12	21	*384*	*384*
Semi and unskilled	%	17	41	4	8	31	*599*	*633*
Difference (managers – semi and unskilled)		+23	-9	+2	-2	-15		

Wider social changes, notably with the proportion of ethnic minorities increasing from four per cent in 1981 to 10 per cent in 2011 (Office for National Statistics, 2012a), and the diversification of household structure (where the proportion of households consisting of couples with children fell from 39 per cent to 27 per cent between 1981 and 2011 (Office for National Statistics, 2012b) have also changed the social landscape.

We thus have an interesting paradox. On the one hand, it is clear from Tables 7.1 and 7.2 that contemporary Britain is marked by strong and pervasive class divisions, measured 'objectively' according to someone's socio-economic group. In turn, these lead to sustained and possibly increasing inequalities across classes, evident in key measures of life chances ranging from educational attainment to health and morbidity. People with working-class jobs are, for example, more at risk of unemployment than those in professional jobs. Increasing disparities in income are driven by accentuating occupational class inequalities (Williams, 2013). Yet, on the other hand, as Tables 7.1 and 7.2 show, the traditional relationship between class and political affiliation has declined,

and fewer people identify with any political party. Plus, although *we* can 'classify' people according to their socio-economic group, when we ask people to classify *themselves* into a particular social class – what we refer to as someone's 'subjective' social class – nearly half of the British population is reticent to do so. And this is no different now to how it was when the questions were first asked in 1983. Over the past 30 years, surveys (formerly the British Election Study latterly British Social Attitudes) have asked the following questions:

> *Do you ever think of yourself as belonging to any particular class? Which class is that?*

If respondents do not spontaneously put themselves as either "middle" or "working class", they are prompted to do so with the question –

> *Most people say they belong either to the middle class or the working class. If you had to make a choice, would you call yourself middle class or working class?*

6 in 10

say they are working class

Table 7.3 shows people's propensity over the years to identify themselves as being middle class or working class. The proportion of people feeling that they are middle class (around a third) or working class (around six in ten) has not changed much over the 30 year period. Nor has the fact that only half of the population spontaneously places themselves as belonging to either class, with others only doing so when prompted to put themselves into one camp or the other.

Table 7.3 Subjective social class, 1983–2012

	83+	87+	92+	97+	05	12
Subjective social class	%	%	%	%	%	%
Middle class						
Unprompted middle class	20	16	16	20	20	22
Prompted middle class	14	18	18	17	17	13
Working class						
Unprompted working class	33	30	29	31	25	29
Prompted working class	27	31	30	30	32	32
Did not identify with any class	6	5	6	2	6	5
Weighted base	*3637*	*3795*	*2672*	*2906*	*2101*	*1084*

+Source: British Election Study, taken from Heath et al., 2009, p21–40

Although people are no more or less likely in 2012 as in 1984 to self-identify with the working or middle classes, the salience of class has declined substantially for people. When asked how close people feel to particular social classes, there is a marked albeit slow decline over time (Heath et al., 2009). This tallies with substantial qualitative evidence suggesting that people are ambivalent about which class they belong to (see for instance, Savage et al., 2001), or even more,

that disadvantaged working-class people actually 'dis-identify' with belonging to a social class (Skeggs, 1997).

Uncertainties about the contemporary cultural and social relevance of class as traditionally defined were very evident in the recent public debate about the findings of the Great British Class Survey which was launched by the BBC in April 2013 (see Savage et al., 2013). These findings attracted great interest, with most commentators recognising that class divisions were strong. Yet at the same time there was much critical commentary about whether the actual classes defined in these new analyses were accurate and whether people felt they actively belonged to any of the newly-defined classes.[2]

In the context of this Savage (2000, p.xii) has identified the "paradox of class" that the structural importance of class to people's lives appears not to be recognised by the people themselves. Culturally, class does not appear to be a self-conscious principle of social identity. Structurally, however, it appears to be "highly pertinent".

Our chapter therefore reflects on the significance of class – both objective and subjective – for a range of people's attitudes on welfare and liberal attitudes. There are at least four possible reasons why we might expect the relationship between someone's social class and their attitudes to have weakened in the last 30 years, each of which we explore in this chapter:

Reason 1: class is no longer politically mobilised. One line of reasoning might run that while objective class differences remain strong, powerful institutions and agencies do not seek to mobilise people on the basis of these inequalities. Marshall et al. (1988) and Evans and Tilley (2012) argue that the decline of class alignment in the political arena is due to the way that political parties themselves have moved to the centre, rather than because people themselves have changed in their political preferences. This leads us to wonder whether people's attitudes and values on issues where political parties used to give a strong lead to their supporters have also become more weakly associated with social class.

Is the traditional distinction between middle class and working class no longer the relevant dividing line?

Reason 2: class no longer means the same thing. A second possibility is that perhaps the apparent importance of social class as an indicator of someone's attitudes has weakened artefactually, simply because our classifications of social class have become outdated. It may be that social class needs to be re-conceptualised, and that, if we did so, stronger associations with attitudes would be found. So, is the traditional distinction between middle class and working class no longer the relevant dividing line? Should we now be thinking in terms of distinctions based on income levels, between say the rich, the 'squeezed middle', and the poor? Or along the lines of Savage et al. (2013) should we be differentiating between different kinds of middle-class groupings, and distinguishing between an 'elite' at the top and a 'precariat' at the bottom? Has education now superseded class as the key source of social attitudes?

Reason 3: people's backgrounds do not influence their views any longer. A third possibility is that in a post-industrial, postmodern society (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991; Giddens, 1994) attitudes themselves have simply become more individualistic and less tightly tied to people's social positions. Since, according to Beck, identities can be freely chosen, attitudes too might have become more indeterminate. Perhaps class has not been replaced by income or education or by

any other social cleavage, but, rather, attitudes more generally have become more amorphous and unpredictable? This might be tied to Inglehart's (1990) famous argument that contemporary societies are becoming more 'post-materialist', or 'expressive' in their orientations, with the consequence that the kind of material interest-based attitudes deriving from class become less important.

Reason 4: other things matter now as well as class. A fourth and final perspective might claim that society has become more fragmented and differentiated with multiple bases of social attitudes rather than a single all-embracing division between middle and working class (or between rich and poor). This might be consistent with the significance of immigration, the rise of multiculturalism and diversity. This is a point discussed in the recent Government Office for Science's report on the Future of Identity (Foresight, 2013). Thus class, education, income, ethnicity and religion may each structure a limited set of attitudes, each within a relatively narrow sphere. We could interpret this, in Bourdieu's terms, as the increasing differentiation of cultural fields (Bourdieu, 1993). In other words we may be seeing a British society emerging in which there are multiple, cross-cutting lines of social cleavage rather than any one dominant line of division in the way that class used to operate.

It could be that society has become more fragmented with multiple bases of social attitudes rather than a single division by class

In order to evaluate the merits of these four possibilities, this chapter focuses on a range of attitudes and values towards traditional class issues such as redistribution and welfare, as well as issues around family and civil liberties. We compare results from the earliest British Social Attitudes surveys of 1983 and 1984 with those for the most recent surveys from 2011 and 2012 (focusing on questions that were asked in identical formats at the two time points). We look at how far responses to these questions are structured by social class (firstly as it is objectively measured and later by people's subjective view of themselves) and by other measures of social identity and social position (referred to later as social cleavages). In particular we consider what may have changed in the last 30 years, and how the importance of social class in shaping attitudes competes with other ways of defining people's social position, such as their religion, ethnicity or age.

We begin by introducing the attitude questions we have used in the chapter to explore the relationship between attitudes and social position. We also present the range of measures we use to explore social class and social position. We present tables showing the associations between someone's attitudes and the different measures of their social class and position, followed by analysis to assess the most significant drivers of attitudes at the beginning and the end of our 30 year period. We finish by discussing the relative importance of people's subjective social class in shaping their attitudes, and drawing conclusions about which, if any, of our four possible reasons for the declining importance of social class, might explain stability and changes in the past 30 years.

The attitude questions

There are only a limited number of questions which were asked both at the start of British Social Attitudes (in 1983 or 1984) and most recently (in 2011 and 2012). In this chapter, we focus on five questions related to income redistribution and aspects of the welfare state. Traditionally, we would expect people's views on these questions to reflect their socio-economic position, or objective class. Commentators who talk of the dealignment of class from political affiliation predict that the relationship will have become weaker over time.

In looking at these questions, we should be aware that their meaning might vary in different periods in time. For instance, the significance of reducing taxes might vary according to the actual tax rates for various income groups, or the meaning of spending on services may vary according to whether these are means-tested or universal. This caveat applies to any question of this kind and requires care in interpreting changing distributions over time:

Which do you think the government should choose?
*Reduce taxes and spend **less** on health, education and social benefits*
*Keep taxes and spending on these services at the **same** level as now*
*Increase taxes and spend **more** on health, education and social benefits*

*Which item of government spending would be your highest priority for **extra** spending?*[3]

How much do you agree or disagree with the statement "The welfare state encourages people to stop helping each other"?

*How much do you agree or disagree that the NHS should only be available to lower income groups?**

Do you feel that opportunities for young people in Britain to go onto higher education – to a university or college – should be increased or reduced, or are they at about the right level now?+

**Not available in 2012*
+Not available in 1984

We expect liberal issues to be less strongly related to socio-economic position, and more closely related to religion and age

The second set of four questions we look at taps into the extent to which people hold liberal views. We expect these issues to be less strongly related to socio-economic position, and more closely related to religion and age. Some theoretical perspectives, such as Reason 3 which suggests that people's backgrounds may have become less important in shaping attitudes, might anticipate that these relationships would also have become weaker over time. Conversely, theories such as in Reason 1, which emphasise the role of political parties, would tend to be more agnostic on whether there will have been changes over time (since British political parties, unlike their American counterparts, do not in general take up distinctive positions on these moral and family issues):[4]

Do you think that divorce in (Britain/Scotland) should be easier to obtain than it is now, more difficult or, should things remain as they are?

If a man and woman have sexual relations before marriage, what would your general opinion be?

What would your general opinion be about sexual relations between two adults of the same sex?

*How much do you agree or disagree with the statement "The law should always be obeyed, even if a particular law is wrong"?+**

**Not available in 2012*
+Not available in 1984

Given that our analysis focuses only on the beginning and the end of the British Social Attitudes time series, it cannot be treated as a definitive account of trends between the 1980s and 2012. Further details on the trends for a number of these measures, both at the population level and for particular subgroups, is available in the chapters on Government spending and welfare (taxation and spending; attitudes to the welfare state) and Personal relationships (attitudes to premarital sex and same-sex relations). Nonetheless, this chapter provides a current picture of the relationship between public attitudes and social class, and an account of how this has changed since 30 years ago.

The measures of social cleavage

In our introductory section, we report on two measures of social class: someone's socio-economic group and their subjective view of the class to which they see themselves as belonging. While someone's socio-economic group is related to their current circumstances, someone's subjective class can be rooted in factors other than their current situation, such as family history, political affiliation, and so on.

However, there are a number of other measures included in British Social Attitudes which are social-class indicators, which we include in this chapter:

- Household income
- Economic activity (full-time education, employed, unemployed, economically inactive)
- Housing tenure (owner, social housing, other tenures)
- Trade union membership
- Educational level (measured by age of completed education in 1983/4 and highest qualification in 2011/12)
- Private education*
- Private health insurance*
- Whether someone views themselves as high, middle or low income

**Not available in 2012*

There are then a number of other social cleavage measures, beyond social class, which are known to divide the attitudes of the British population:

- Religion (Christian, other religion, no religion)
- Attendance at a place of worship (no religion, never attends, … attends weekly)
- Ethnicity (white, non-white)
- Age group
- Sex

By looking at the associations between someone's attitudes and these wider measures of social cleavage, we can explore whether social class is becoming more or less significant in shaping attitudes than other definitions of their social position. By doing this we can test the question raised as Reason 4; that the social drivers of attitudinal differences have become more diverse. We can also see whether the relative importance of income against our measures of class has changed; this might be consistent with our second argument about the importance of material factors (although we might need a new measure of social class to effectively capture these). By looking at the significance of trade union

membership we can (partially) assess the role of political institutions in affecting attitudes (hence offering some insights on our first perspective), recognising that the social composition of trade union membership has also changed. Alternatively, if all these factors appear to have become less important over time, this might lend support to our third hypothesis about the increasing significance of reflexive, expressive and individualised attitudes.

The relationship between social attitudes and measures of objective social class or social cleavage

In this section, we take the first of a series of steps to assess the relationship between someone's social class, or their social position, and their social attitudes – in the early 1980s and then in 2012. Step one is to look at the *strength* of the associations between the range of objective social class and cleavage measures above, and people's attitudes. (We turn later in the chapter to discuss people's subjective social class, that is, how they view themselves in terms of class and income levels.) So, without reporting at this stage on the actual percentages of who holds which views across the different social groups, we look at the overall *pattern* of the relationship between social position and attitudes, and where those relationships are strongest.

Tables 7.4 to 7.7 show how strongly people's attitudes are associated with each of our measures of social class or social position, firstly in 1984, then in 2012. In each case, we have measured the strength of the association using a Cramer's V (a statistical chi-square based measure of association), where the association between the two variables is expressed as a score between 0 and 1. The larger the V score, the more strongly the two variables are associated. So, for example in Table 7.4, someone's social class is more strongly associated with someone's views on the NHS (0.151) than with their views on opportunities for higher education (0.054). Using asterisks, we also show the level of statistical significance in the difference between the two variables (as measured by a chi-square test).[5]

In 1984, someone's class, measured by socio-economic group, was significantly associated with four out of the five welfare state attitudes

We look firstly at the relationship between someone's social class, and their position across other social cleavages, and their attitudes to welfare and redistribution in 1984 (Table 7.4) and in 2012 (Table 7.5). In 1984, someone's class, measured by socio-economic group, was significantly associated with four out of the five welfare state attitudes (with the working classes being more positive towards government spending). Likewise, other measures of someone's social class, such as their current economic activity, their education level and trade union membership were also strongly associated with attitudes to welfare, on at least three of our five attitudinal measures. It is striking that someone's attitudes to welfare issues were often less strongly associated with someone's income level. Other measures of social cleavage were associated with a preference for taxation and spending, but were often not related to the other welfare questions. The exception to this was someone's age, which was significantly associated with their views on welfare across all five of our attitudinal questions. But overall, in 1984, social class appeared to be significantly more important in structuring most attitudes to welfare than our other social cleavage measures.

By 2012, people's attitudes to welfare are less strongly related to their social class (measured by someone's socio-economic group) and other measures of their social position are somewhat more significant. People's housing tenure, economic activity and educational attainment are all more important now to people's attitudes to welfare than they were in 1984, having statistically significant associations with four of the five welfare attitudes questions. Religion, sex, age and ethnicity are all more important now too. They have statistically significant associations with four of our five welfare attitudes, whereas social class is associated with three, income with one, and trade union membership with two. To this extent, there is some evidence that social class has become somewhat less dominant in structuring welfare attitudes in the past 30 years.

So, having established where there are statistically significant associations between people's attitudes and different measures of their social position, we turn to the *strength* of that association (as measured by Cramer's V). Overall, there is no clear trend that suggests that the strength of the associations we see have become more or less strong over time. For example, we see that in both 1984 and 2012, socio-economic group has a slightly stronger association with the welfare attitudes than income level does, and there is little sign that income has supplanted socio-economic group as the main economic driver of attitudes in 2012. Overall, economic activity remains as strong a predictor of people's attitudes to welfare as it had been in 1984, as does housing tenure. Just as in the early 1980s, private health and private education do not prove to be highly associated with people's attitudes in 2012. In contrast to theorists such as Peter Saunders (1990) who predicted that these 'consumption sectors' would become increasingly significant in a more marketised environment, in fact they have negligible significance. However, there does seem to be an important decline in the strength of the association between trade union membership and welfare attitudes. This may be due to the change in profile of trade union membership during this period, when there has been a shift from the majority of members being manual workers to non-manual workers, with the rise in professional trade union membership.

There does seem to be an important decline in the strength of the association between trade union membership and welfare attitudes

Table 7.4 Associations between attitudes to welfare and measures of social cleavage, 1984+ (Cramer's V and significance level)

	Taxation and spending	Health or education first priority for spending	Opportunities for higher education	Welfare state stops people helping	NHS limited to low incomes
Socio-economic measures					
Socio-economic group	.080*	.090**	.054	.085**	.151***
Income quartile	.067*	.060	.057	.051	.109***
Economic activity	.093***	.670*	.059	.068	.183***
Housing tenure	.090**	.038	.077**	.068	.052
Trade union membership	.166***	.340	.930**	.770	.980***
Education	.690*	.580	.067*	.066	.082**
Private education	.034	.054	.045	.059	.020
Private health	.105***	.069*	.030	.077	.063*
Measures of other social cleavages					
Religion	.109***	.030	.054	.067	.013
Attendance at a place of worship	.083*	.181*	.064	.065	.062
Sex	.065*	.062*	.074	.058	.128***
Age	.094***	.186**	.072***	.102***	.177*
Ethnic group	.790**	.024	.084**	.042	.050
Base	*1630*	*1629*	*1695*	*1494*	*1628*

** = significant at 0.05 level, ** at 0.01 level and *** at 0.001 level*
+data on opportunities for higher education from 1983

Table 7.5 Associations between attitudes to welfare and measures of social cleavage, 2012+ (Cramer's V and significance level)

	Taxation and spending	Health or education first priority for spending	Opportunities for higher education	Welfare state stops people helping	NHS limited to low incomes
Socio-economic measures					
Socio-economic group	.048	.097***	.100***	.083***	.077
Income quartile	.049	.027	.078***	.050	.065
Economic activity	.068***	.055**	.098***	.065***	.050
Housing tenure	.045*	.050**	.136***	.055*	.129***
Trade union membership	.048*	.024	.046	.051	.120***
Private education	.057	.054		.095	
Private health	.051	.045		.120*	.050
Education	.073***	.090***	.075***	.072***	.089
Other social measures					
Religion	.048**	.055***	.107***	.054*	.044
Attendance at a place of worship	.049	.078***	.060	.066***	.088
Sex	.063**	.140***	.119***	.063*	.057
Age	.070***	.077***	.113***	.092***	.072
Ethnic group	.092***	.056**	.118***	.058***	.073
Base (minimum)	*3217 (1078)*	*3233 (1078)*	*2133*	*2783 (919)*	*1081 (928)*

** = significant at 0.05 level, ** at 0.01 level and *** at 0.001 level*
+data on NHS being limited to those with lower incomes from 2011
Cells are left blank where a statistic could not be estimated because the predictor and the attitude question were in different versions of the questionnaire
Figures in brackets show the minimum base

Tables 7.6 and 7.7 show the changing relationship between liberal attitudes (those listed earlier) and people's social class and other measures of their social position, again comparing 1984 and in 2012. In 1984, someone's socio-economic group was not as significant in shaping these liberal attitudes as most of the other social class measures, especially education. By 2012, these measures of social class have also declined in importance, and there are much closer associations between liberal attitudes and the other social cleavages, notably religion, attendance at a place of worship, age and ethnicity. In 2012, as in 1984, religion and attendance at a place of worship have the strongest associations of all (measured by the Cramer's V score). This is especially the case with attitudes towards premarital sex (and related issues like ease of divorce). The relationship between liberal attitudes and religiosity has, if anything, got stronger over time, especially with respect to the acceptability of same-sex relationships. But educational level also remains a powerful predictor of liberal attitudes.

Table 7.6 Associations between liberal attitudes and measures of social cleavage, 1984+ (Cramer's V and significance level)

	Ease of divorce	Premarital sex	Same-sex relations	Obey law
Socio-economic measures				
Socio-economic group	.091**	.072	.092***	.054
Income quartile	.050	.125***	.099***	.131***
Economic activity	.126***	.176***	.118***	.142***
Housing tenure	.097***	.101***	.114***	.027
Trade union membership	.100***	.136***	.078*	.047*
Private education	.033	.092**	.113***	.001
Private health	.015	.063	.077*	.039
Education	.105***	.131***	.139***	.147***
Other measures of social cleavage				
Religion	.117***	.213***	.130***	.148***
Attendance at a place of worship	.177***	.206***	.107***	.150***
Sex	.108***	.113***	.102**	.001
Age	.140***	.475***	.134***	.245***
Ethnic group	.025	.066	.042	.059*
Base	*1625*	*1617*	*1613*	*1687*

** = significant at 0.05 level, ** at 0.01 level and *** at 0.001 level*
+data on obeying the law from 1983

Table 7.7 Associations between liberal attitudes and measures of social cleavage, 2012 (Cramer's V and significance level)

	Ease of divorce	Premarital sex	Same sex relations	Obey law
Socio-economic measures				
Socio-economic group	.079	.091	.122***	.099***
Income quartile	.076	.113***	.127***	.036
Economic activity	.104***	.115***	.135***	.090***
Housing tenure	.089**	.056	.062	.067**
Trade union membership	.040	.055	.056	.031
Private education				.025
Private health				.019
Education	.076	.073	.138***	.128***
Other measures of social cleavage				
Religion	.155***	.344***	.268***	.048*
Attendance at a place of worship	.157***	.240***	.202***	.032
Sex	.054	.109*	.134***	.044*
Age	.112***	.106***	.142***	.102***
Ethnic group	.120***	.389***	.241***	.044*
Base (minimum)	*1083*	*1083*	*1082*	*2774 (920)*

** = significant at 0.05 level, ** at 0.01 level and *** at 0.001 level*
Cells are left blank where a statistic could not be estimated because the predictor and the attitude question were in different versions of the questionnaire
Figures in brackets show the minimum base

To generalise, it is clear that, even in 1984, social class (measured by someone's socio-economic group) was not necessarily the key factor affecting people's attitudes and values. Several other measures of economic position, notably economic activity, housing tenure and membership of a trade union were associated with attitudes as much as, or possibly even slightly more than, socio-economic group. It would be wrong, therefore to think that class (objectively measured by socio-economic group) was predominant even at this period in the 1980s of apparent class polarisation.[6] In the early 1980s, there was a differentiation between welfare attitudes, which generally appear oriented on a left-right axis in which class, housing, economic activity, and trade union membership were important, and liberal attitudes, which were more closely related to age, education and religion. However, class and class-related factors such as economic position come over as the most significant predictor of attitudes across the board at that time – so to this extent we can usefully talk about socio-economic position being a fundamental driver of attitudes in the 1980s.

The patterns for 2012 reveal that there are many similarities and only modest changes since the 1980s. The overall pattern of associations between social position and social attitudes is broadly similar to 30 years ago, with class-related factors significantly related to the various welfare questions, and age, education, and religion, as before, being more strongly associated with liberal attitudes. However, age, education, ethnicity and religion now appear to have significant associations with many of the welfare issues in a way that was not apparent in the earliest period. Across all the measures of someone's social position, relationships between ethnicity and people's attitudes have shifted most in this 30 year period. Ethnicity now vies with economic activity as the single most important driver of attitudes across the board, more important than socio-economic group or sex. Its importance for same-sex relations and premarital sex is especially marked, which may well be associated with the religious views of some of the ethnic groups.

As one might expect, there is a considerable amount of fluctuation in levels of significance and magnitude of the associations over time, reflecting changing historical contexts – and also reflecting methodological issues such as sampling errors and changing sample sizes – but the overall patterns look pretty similar in the two periods. In order to illustrate some of these patterns in more detail, and the changes between the early 1980s and now, we next present some simple tables showing the relationship between people's attitudes and various measures of their social position. For simplicity, we focus on one question on attitudes to welfare – attitudes towards taxation and government spending – and one question on liberal attitudes – towards premarital sexual relationships. We chose these because earlier factor analyses had indicated that these were the most central items in both periods for each of the two ideological dimensions. We show the full set of response categories to each of these two questions enabling us to flesh out the findings above on exactly how people's attitudes on these two measures are associated with their position in society.

In Table 7.8, we begin with the relationship between someone's socio-economic group and their attitudes to taxation and government spending, in 1984 and 2012. We show the proportions from each socio-economic group who prefer increased taxation and increased spending on health, education and social benefits.[7] As we can see, both now and 30 years ago, business-owners and self-employed people (often termed the petty bourgeoisie) are the least likely to

support increased taxation (28 per cent supported it in 1984, and 27 per cent did so in 2012, due to small sample size of this group the 1984 figure should be treated with caution), with managers not far behind in their views in 1984. Those more likely to benefit from income redistribution, in the lower socio-economic groups are most likely to support increased taxation and social spending. For instance, among the semi- and unskilled-manual classes, 40 per cent supported increased taxation and spending in 1984 and 36 per cent do so in 2012. However, we can also see that the gaps between the classes have reduced somewhat in 2012, compared with 1984, largely because the working classes have become less supportive of greater spending. This may reflect the effects of the recession of 2008, the subsequent austerity measures, and the consequent squeeze on the incomes of ordinary working people, which has perhaps made them more reluctant to support government spending. However, the change in the strength of relationship does not reach statistical significance, so we are careful not to over-interpret the change.[8]

Table 7.8 Taxation and spending, by socio-economic group, 1984 and 2012

	1984			2012		
% saying the government should increase taxation and spending		*Weighted base*	*Unweighted base*		*Weighted base*	*Unweighted base*
All	39	*1645*	*1675*	34	*3248*	*3248*
Socio-economic group						
Managers	32	*173*	*175*	35	*405*	*402*
Owners and the self-employed	28	*39*	*41*	27	*205*	*187*
Professional and intermediate	41	*264*	*276*	36	*984*	*965*
Junior non-manual	36	*294*	*293*	33	*440*	*489*
Skilled manual	45	*297*	*308*	34	*400*	*400*
Semi and unskilled	40	*401*	*408*	36	*640*	*667*
Difference (owners–skilled)	-17			-7		

In both years, the relationship between support for increased taxes and welfare spending and one's own income level is weak

Table 7.9 shows the pattern of responses to the same question on taxation and spending, across people with different household incomes, divided roughly into four quartiles. In both years, the relationship between support for increased taxes and welfare spending and one's own income level is weak, with no statistically significant difference between the two time points.[9] At least on this particular issue, income is not associated with attitudes on taxation and spending in either year.

Table 7.9 Taxation and spending, by income quartile, 1984 and 2012

	1984			2012		
% saying the government should increase taxation and spending		*Weighted base*	*Unweighted base*		*Weighted base*	*Unweighted base*
Income (quartiles)						
Top income quartile	40	*285*	*281*	33	*695*	*577*
Next top	41	*421*	*418*	36	*658*	*609*
Next bottom	40	*381*	*369*	34	*547*	*610*
Bottom income quartile	41	*384*	*377*	39	*653*	*832*
Difference (top–bottom)	-1			-6		

In Table 7.10 we show the differences in attitudes to increased taxation and spending comparing those in full-time education, in employment (including self-employment), unemployed, and economically inactive (for simplicity grouping together people who are retired, homemakers and other inactivity). In both 1984 and 2012, there is a clear distinction between people who are employed and those who are unemployed, with unemployed people 10 percentage points more likely to prefer greater government spending. Once again, a formal test indicates that there has been no statistically significant change over time in the extent to which people who are unemployed differ from those who are employed.

Table 7.10 Taxation and spending, by economic activity, 1984 and 2012

	1984			2012		
% saying the government should increase taxation and spending		*Weighted base*	*Unweighted base*		*Weighted base*	*Unweighted base*
Economic activity						
Full-time education	53	*27*	*27*	32	*156*	*87*
Employed	40	*856*	*876*	31	*1811*	*1591*
Unemployed	53	*102*	*106*	41	*193*	*166*
Inactive	35	*658*	*664*	40	*1088*	*1403*
Difference (unemployed–employed)	+12			+10		

Next we turn to trade union membership. Here for the first time we see a major change over time with a significant weakening in the strength of association between a measure of social class and someone's attitudes to taxation and spending. In 1984, there was an 18 point difference in support for greater spending between trade union members and non-members (the largest we have seen so far), with trade union members, not surprisingly, being much more likely to support greater spending. The relationship remained significant in 2012 but was sharply reduced to only six points. Formal testing indicates that the change in strength of relationship is highly significant.[10] However, as we mentioned earlier, these findings need to be taken in the context that the profile of trade union membership during this period has shifted from majority membership from manual workers to non-manual workers, with the rise in professional trade union membership.

Table 7.11 Taxation and spending, by trade union membership, 1984 and 2012

	1984			2012		
% saying the government should increase taxation and spending		*Weighted base*	*Unweighted base*		*Weighted base*	*Unweighted base*
Trade union membership						
Union member	53	*430*	*437*	39	*505*	*503*
Not union member	34	*1204*	*1225*	33	*2662*	*2668*
Difference	+18			+6		

We now move on to look at the relationships between someone's social class or social position, and their attitudes to premarital sexual relationships, a core question among a set of British Social Attitudes questions about liberalism. We begin in Table 7.12 with looking at the relationship between someone's age and their attitudes to premarital sex. As we can see, there was a very strong relationship between the two in 1984, much stronger than any involving the class-related issues or cleavages. But there is an interesting change by 2012: older age groups have become much more liberal, while the attitudes of the youngest group have barely changed.[11] This may well reflect processes of generational change (with younger more liberal cohorts replacing older ones with more traditional views), rather than individuals becoming more liberal as they age. Indeed, people who were aged between 25 and 34 in 1984 will broadly be concentrated in the 45 to 54 year old age group in 2012: and as we can see the attitudes of this cohort in 2012 are rather similar (67 per cent in favour of premarital sex) to the attitudes of the 25 to 34 year olds in 1984 (65 per cent in favour). One plausible interpretation therefore is that these kinds of attitudes are learned while young, and then change little over the course of life.

Table 7.12 Premarital sex, by age, 1984 and 2012

	1984			2012		
% saying premarital sex is not at all wrong		*Weighted base*	*Unweighted base*		*Weighted base*	*Unweighted base*
Age						
55+	20	*580*	*599*	55	*395*	*509*
45–54	35	*222*	*235*	67	*183*	*167*
35–44	53	*292*	*286*	72	*202*	*201*
25–34	65	*311*	*309*	73	*100*	*155*
18–24	66	*213*	*216*	67	*117*	*69*
Difference (55+ – 18–24)	-46			-12		

We see a rather different pattern when it comes to the attitudes of people with different levels of education (Table 7.13). In 1984 we see a strong 'curvilinear' relationship (with people at the two ends of the spectrum holding similar views and those in between holding different ones) in which graduates and those with no educational qualifications were less likely to approve of premarital sex than those with intermediate qualifications. However by 2012, there is general acceptance of premarital sex across all groups.[12]

Table 7.13 Premarital sex, by education, 1984 and 2012

	1984			2012		
% saying premarital sex is not at all wrong		*Weighted base*	*Unweighted base*		*Weighted base*	*Unweighted base*
Education level[13]						
Degree	35	*146*	*147*	65	*237*	*202*
A level and higher education below degree	53	*94*	*84*	68	*327*	*303*
GCSE	53	*127*	*230*	68	*179*	*176*
CSE	55	*390*	*393*	70	*68*	*64*
Less than CSE	36	*867*	*893*	59	*189*	*249*
Difference (highest–lowest)	-1			+6		

We find a very powerful relationship between attendance at a place of worship (church, mosque, temple or gurdwara for example) and attitudes to premarital sexual relations (Table 7.14). If anything the relationship has strengthened over time;[14] in 2012 the gap between the level of acceptance of premarital sexual relations of people who attend a place of worship weekly and of people with no religion had widened to a massive 62 percentage points.

Table 7.14 Premarital sex, by attendance at place of worship, 1984 and 2012

	1984			2012		
% saying premarital sex is not at all wrong		*Weighted base*	*Unweighted base*		*Weighted base*	*Unweighted base*
Attendance at a place of worship						
Attends weekly	13	*201*	*213*	23	*108*	*106*
Once or twice a month	28	*130*	*140*	46	*71*	*84*
Once or twice a year	39	*304*	*299*	53	*138*	*126*
Less than once a year	39	*80*	*84*	61	*46*	*57*
Never attends	42	*384*	*393*	71	*506*	*525*
No religion	60	*530*	*529*	85	*219*	*194*
Difference (weekly–no religion)	-47			-62		

Finally we turn to ethnicity, which we saw in Tables 7.5 and 7.7 had quite strong associations with attitudes across the board in 2012. Since the number of ethnic minority respondents in 1984 was very small, it does not make a great deal of sense to explore change over time in any detail, we therefore focus only on 2012. Table 7.15 shows the relationship between ethnicity and our two key measures of attitudes on welfare and liberal issues.

Table 7.15 Views on taxation and spending and premarital sex, by ethnicity

	% saying the government should increase taxation and spending			% saying premarital sexual relations not wrong at all		
Ethnicity		*Weighted base*	*Unweighted base*		*Weighted base*	*Unweighted base*
Ethnic minorities	24	*349*	*259*	32	*131*	*94*
White	36	*2884*	*2977*	69	*961*	*1001*
Difference	-12			-37		

The fact that ethnic minorities are less tolerant of premarital sexual relationships is no surprise. But it may surprise, given that minorities have very high levels of support for the Labour Party, that they are not supportive of the left-wing policy of increasing taxation and government spending. However, this pattern has been found before (Dancygier and Saunders, 2006; Heath et al., forthcoming) using independent data sources. One possible interpretation is that many people from ethnic minorities originate from countries with much less developed welfare states than Britain, and therefore are relatively satisfied with Britain's, in comparison, rather generous arrangements.

The importance of objective social class in shaping social attitudes

Many of the measures of people's social position that we have been looking at above will be associated – or correlated – with one another. So, for instance, someone's income is correlated with their socio-economic group, with people in higher socio-economic groups more likely than those in lower groups to have higher incomes, and so on. Another example where there is a well-known association is between age and attendance at a place of worship, with older people more likely to attend a place of worship frequently. In order to understand the key *underlying* predictors of people's attitudes – and the relative importance of the various measures of social class and cleavage – we have used regression analysis, which allows us to measure the independent association of each measure, controlling for the others.[15]

In Table 7.16, we show the results, for 1984 and 2012, of the two attitude factors we focus on in the earlier section: attitudes towards tax and spending and attitudes towards premarital sex. In our analysis, we included all the social class and cleavage measures listed in Tables 7.4 to 7.7. (The one exception is that we do not include both religion and attendance at a place of worship since they share the common category of 'no religion'.) This enables us to show the independent associations between the attitude measure and each measure of social class or position, taking into account – or controlling for – all the other measures in the model. In the tables, we show which measures of social class are statistically significantly associated with each attitude (shown by the asterisks), and the strength of the association (shown by the coefficients). For example, the coefficient for ethnicity shows by how much members of a minority group differ in their attitudes compared with a member of the majority group of the same age, educational level, socio-economic position and so on. In order to focus on the key stories, we do not show coefficients where the relevant

measure was not statistically significant, in either 1984 or 2012. However, where the coefficient was significant in one of the two survey years, we also show its value in the other year in order to facilitate comparison. For example, in 1984 there was a significant difference between people who were employed and those who were unemployed in their attitudes towards taxation and government spending (as also shown in Table 7.10), and we accordingly show the coefficient for this contrast. A negative coefficient (with a minus sign) indicates that the group in question was more left-leaning or more liberal than the comparison group (shown in brackets as the reference group). Thus the negative coefficient for the unemployed in the first column of the table indicates that, in 1984, the unemployed were significantly more likely to prefer greater taxation and spending than were those in employment (just as we saw in Table 7.10).

Table 7.16 Significant associations with views of taxation and spending and premarital sex, 1984 and 2012 (coefficients and significance level)

	Preferring more tax and spending		More liberal on premarital sex	
	1984	2012	1984	2012
Socio-economic group (ref semi and unskilled)	ns	ns	ns	ns
Income+	ns	ns	ns	ns
Unemployed (ref employed)	0.60***	0.50**	ns	ns
Tenants in social housing (ref owners)	0.21	0.22*	-0.27*	0.30
Union member (ref not)	0.63***	0.25*	ns	ns
Private education (ref not)	ns	n/a	ns	ns
Private health (ref not)	-0.63***	n/a	ns	ns
Education+	ns	ns	ns	ns
Attendance at a place of worship+	ns	ns	-0.32***	-0.46***
Sex (ref female)	ns	ns	-0.08	-0.36*
Age+	-0.09*	-0.13**	-0.55***	-0.22**
Ethnic minority (ref ethnic majority)	-1.10**	-0.59***	-0.63	-1.76***
Pseudo R2 (Nagelkerke)[16]	0.065	0.035	0.297	0.265
Base	*1633*	*3204*	*1598*	*1082*

** = significant at 0.05 level, ** at 0.01 level and *** at 0.001 level*
ns = not significant in either year
n/a = not asked
Additional categories (not reported) were included for missing data on socio-economic group or income
+Age, income, education and attendance at a place of worship were treated as continuous variables

Most importantly we see that, after taking into account other measures, neither socio-economic group nor income have significant relationships with people's attitudes

Some clear stories emerge from Table 7.16. Perhaps most importantly we see that, after taking into account other measures of social position, neither socio-economic group nor income have significant relationships with people's attitudes, even on tax and spending. Instead it is the factors like trade union membership and unemployment which are related to these attitudes. Moreover, this is true as much in 2012 as it was in 1984. This has considerable implications for the questions we pose at the start of the chapter. It suggests that specific interests, for example from being unemployed, rather than more generalised class location are the key drivers of these particular attitudes. This is the most striking divergence of this regression analysis from the early tables (which did not taken into account the interrelationship between different measures of social position) in which, in 1984, socio-economic position and income both

had significant relationships with attitudes towards taxation and government spending. This might be an argument in favour of the view that the effects which *appear* to be the product of social class are in fact attributable to smaller-scale processes (see, for example, Grusky and Weedon, 2008).

In most other respects, the regression analysis confirms the findings of the earlier tables. Thus age, sex (in 2012), ethnicity, and attendance at a place of worship are all highly significant predictors of attitudes towards premarital sexual relations, even after taking into account all the other measures of social position. Our provisional conclusions about changes in strengths of relationship over time are also confirmed.[17] Trade union membership had a weaker relationship with attitudes to government spending in 2012 than it did in 1984. The effect of age on attitudes to premarital sexual relationships has weakened, and that the effect of attendance at a place of worship has strengthened.[18]

Subjective social class

Previous sections have focused on objective measures of social class and other measures of someone's social position. Here, we return to our initial question of the importance of someone's subjective class awareness. We ask how important this is in shaping social attitudes. We measure subjective social class using responses to the following questions (the first of which we report on in Table 7.17):

Which class would you place yourself in, middle class or working class?

Among which group would you place yourself, high income, middle income, or, low income?

To what extent do you think a person's social class affects his or her opportunities in Britain today? A great deal, quite a lot, not very much, or not at all

Half of people think they have a middle income, 44 per cent think low income and only four per cent perceive themselves as having a high income

We reported earlier, in Table 7.3, that there has been very little change in the proportion of people identifying as "middle" or "working class" over the last 30 years. In 2012, 35 per cent of the public sees itself as "middle class" and 60 per cent view themselves as "working class". Table 7.17 shows a similarly flat trend regarding the income group that people perceive themselves to be in, although there are signs of a slight increase in propensity to view oneself as middle rather than low income. In 2012, half (51 per cent) of people think they have a middle income, 44 per cent think low income and only four per cent perceive themselves as having a high income. Likewise there has been little movement since 1983 in whether the public perceives that someone's class affects their opportunities. Throughout the period, a majority of people (around seven in ten) think that social class does affect opportunities, either a great deal or quite a lot.

Table 7.17 Self-rated income and whether class affects a person's opportunities, 1983–2012

	83	87	91	97	98	12
Self-rated income	%	%	%	%	%	%
High income	3	3	3	n/a	4	4
Middle income	47	50	48	n/a	52	51
Low income	50	46	47	n/a	43	44
Weighted base	*1719*	*2766*	*1422*	*n/a*	*3146*	*3248*
Unweighted base	*1761*	*2847*	*1445*	*n/a*	*3146*	*3248*
A person's class affects their opportunities	%	%	%	%	%	%
A great deal	25	28	27	27	n/a	22
Quite a lot	45	39	47	49	n/a	44
Not very much	25	27	21	17	n/a	28
Not at all	3	5	3	3	n/a	3
Weighted base	*1719*	*2766*	*1414*	*1355*	*n/a*	*1084*
Unweighted base	*1761*	*2847*	*1473*	*1355*	*n/a*	*1076*

n/a = not asked

As we discussed in the introduction, people's subjective awareness of social class may have followed a different trajectory over time from their objective one (measured by their socio-economic group), and it may be the subjective side that is more closely related to social attitudes. Thus we might see a sharper decline over time in the relationship between subjective class and attitudes than was the case with objective socio-economic group. And it could also be that people's subjective sense of where they stand in terms of income has become relatively more important. To explore these possibilities we add measures of subjective class, self-rated income and class awareness into our regression analyses on which we report. Table 7.18 shows the results for these three subjective measures only. All the other measures from Table 7.16 were also included in the model, but the coefficients are not shown as they were little affected by the inclusion of the new measures.

Table 7.18 Significant associations, 1984 and 2012 (coefficients and significance level)

	Preferring more tax and spending		More liberal on premarital sex	
	1984	2012	1984	2012
Subjective working class (ref middle class)	0.55***	0.08	0.33**	Not available
Self-rated income+	-0.28*	0.13	0.06	0.23
Class awareness+	0.23***	0.23**	0.01	Not available
Pseudo R2 (Nagelkerke)	0.097	0.067	0.297	0.265
Base	*1524*	*1031*	*1598*	*1082*

** = significant at 0.05 level, ** at 0.01 level and *** at 0.001 level*
Subjective class and class awareness were asked in a different version of the questionnaire from premarital sex in 2012, and so were not answered by the same group of respondents
+Self-rated income and and class awareness were treated as continuous variables

This analysis confirms the view that the subjective significance of class has declined considerably over the past 30 years. In 1984, one's self-rated class affected both welfare and liberal attitudes, even controlling all other factors we have looked at so far. To this extent, subjective class was more important than objective class in the early 1980s. By 2012, however, subjective class makes no significant difference in attitudes to tax and spend, and nor does one's self-rated income position. It is true that class awareness remains significant and of identical magnitude, but here the causality is especially complex as it might be the case that those in favour of 'tax and spend' might be more predisposed to thinking that class matters in shaping opportunities.

Conclusions

Despite the fact that we are looking only at the two ends of the British Social Attitudes time series, this chapter offers powerful support to those who claim that there have been only gradual shifts in public attitudes, and that there is only limited evidence of the declining significance of class. The first key point is that – at the start of British Social Attitudes in the early 1980s – once we take into account the various ways of dividing the British population into different social positions, we find that social class in itself was not very important in shaping attitudes. Rather, people's attitudes were related to other factors associated with social class – such as employment and trade union membership. This in itself limits the debate about the declining importance of class. So, overall, the big story is that not a great deal has changed over the years from 1984 to 2012: there is substantial continuity in the patterns of relationships between social attitudes and social class. While some relationships between attitudes and social cleavages have weakened (for instance, trade union membership with welfare attitudes) others have strengthened somewhat (such as attendance at a place of worship and liberal attitudes).

Someone's class is now less related to their views on welfare than it used to be, in parallel to the decline in class voting

Let us reflect on the four possible explanations of the relationship between class and attitudes which were raised at the start to consider how our analysis affects them. The first of these (Reason 1) is that political agencies no longer seek to make an issue out of class, hence leading to a declining relationship between class and attitudes. Perhaps there is some evidence for this in that trade union membership is no longer a driver of attitudes in the way that it was in the early 1980s, linked in part to its different social composition. The historical remaking of the Labour Party and the weakening of the link with trade unions might be responsible for this. The declining significance of subjective class identities in shaping attitudes might also be linked to this trend. Someone's class is now less related to their views on welfare than it used to be, in parallel to the decline in class voting and – perhaps for similar reasons – the movement of New Labour to the centre of the political spectrum and the absence of class-related cues.

We are not really able to adjudicate the second possibility (Reason 2): that the nature of class divisions have changed and require different measures, because we do not have alternative operationalisations of class in British Social Attitudes. The fact that the apparent effect of class can largely be decomposed into constituent factors associated with class might suggest that the artefactual issues might be important. However, there is no supporting evidence that this might be an issue in our study. There is certainly no evidence that one's position in 'consumption sectors' (for instance in public or private systems of housing or health care) makes an increasing difference.

Is there evidence for the third view (Reason 3) that we are seeing a more individualised set of attitudes along the lines that Beck (1992) sketches out? In Giddens's (1991) formulation, for instance, class might be expected to remain important for the politics of 'life chances' whereas it becomes less important for 'identity politics'. However, our analysis suggests that attitudes on welfare are becoming less structured by objective indicators, whereas those concerned with liberal attitudes are becoming more marked by these, and especially by sex, religion and ethnicity. There is no uniform story of 'individualisation' as Beck would have it.

This finding may suggest some modest support for the fourth idea (Reason 4) we mentioned at the start; that we are seeing an increasing fracturing of attitudinal domains. This would be consistent with the increasing significance of religion and attendance at a place of worship on liberal attitudes. If there is an overarching story here, it concerns the declining significance of subjective class membership and awareness on attitudes and the rising significance of ethnicity which appears to be a major new division in British society.

Notes

1. The reduction in the strength of the association between socio-economic group and party identification is clear from the Cramer's V score in each year. Cramer's V is a chi-square based measure of association. While a chi-square coefficient depends both on the strength of the relationship and on sample size, Cramer's V eliminates the effect of sample size by dividing chi-square by N, the sample size, (together with a further adjustment) and taking the square root. V may be interpreted as the association between two variables expressed as a percentage of their maximum possible variation. In 1984, the Cramer's V was 0.180 (Chi2 = 179.7 (20 df), $p < 0.0001$). In 2012, it was 0.125 (Chi2 = 181.4 (20 df), $p < 0.0001$).
2. The seven classes identified by Savage et al. (2013) are the elite; the established middle class; new affluent workers; the technical middle class; the traditional working class; emergent service workers and the precariat.
3. Our analysis of the responses to the items on the first and the second priority for government spending (cross-tabulating the two variables and inspecting the adjusted standardised residuals) indicated that the responses "health" and "education" were highly significantly associated, while the responses "defence" and "police and prisons" were also significantly associated. None of the other responses showed a distinctive pattern of association. In our analysis we have therefore constructed three categories: health and education; defence and police; other.
4. Factor analysis (see Technical details for more information) confirms that the questions we selected do indeed belong (in both periods) to two distinct ideological dimensions, the structure remaining largely unchanged over time. See the appendix to this chapter for the results of the factor analysis.
5. Chi-square is very sensitive to the sample size, and sample sizes vary both between surveys and within surveys (since some items were asked only of randomly chosen subsets of respondents). We cannot therefore use chi-square to tell us about the strength of association, only about its statistical significance. As a measure of strength of association we use Cramer's V (explained in note 1).
6. We also explored alternative 'objective' measures of class and reached the same conclusion.
7. Since the factor analyses indicated that attitudes towards tax and spending and towards premarital sex had the strongest loadings on the two ideological dimensions

(both in 1984 and in 2012 – see the appendix to this chapter), we focus on these two issues in our more detailed cross-tabular and regression analysis.

8. The 1984 and 2012 datasets were pooled and a loglinear model fitted to the data. The model was one which assumed that there were relationships between social cleavage and attitude, between social cleavage and year, and between year and attitude, but that there was no three-way inter-relationship. In effect this tested whether the relationship between cleavage and attitude was the same in both years (allowing for changes in the marginal frequencies over time). It is analogous to the 'constant social fluidity model' in social mobility research. If the model does not give a good fit to the data, as judged by the deviance, then the null hypothesis of a constant relationship has to be rejected.

9. Deviance 14.0 with 8 df, $p > 0.05$.

10. Null hypothesis that the relationship is unchanged is rejected: Deviance = 9.9 with 2 df, $p < 0.01$.

11. Deviance 76.9 with 16 df, $p > 0.001$.

12. The measure of education level is different in the two years, so we therefore hesitate to interpret the changing pattern.

13. The only measure available in 1984 was age when education completed, namely 19 and over (plus "still at college or university", equated to degree), 18 (equated with A levels), 17 (equated with GCSE), 16 (equated with CSE) and 15 or less (equated with CSE). These are very crude equivalences but do capture the hierarchical nature of education.

14. Deviance 76.9 with 16 df, $p > 0.001$.

15. We used ordered logit modelling, which is the appropriate technique when we have dependent variables such as attitudes towards premarital sex which are ordered (responses ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree).

16. Variance explained, or R squared, is a statistical measure of "the proportion of the total variability of the outcome that is accounted for by the model". It is used in OLS regression, where continuous, normally-distributed variables are assumed. The OLS interpretation has no formal equivalent in logistic regression (which does not assume that variables are either continuous or normally distributed). However, if some heroic assumptions are made, a statistic that looks like R-squared, and which has the same range from – to 1, can be developed. (They are essentially counterfactuals – what might the variance explained have been if this were a continuous normally distributed variable?) Lots of different pseudo R-squareds have been developed, and none has become standard. We use the Nagelkerke version. These measures should not be used to compare different datasets but only really to compare goodness of fit of different models within the same dataset.

17. See note 8.

18. We also found some evidence, from the measures of variance explained (the pseudo R2 statistic) that the overall explanatory power of the predictors has declined somewhat between 1984 and 2012. We have to be a little cautious here, since the multivariate analyses reported in Table 7.16 only cover two of our nine attitude measures. To check our results we constructed composite measures of the two main ideological dimensions, using all the available attitude items. This composite analysis confirmed our individual analysis of government spending on the welfare state (R2 for the government spending dimension falling from 0.061 to 0.022) but it did not confirm a decline in explanatory power for the liberal dimension (R2 actually increasing when a composite measure was constructed from 0.264 to 0.301).

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Appendix

Below are the results of two factor analyses, on 1984 and 2012 data, on the attitudinal items used in the analysis in this chapter. Factor analysis is a statistical technique which aims to identify whether there are one or more apparent sources of commonality to the answers given by respondents to a set of questions. For further details on this kind of analysis see the Technical details chapter.

Table A.1 Factor analysis of attitudes in 1984

	Factor 1	Factor 2
Premarital sex	0.751	0.123
Same-sex relations	0.647	0.184
Ease of divorce	0.635	-0.190
Tax and spend more, same or less	0.025	0.662
Welfare encourages people to stop helping each other	0.092	0.500
NHS should be available to all	0.530	0.423
First priority for government spending	-0.069	0.587

Table A.2 Factor analysis of attitudes in 2012

	Factor 1	Factor 2
Premarital sex	0.820	-0.177
Same-sex relations	0.808	-0.046
Ease of divorce	0.536	-0.127
Tax and spend more, same or less	0.135	0.693
Welfare encourages people to stop helping each other	0.071	0.678
NHS should be available to all	n/a	n/a
First priority for government spending	0.110	0.495

n/a = not asked

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