

Social class, wealth and multidimensional inequalities: The Great British Class Survey after ten years

Mike Savage

International Inequalities Institute, London School of Economics, London
M.A.Savage@lse.ac.uk

Abstract

This paper reflects on the impact of the *Great British Class Survey*, hosted by the BBC from 2011 to 2013. I argue that its intense appeal lay in the ability to crystallize three separate trends in one piece of research. These are (i) the problems of relying on a single variable definition of class, such as one based on employment and occupation; (ii) the growing significance of wealth and property as a central driver of 21st century class relations; and (iii) the inherent intersectionality of class with multiple other divides, notably around race and gender. The Great British Class Survey both undercut occupationally based models of class analysis that had become hegemonic during the late 20th century, and offered a template for a new multidimensional approach to class analysis. I consider how these multidimensional perspectives on class are being strengthened through the important shift towards centering wealth and property as the 21st century bedrock of class relations.

Key words: class; Great British Class Survey; wealth; multidimensional inequality

In 2011 the BBC launched the *Great British Class Survey* (GBCS) with a huge media blitz encouraging Britons to complete an online survey on their economic, social, and cultural capital. 166,000 people responded to this invitation within a few weeks, and along with Prof. Fiona Devine I coordinated a research effort to analyze this data. Drawing inspiration from Pierre Bourdieu, our aim was to conceptualize social class not as a unitary 'variable', but as a crystallization of economic, social and cultural capital. We quickly realized that the BBC's online web survey was hopelessly

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skewed towards an educated and affluent audience and persuaded the BBC to commission a small representative survey to provide a better benchmark for our study. After various false starts, we applied latent class analysis to this small national survey to delineate the underlying patterns in our complex data set. This generated seven latent classes which we saw as a useful heuristic tool for identifying the central ways that economic, social and cultural capital clustered together – drawing attention to the pulling apart of British society, given the striking divergences in the possession of capitals that we detected.

The BBC cleverly saw the possibility of pitching these as a means of identifying the new class structure of contemporary Britain. Skillfully, if not entirely seamlessly, they launched a brilliantly choreographed campaign to publicize these seven classes, timed to coincide with the publication of our academic article (Savage et al., 2013) on April 13th 2013. Benefitting from a ‘poor news day’, and the deft use of an interactive class calculator¹ that could be easily shared on social media, the story gathered huge public interest, with over 7 million people clicking a few responses to see which class they had been placed in (see the account in Devine & Snee, 2015). Many academic sociologists were hostile to what they saw as the ‘dumbing down’ of class analysis, and what some saw as the implicit criticism of the official measure of class enshrined in the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification. Numerous questions were posed about the robustness of the data and our methodological choices². Seeking to draw out the huge interest in the GBCS and also to respond to the criticisms that had been made, we conducted additional qualitative interviews and ethnographic and contextual analysis to write the best-selling *Social Class in the 21st Century* (Savage et al., 2015). This was part of a blitz of publications in which our team members highlighted the power of this multidimensional approach to shed light on a range of social issues, including political participation (Laurison, 2015), social mobility (Friedman et al., 2015), elitism in higher education (Wakeling & Savage, 2015), and urban inequalities (Cunningham & Savage, 2015).

This was ten years ago, and it is not the aim of this article to reprise the arguments afresh. Rather, taking advantage of the longer-term perspective that is now possible, I reflect on the place of the GBCS on the longer-term trajectory of class analysis itself. In retrospect, it is clear that its interest was linked to the particular moment at which it was publicized. This was the window between 2010 and 2015 when studies of inequality had huge public as well as academic traction (see Savage and Vaughan 2024 for a fuller elaboration of this argument). The period since the 2008 financial crash had seen huge public outrage at the extravagant incomes of well-paid bankers

and corporate leaders. High-profile political campaigns, notably by Occupy Wall Street (Calhoun, 2013) and Oxfam had questioned the disproportionate fortunes of the super-rich. Books such as *The Spirit Level* (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010), and *Capital in the 21st Century* (Piketty, 2013) had enjoyed huge sales and drove home the social dysfunctionality of inequality. Our book followed in this wake by considering what 21st century economic inequality entailed for understanding the concept of social class – that staple of sociological analysis.

But since 2015, we have entered a different historical period. At least in Anglophone contexts, the surge of inspirational inequality research has become much more subdued, and the topic no longer commands the same media or public interest. Michael Vaughan and I (2024) have argued that the awareness of inequality has morphed after 2015, notably as right-wing and populist forces have shown themselves more adept than the political left in appealing to large swathes of voters who feel disempowered. Since the political left has largely sought to work within the existing political rules of the game, it has been ‘anti-system’ politicians who have been able to win over the socially and economically marginalized who feel the entire system is corrupt and needs more radical reform (see Hilhorst et al., 2024). The analysis of inequality continues to be a major theme in academic social science, but in contrast to the ambition of the 2010 – 2015 period, it has to a large extent ‘battened down the hatches’, preferring risk averse, disciplinary based studies, highly empirically driven, rather than the more expansive and ambitious thinking evident only ten years ago³.

In this context, my article does not seek to specifically re-evaluate the GBCS afresh. It was the product of its time. Rather, I ask a broader question, regarding the lessons to be learnt in terms of the trajectory of the concept of social class in the interdisciplinary study of inequality. In previous publications (notably Savage, 2015; 2016) I have reflected on the rise and fall of class analysis during the later 20th century, but here I want to bring my arguments up to date. I suggest we are now at a time where there is a new potential for class analysis to ‘rise from the ashes’ and to gather increasing traction in wider social science debate. This is because we are in an exciting new phase where strong links can be established between three separate lines of inquiry: (a) an awareness of multidimensional inequality; (b) the centering of wealth as the central driver and product of 21st century inequality; and (c) the recognition of the inherent intersectionality of class with multiple other divides, notably around race and gender.

In telling this story I draw on several recent publications, notably my book *The Return of Inequality* (Savage, 2021), and collaborative writing

with Nora Waitkus and Maren Toft (Waitkus et al., 2024). My account here is a synthesis that draws together these various contributions into a wider argument about the need to re-center the concept of class as a means of articulating intersecting inequalities.

1 The trajectory of 20th century class analysis: from historical agent to a discrete sociological variable

I do not have time to rehearse the longer-term history of class analysis (for a good account see Crompton, 2008; as well as my reflections in Savage, 2016). In a nutshell, a crucial modulation in the purposes of class analysis took place in the period between 1950 and 1980. This involved the transition of understandings of class away from the political sphere, where it had been mobilizing a cry for political parties across most liberal democracies, towards a more scholastic, academic framing. As legions of historians have emphasized, until the 1950s, the concept of class operated primarily in civil society, political mobilization, and party organization, notably through the power of trade union and labor movements to insist on the need for forms of working-class representation in governmental and corporate organizations. Although the dynamics of this kind of working class mobilization varied between nations (e.g. Katznelson & Zolberg, 1986), it was a common trend in European nations, with echoes in other nations (see the overview of the rise and fall of social democracy in Benedetto et al., 2020). It necessarily followed that the concept was intended to be a mobilizing call as much as an ‘objective’ social science category.

In particular, identifying the ‘working class’ as an agent of progressive social change was a major plank in socialist and communist politics, which in its wake led to an interest in establishing who was to be construed as middle and upper class – the contrasting bulwarks of stability. This origin story explains why David Lockwood (2013) argued that the sociology of class had been oriented around the ‘problematic of the proletariat’ (see the wider discussion in Savage, 2015). This historical and political framing of class reached its heyday in the work of Marxist historians such as Eric Hobsbawm and especially E.P. Thompson whose iconic *The Making of the English Working Class*, published in 1963, had a profound impact on subsequent scholarship. Thompson railed against the view that class could be seen as any kind of objective category, instead insisting that classes were always ‘in the making’, as different kinds of people sought common cause with each other – and in ways that were not necessarily a reflex of a specific

social position. Thompson's focus on the historically mutable forms of class formation did get some sociological take up, notably in the arguments of Pierre Bourdieu (1986), as well as amongst some British sociologists who sought to distinguish class structure from class formation (notably Giddens, 1973; Goldthorpe et al., 1980; Savage et al., 1992).

However, the historical approach to class inspired by Thompson came under attack from the later 1970s as it was seen as both conceptually loose, and empirically opaque. New generations of sociologists sought to establish the validity of the concept of class by pinning down a more precise empirical definition, which could ultimately be reduced to the operation of a specific variable. In the UK, where the concept of class had particular prominence, we can trace this 'objectivist' turn back to the later 19th century, through the work of social investigators such as Charles Booth and Seebohm Rowntree who tried to 'fix' definitions of social class through the geographical mapping of cities (see Bulmer et al., 1991; Szreter, 1984). The subsequent Registrar General's Class Schema which predominated in British social statistics continued to be vague in its precise operationalization, and reflected the moralizing perceptions from civil servants as much as more precise definition. From the mid twentieth century, it therefore understandably came under increasing attack from new generations of social scientists. Furthermore, from a different direction, the loose political definition of class was also attacked by structuralist Marxists who saw Thompson's loose discussion of class 'experience' as lacking clear anchoring in the relations of production that Marxism had typically placed at the center of their account.

The result of this pincer movement of quantitative social scientists on the one hand, and Marxist theorists on the other, came to a head during the later 1970s and into the 1980s through a determined effort to define class 'scientifically'. This boiled down to specifying it as some kind of unitary variable. Although very different in their intellectual perspectives, the main protagonists in this duel, John Goldthorpe and Erik Olin Wright, agreed that class should be operationalized as defined by some combination of employment and occupation, although they disagreed about how exactly to do this. Goldthorpe ultimately prevailed in the dispute between these two occupational class schemas (see in particular, the painstaking consideration of the relative power of the two schemes in the UK case by Marshall et al., 1988, which also serves as a useful introduction to their different framings). Through effective advocacy by its camp-followers, the Erikson-Goldthorpe-Portacero (EGP) model was institutionalized in the UK through being incorporated into official government data as the National

Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC). It also became the most significant class scheme to be adopted across differing national surveys, so allowing it to be used for pathbreaking comparative research (see notably Erikson & Goldthorpe, 1992; Breen et al., 2004).

Goldthorpe and his colleagues defended this approach to class by insisting on the need for a validated objective measure to be used to empirically unpack the significance of class for a variety of life chances and outcomes (see notably Goldthorpe & Marshall, 1992). Analyses of the construct and criterion validity of this class schema (Evans & Mills, 1998; 2000) championed the robustness of using 'job characteristics as indicators of class positions derived from employment relations' (Evans & Mills, 1998 p. 87), and the NS-SEC remains the most widely used measure of class in comparative survey analysis to this day. However, it has come under increasing pressure, notably from proponents of 'micro-class' analysis (e.g. Jonsson et al., 2009) who draw out how more granular data allows a recognition of specific occupational effects which suggest that 'big classes' of the kind that Goldthorpe constructs may be of limited analytical use.

It is now clear that this 'objectivist' turn, which seeks to define class in a unidimensional way has run its course. This is because the 21st century has seen major historical shifts which mean that the 20th century foundations for this way of conceptualizing class have lost their force. Three specific points can be made here. Firstly, the occupational approach to class came to the fore during the period when analytical methods in quantitative sociology largely defaulted to 'variable-based' framings, whether this be through regression-based procedures, or through the forms of categorical data analysis (such as log linear modelling) that Goldthorpe more specifically advocated. In this context, ensuring the clarity of a unidimensional measure of class allowed it to be differentiated from other variables so that its relative analytical importance could be assessed in multivariate analysis (precisely as Goldthorpe and Marshall advocated in 1992). It followed from this logic that the specified classes needed to be large enough for them to produce statistically significant findings in representative surveys. Small 'elite' classes, most notably had to be methodologically ruled out (see Goldthorpe's (1981) admission of this point). However, in the context of the wider deployment of administrative data, and the use of computational methods, which allow for more refined analysis, notably of the 'top end' for those with the most resources and privilege, the value of these 'big class' perspectives is far less certain. It is notable that the growing social scientific interest in elites and 'top end inequality' has not found it useful to conceptualize class in this way.

Secondly, this objectivist definition of class sundered any meaningful connection to the rich tradition of historical class analysis, and to wider theorization of class itself. This problem was respectfully pointed out by Aage Sorenson in his review of *The Constant Flux* (Sorensen, 1992) and in his later endeavors to reorient class theory around forms of exploitation and rent (Sorensen, 1998). The basic problem was that Goldthorpe and his followers gave no reason why the EGP should be construed as a measure of class, rather than as a measure of 'employment position', because their operationalization is entirely detached from concepts of exploitation, political mobilization, and domination that the classical tradition of Marx and Weber had foregrounded, and which had been the crux of 20th century mobilization. It is not incidental that the UK government's operationalization of the EGP approach to class construes it as a 'National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification', rather than identifying it as a measure of class. A particular problem, which Goldthorpe has admitted in his recent work, is that the EGP gives no ready handle on people's cultural, political and ideological views, i.e. exactly the kinds of issues that class analysis in its classic period was intended to shed light on. In this very real sense, therefore, this perspective on class represents 'an emperor with no clothes' (see for instance Chan and Goldthorpe's 2004 argument that it was vital to distinguish status from class to be able to address these issues).

This links to a third problem. Because this model of class was defined at a moment in time when economic inequality was relatively subdued, and at a time when the trade union movement was relatively strong across many nations, and mobilized around some kind of conception of representing the interests of labor, it seemed intuitive to see the EGP approach as being a reasonable 'objective' rendering of fundamental class divides. However, we now live in a very different world, in which intensified economic inequality has reduced the salience of the traditional boundaries between working and middle class. Extensive research, including some which still adopt versions of Goldthorpe's approach, has demonstrated the need for more refined differentiation of privileged groups (e.g., Le Roux et al., 2008).

In short, the understandable, and for its time valuable, attempt to define an 'objective', unitary measure of class that reached its peak in the 1980s and 1990s has now run its historical course. It is in this context that we can better appreciate why the GBCS gained such interest, as an alternative model which could expose the limited appeal of unitary class models.

The GBCS actually had a long historical gestation. It drew on currents of research, which had become centered on the ESRC Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change (CRESC) at the University of Manchester and

the Open University, that had become interested in empirical studies of social class based on Pierre Bourdieu's conceptualization of capitals, and which notably became manifest in the influential *Culture, Class, Distinction* (Bennett et al., 2008). This cross-fertilized with qualitative studies which had become interested in the indirect and often implicit ways that class was interpreted by numerous social groups, and hence the implausibility of expecting people to recognize class membership in any kind of direct or unmediated way (see notably Skeggs, 1997; Savage et al., 2001).

The significance of the GBCS in this context was that it incorporated the confluence of this rich, mostly qualitative, approach, but also linked it to quantitative survey measures, and through the collaboration with the BBC, attracted major public interest. It is telling, in this context, that diverse public and academic audiences found the multidimensional approaches to class more persuasive and appealing. This was in great contrast to the EGP which was pitched as a scientific measure of class, and which has never had much public take up or interest. The GBCS thus acted as an 'explosive device' that shattered the previous dominance of EGP measures of class by demonstrating the appeal of multidimensional perspectives. Because lay people of different kinds see class as straddling various situations, practices, values and identities, the GBCS was appealing as it offered an overarching framework which people could use as a reference point. Even when, as was sometimes the case, audiences found the 'new model of class' unpersuasive, it still offered something to pitch against.

The GBCS also gained traction because it spoke to themes that chimed with academic and lay audiences. In pointing to the growing distance between wealthy elites and the deprived precariat, it registered how the class system was being stretched out, and that previously strongly policed boundaries between middle and working class were of limited significance. In taking advantage of the skewed sample of the BBC web survey towards elites and the privileged, the GBCS assisted with the growing current of research addressing elite formation as a central dynamic of contemporary societies. In short, the GBCS paved the way for the return of a multidimensional approach to class, that is better equipped to comprehend the various forms of inequality people experience. I now turn to consider how the concept might be further re-energized to take advantage of this turn.

2 Class and multidimensional inequalities

I have made the point that the GBCS acted as an explosive device that ruptured previously dominant social science framings of the concept of social

class that saw it as some kind of unitary variable, derived from occupation and employment. Yet there is a danger that the particular media prominence it enjoyed detracts attention from the wider scholarship that also sought to understand class through some kind of multidimensional lens. Most notably, Dutch researchers have used similar approaches to also elaborate multidimensional approaches to class (Vrooman et al., 2024; from research originating in 2014). Similar models, some of them using versions of a GBCS-like media generated web survey, have been trialed in Australia (Shepard and Biddle, 2017) and Croatia (Doolan & Tonković, 2021). Bourdieu-inspired models of 'social space' have also proved to be a powerful tool to dissect class relations across numerous societies (e.g. Flemmen, 2012; Vandebroek, 2018), including in the global south (Branson et al., 2024).

This interest in considering multidimensional dynamics has increasingly cross-fertilized with an interest in property and wealth. Conceptually, a key aspect of this argument is not to see class as a bounded and exclusive category, in which individuals were allocated to differing classes according to their employment situation on an either/or basis. Savage et al. (2005) argued instead that classes should be derived from forms of capital that generated accumulating advantages over time. It was this 'capitals, assets and resources' approach that was operationalized in the GBCS by considering how economic, social and cultural capital each specified mechanisms through which further rewards could be leveraged at future points in time.

This broad perspective that classes were defined not by a cross-sectional location in an employment class, but by the potential to accumulate advantage was given a huge boost by the pathbreaking work of economists Thomas Piketty (2013), Gabriel Zucman, and Branko Milanovic. Piketty's paper with Zucman (2014) insisting that 'capital was back' emphasized the fundamental significance of wealth as both a product and a driver of intensifying economic inequality because of its potential to generate rewards through the 'Matthew Effect'. This economic analysis chimed with Bourdieu's sociological focus on capitals as 'accumulated history' and more specifically highlighting the role of economic capital.

In the intervening decade, the argument that class should be re-conceptualized around modes of wealth acquisition, which thus critically depend on property relations, has gathered pace (e.g. Hansen & Wiborg, 2019; Hansen & Toft, 2021). The arguments of Lisa Adkins (2021) and her colleagues inspired interest in how relationships to domestic property were becoming an increasingly central mechanism to lever class advantages, especially as the economic rewards of metropolitan property ownership were coming to outstrip those that can be derived from the labor market.

This perspective has recently been synthesized and related to broader conceptions of property and rent extraction as a distinctive re-orientation of class analysis (Waitkus et al., 2024).

Wealth, unlike income, is inherently multidimensional. Whereas income can only be expressed in monetary forms, wealth exists as some kind of stock (e.g. property, pension funds, stocks and shares), the storing and accessing of which depends on a wider socio-legal infrastructure. Thus, wealth can be owned by individuals, households, corporations, the state, and in various communal and collective forms (such as 'common land'). The acquisition of wealth is linked to strategic practices, that valorize certain modes of cultural capital (see the discussion in Waitkus et al., 2024; Savage, 2021). Whereas influential economic research, such as that of Chetty et al. (2014), offers powerful insights into the contours of social mobility in the US by using income as the key measure, it tends towards a reductive way of placing individuals in a hierarchy. By contrast, measures of wealth are not only more supple but also more multidimensional, as they can encompass a wider variety of phenomena (e.g. the value of owner-occupied property, pension funds, savings, financial instruments tied up in corporate stocks, etc.).

It can also be argued that measures of wealth are a better way of understanding how inequalities impinge on people's well-being and hence may be a driver of political awareness and identities. This is because wealth has a distinctive relationship with senses of time and the future. Those with wealth assets can project a positive forward-looking sense of the future, in which their investments can be redeemed, with a good chance of accumulated interest. By contrast, those without wealth resources, and who may possibly be juggling debt obligations, can feel trapped in the past and present, with no future prospects (see Hecht & Summers, 2021). It is for these reasons that those in disadvantaged class positions are more likely to be attracted to populist political forces that seek radical redress for the apparent lack of hope that orthodox political parties present.

However, there are dangers in treating wealth as the key building block of contemporary class relations. The economic analysis of wealth might lead to undue attention to super-wealthy elites, possibly leading to an overly polarized account in which social divisions are polarized between the top 1% (or some similarly small fractile) and everyone else. In fact although the volume of wealth assets have dramatically increased across most nations in the past five decades, in many cases there has been only a modest increase in wealth inequality. Substantial amounts of wealth are held across the top half of the wealth distribution, especially the top 20% – what Piketty (2013)

identifies as the ‘patrimonial middle class’. Similarly, there is a danger that the focus of wealth becomes unduly unidimensional, for instance with Adkins et al.’s (2020) suggestion that housing assets now underpin class relations in Australia.

Therefore, as Waitkus et al. (2024) argue, a sophisticated perspective to class, property and wealth needs to be fully intersectional and multidimensional. This is because property ownership is complex and multi-faceted and is therefore necessarily bound up with numerous axes of advantage. This includes forms of racialized exploitation (most notably in relations of slavery), as well as gendered and patriarchal relations (as recently discussed by Bessiere & Gollac, 2023). This approach to class as generated wealth thus has the effect of systematically drawing out the intrinsic ways that classes are also racialized and gendered, in a mode that is more fully engaged with intersectional thinking.

This repositioning is also important, as growing evidence from political science and attitude studies indicates that the relationship property and wealth (e.g., Ansell et al., 2021; Ansell & Samuels, 2014), – which has until recently been poorly captured in survey questions – can be empirically shown to be significant in influencing attitudes to politics. In this way, whereas the EGP approach to class proved largely ineffective in demonstrating close affiliations between class structure and class identities and formation, a stress on wealth and property might offer far more analytical leverage.

A final advantage of centering the analysis of multidimensional inequality around concepts of class, property and wealth is to avoid the danger of using relatively arbitrary indicators of inequality, leading to a shopping basket perspective that will always be open to contestation (why is a certain item in the basket, and not others). It was along these lines that critics of the GBCS claimed that our measures were dependent on data mining and creating arbitrary classifications (e.g. Mills, 2014). In fact, these critics had not appreciated that the GBCS team had conducted extensive data analysis to define measures that best operationalized forms of economic, social and cultural capital that (following in the spirit if not the letter of Bourdieu) we theoretically saw as lying at the foundation of class relations. These data analyses followed approaches that we had honed in earlier studies, notably those associated with the *Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion* study reported in Bennett et al (2009). In other words, drawing on the concept of class allows coherent theoretical decisions about what kind of variables should be included in the multidimensional mix – and in a way that can be appreciated by wider non-academic audiences who may also be aware of the ways that different kinds of privilege intersect.

Finally, I want to add that this multidimensional perspective is also more capable of global and comparative extension. Standard late 20th century measures of occupational class were designed with global north nations in mind. They had been forged in the eras of 19th-century European industrial capitalism and contain assumptions (notably around the fundamental divide between the working and middle class) that cannot necessarily be applied to the majority of the world, which is characterized by high levels of informal employment, and the restricted importance of regularized employment. A multidimensional perspective oriented around property and wealth makes this problem more tractable. Indeed, this perspective is already being used in studies of the emerging economies (see for instance Branson et al 2024 on South Africa). Over recent decades, global inequality has been transformed by the economic growth in many nations in the global south, especially in China (see notably Milanovic, 2016; 2019). As a result, concerns driven by economists to ‘lift people out of poverty’, which prevailed in the later 20th and early 21st century, and which were enshrined in millennium development goals, have been modulated into a more sociological interest in how increasing numbers of people are able to live lives mostly freed from the immediate constraints of navigating scarcity. In this context, the social science research agenda should move away from prioritizing purely economic measures, notably levels of income, and needs to include a wider variety of measures of well-being and privilege. One way in which this can be done is by measuring the role of various kinds of assets or resources in making a difference to people’s lives, notably through access to land, water supply, public services and the like.

3 **Conclusion: The value of social class in a multidimensional perspective on inequality**

It is now common to recognize the multidimensionality of social relations. Thus, the tortuous methodological and political disputes involved in setting a global poverty threshold have increasingly been challenged by those insisting that poverty cannot be boiled down to one definite measure, and that a myriad of factors are involved (e.g. Alkire & Foster, 2011; Alkire et al., 2015). Recent important studies have insisted that we need to ‘turn the telescope’ to look at those with wealth and privilege, the groups whose advantages have boomed in recent decades (see my wider discussion in Savage, 2021; as well as Kerr, 2024). Accordingly, multidimensional measures of inequality

will surely gain traction as a means of unpacking the central dynamics of these inequalities, straddling economic, social, cultural and political axes.

Yet, we need to be mindful of the fraught and complex methodological politics of developing synthetic indicators that are generally opaque to non-experts and can become bound up with technocratic manipulation and bureaucratic processes, which might indirectly actually exacerbate the problems that such measures are intended to highlight. It is for these reasons that Piketty (2013) has criticized the use of the 'Gini coefficient' as offering the best summary measure of economic inequality compared to the more concrete measures of income shares taken by particular percentiles.

Drawing on my reflections on the Great British Class Survey, I have suggested in this paper that the concept of class could offer a powerful way of organizing multidimensional measures of inequality, but in a form that engages wider publics and can establish links between the numerous 'polycrises' that characterize contemporary economic, social and political life. More precisely, I have argued that attention to property and wealth as a key element of class relations is not only conceptually warranted, but also provides a powerful means of understanding how class crystallizes numerous intersecting inequalities. It can perform this role whilst also demonstrating to wider audiences the value of such analyses, ensuring that they do not come over as data-driven technocratic exercises.

Notes

1. See: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/special/2013/newsspec_5093/index.stm
2. One of the most critical responses, initially a blog, was Mills (2014), published along with other responses in the journal *Sociology* in 2014, and a special issue of *The Sociological Review* was largely devoted to eliciting a variety of theoretical and methodological critiques, along with new original research that we had conducted on the GBCS data set.
3. A good example of this changed tenor in the UK would be the work of the Deaton Review based at the Institute of Fiscal Studies. This has produced valuable reports on numerous, mostly economic, aspects of inequality in the UK, but these have not been synthesised into the kind of overarching statement that characterises interventions of the earlier period.

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About the author

Mike Savage, a Professorial Research Fellow at LSE's International Inequalities Institute, joined LSE in 2012 and served as Martin White Professor of Sociology until 2024. He held leadership roles as Department Head and Institute Director, advancing research on social class and economic inequality through collaborative, public-facing, systemic critique of disparities.