

a smooth-talking charmer who has mastered the art of seducing women). Many famous people (in history, literature, show business, etc.) have received nicknames by means of these figures of speech: Robespierre is also known as "the Incorruptible" and Sade as "the Divine Marquis". Such denominations can also be given to countries, cities, towns or places: Hexagon (France), the City of Lights (Paris), the Eternal City (Rome). Some are well-known but some others present difficulties in understanding: how to localize "the Rock" (Monaco) and "the stone" (New Caledonia)? Other figures of rhetoric (such as metonymies) appear frequently in the French press: "l'Hémicycle" (French Assembly), "la Santé" (a prison) "un Grenelle" (an open multi-party debate that brings together representatives of national and local government and organizations on an equal footing, with the goal of unifying a position on a specific theme).

The last part is devoted to eponymous adjectives. These adjectives have different endings and foreign learners may not be aware of the nuances brought by the suffix. Thus, they may confuse "platonique" (platonian) and "platonicien" (platonist). A presentation of the four most important endings (-esque, -ique, -ien, -iste) allows a better comprehension of the subtleties of the foreign language.

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Recent Changes in the Role and Status of the British Middle Class

Abstract

Throughout much of the twentieth century, the British middle class enjoyed relative economic and social stability. However, since the arrival of the credit crunch of 2008 and the subsequent economic recession, members of this social group have been facing a series of challenges to their established way of life as a result of the increasing economic uncertainty, rising costs of housing and education and ever tougher competition on the labour market. The paper aims to demonstrate how the middle-class status is being affected by these changes. Particular attention is paid to the phenomenon of the coping class, a term coined to refer to individuals striving to maintain both self-reliance and distinct middle-class identity amidst the economic adversities. The changes affecting this group are shown to be part of a wider restructuring of British society currently underway, with a "two nations" model looking increasingly likely to replace the traditional tripartite arrangement.

Key words: middle class, Margaret Thatcher, coping class, welfare state, Ed Milliband, credit crunch

1. Introduction

"We are all middle-class now," exclaimed John Prescott, a senior New Labour figure, shortly after the party's landslide victory in 1997 (Webb 2011). A soundbite rather than a reflection of social reality, this assertion not only demonstrated the shift of the New Labour

project from the left to the centre, but also voiced a vision of a more affluent, meritocratic Britain, no longer divided by traditional class barriers. Fifteen years on, the false optimism of this statement is evident. Class awareness remains an entrenched element of British society, while social mobility, a pre-requisite to greater social equality, has been in steady decline. What is more, the position of the British middle class, so far relatively secure and comfortable, is becoming vulnerable under the strains of the present economic recession. The “coping classes”, another name popularly given to the middling sections of British society, are finding it increasingly more difficult to cope.

The present paper aims to provide an analysis of the recent changes faced by the British middle class, both from economic, social and cultural points of view. Before that task is undertaken, some theoretical background may help to illuminate the relevance of discussing British society in terms of class. Cultural historian Arthur Marwick has called the British class system “*that topic all absorbing*”, emphasizing the crucial role of class as an identity indicator in contemporary Britain (Marwick 2003, 17). Even in the face of sweeping demographic changes, class is showing remarkable resilience, as numerous polls repeatedly demonstrate.

The term “class” may require some initial explication. In his seminal book *Class in Britain*, historian David Cannadine argues for three models of social structure that have developed over centuries and have provided the British with a means of making sense of their position in society (Cannadine 2000, 20). The first and oldest is the hierarchical model of ranks and orders. Medieval in origin, this model perceived society as “*providentially ordained, hierarchically ordered and organically interconnected*” (Cannadine 2000, 26), with each rank being essential to the functioning of the organic whole. Though being used mainly in pre-industrial Britain, the model did not die out completely, playing a role in the visions of some twentieth-century, conservative-minded writers or politicians (Evelyn Waugh, Stanley Baldwin and, to some extent, even Margaret Thatcher).

The second model, the tripartite system comprising the upper class, the middle class and the working class (with possible subdivisions, plus the addition of an under-class) came into existence during the Industrial Revolution as a result of the rapid growth of cities and urban populations. This is the model which is most commonly referred to when discussing class and in terms of which the majority of British population identify their social position.

The third, dualistic model of “two nations” (i.e. the rich and the poor, or “them” and “us”) originated during the nineteenth century and was popularized by Benjamin Disraeli in his novel *Sibyl*.¹ Despite having its roots in Victorian social divisions, the model

1) Disraeli’s definition of the two nations concept famously reads: “Two nations between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other’s habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of

has also proved viable in more recent periods, having been evoked by a series of writers, artists and political figures (examples including the concept of U and non-U language by novelist Nancy Mitford, the rhetoric of *The Guardian* journalist Polly Toynbee or the song *Common People* by the Britpop band Pulp). For the purposes of the present paper, the tripartite model will be primarily used, with reference to the two nations model where needed.

Having outlined the three possible concepts of class, some delimitation of the term “middle class” needs to be provided. Here, definitions vary greatly, especially when made from the economic point of view, i.e. when attempting to define middle class membership on the basis of income. The solution most workable for the purposes of the present paper appears to be the delimitation used by sociologists Nicolas Abercrombie and Alan Warde, who define the middle class on the basis of occupation, given that the other attributes of class (social and cultural patterns, etc.) are to a great extent linked to the occupation performed by the individual (Abercrombie and Warde 2000, 168-176). On that basis, the middle class can be subdivided into the following groups:

- a) The service class, comprising managers, higher professionals (lawyers, doctors, engineers, etc.) and lower professionals (e.g. teachers, nurses, social workers etc.)
- b) Routine white-collar workers.
- c) Petite bourgeoisie (self-employed people or owners of small businesses).

As seen further in this paper, the economic and social changes of recent decades have affected the individual groups of the middle class with different intensity, producing different outcomes.

2. Historical overview

In the years following the end of the Second World War, the structure of British society resembled a pyramid, with a small but extremely affluent and influential upper class at the top, followed by the more numerous middle class and, finally, by the large majority represented by the working-class. For British society as a whole, the post-war years involved a gradual move from austerity to affluence, the middle class being no exception to this. The process was foreseen by Labour minister Herbert Morrison, who declared in 1948: “*The middle classes, whose energies have helped to make Britain great during the nineteenth century, can look forward with confidence to an important and prosperous future*” (Cannadine 2000, 156). However, many middle-class people did not share the

different planets; who are formed by a different breeding, are fed by a different food, are ordered by different manners, and are not governed by the same laws. [...] The rich and the poor” (Disraeli 1995, 66).

minister's optimism, believing instead that they were being squeezed by Labour's welfare policies as well as let down by the Conservatives, who, under the post-war political consensus, refused to cut taxes and reduce welfare expenditure.

In terms of the cultural identity of the middle class, there were contradicting trends. On the one hand, there was a distinct positive self-image connected with being middle class (centred around the core values of respectability, education and, above all, being independent of the welfare state), coupled with a tangible feeling of superiority towards the working class. On the other hand, to other social groups, middle-class life appeared as far from fashionable. Considered as too suburban, repetitive, uninspiring and effeminate (while the working classes prided themselves on their grit), it was frequently subject to mockery, such as in the song *Semi-Detached Suburban Mr. James* by Manfred Mann or the popular comedy series *The Fall and Rise of Reginald Perrin*.

The 1980s, however, marked a dramatic change in both the economic situation and the social image of the middle class, the obvious reason being the embrace of Thatcherism.

Thatcher's vision was centred around the idea of an enterprise economy, based on the perceived virtues of hard work, self-reliance and responsibility, and it was the middle class members whom she saw as the bearers of these virtues (Cannadine 2000, 173). Her "middle England" (she would often use this term to refer to middle-income social groups) included not only the traditional middle-class members, but also white-collar workers, skilled blue-collar workers and self-employed people of various kinds. Thatcher's championing of the enterprise culture resulted in an increased desirability of the middle-class lifestyle. The suburban existence, once sneered at, became an object of aspiration, together with the conspicuous consumption enabled by the easy availability of credit cards. The structure of British society, accordingly, underwent change; its model now resembled a diamond, with middle class being the most numerous group, while the working class went into decline as a direct result of the abandonment of industry in favour of the service sector. The years of John Major's Conservative premiership saw the continuation of this trend.

With the 1997 landslide election victory, a reinvented Labour Party came to power under the leadership of Tony Blair. In the election campaign, New Labour deliberately attempted to appeal to middle-class voters, or more precisely, to a combination of striving white collar workers and skilled manual workers. The latter group earned the popular nickname "Sierra Man" (later changed to "Mondeo Man"), based on a 1996 Blackpool speech in which Blair identified an aspirational voter from a lower background whose desire for social mobility made him sympathize with Conservatives rather than Labour. Thus, New Labour presented itself as the party of aspiration, repeatedly wooing the middle sections of society (as opposed to its traditional working-class support base, continually shrinking due to de-industrialisation) and presenting itself as the party of meritocracy.

During Labour's first term, middle earners saw an improvement over the previous Conservative administration; these were the "feast years" (Lansley 2011a, 15). During the second and the third terms, however, the trend was reversed (the "lean years"). Yet, despite the decrease in income growth, the members of the middle class largely managed to retain their affluent living standards throughout the Blair years; this was made possible by the growing dependence on debt. Simultaneously, the middle class was becoming increasingly polarized, a process greatly hastened by the credit crunch of 2008 and the subsequent economic recession. By the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, Britain's middle class was clearly facing new economic and social challenges.

3. The coping class

The arrival of the credit crunch in Britain in 2008, with the accompanying slowdown of the British economy, coincided with the emergence of a new term in the social debate – the *coping class/classes* (the plural form is often used). Coined by Irish columnist and senator Eoghan Harris and quickly adopted by British newspapers, it has been used to refer to middle-class members hard-pressed by the worsening economic situation (Harris 2008). The word "coping" relates to the effort involved in maintaining livelihood amidst the present economic challenges; whether intended or not, it implies the middle-class value of economic independence of the State, mentioned in the previous section. Indeed, when coining the term, Harris sympathetically used it in contrast to the term *cushioned class*, by which he meant the protected public sector class whose members were surviving the economic crisis without struggle.² Thus, inherent in the concept of the coping class is dissatisfaction with the government policies which appear to penalize hard work and self-reliance.

The image of the coping classes as victims of not only economic crisis but also direct government neglect soon began to feature in a series of – predominantly right-leaning – newspapers (and their online versions), most notably in *The Telegraph*, which began to present itself as the voice of this disenfranchised group. The most extensive coverage of the phenomenon came in a trio of articles by journalist Judith Woods, whose very titles expressed the felt injustice in no uncertain terms: *The Coping Classes – Part 1: Why Do We All Feel So Damn Poor?* (Woods 2008a), *The Coping Classes Part 2: Paying for Their Good Intentions* (Woods 2008b) and *The Coping Classes Part 3: From the cradle to the grave: bills, bills, bills ...* (Woods 2008c).

Similar sympathetic attempts to present an economic, social and cultural profile of the coping class were made by other dailies, including *The Times*, *The Financial Times* and *The Daily Mail*.

2) Since 2008, the term *cushioned class* has ceased to apply as the public sector now faces substantial cuts under the present Coalition government.

Subjected to analysis, the coverage of the coping class in these major periodicals is revealed to contain some basic characteristics of its members, as outlined below:

- a) They are portrayed as hard-working, responsible and self-reliant. Judith Woods (clearly identifying herself as a coping class member) provides the following characteristics: *“Hard-working, astute and competent, we in the Coping Class are happy to take responsibility for our own lives; we rush home from the office to read to our children at bedtime, we save as best we can for our pensions”* (Woods 2008a). Thus, they are depicted as the embodiment of Thatcher’s enterprise culture, with a markedly positive self-identity and a firm set of values.
- b) They are presented as victims of heavy taxation. Their hard work and contribution to the national economy is shown to be in stark contrast to the unfairness of being subjected to stealthily increasing taxes. They are constantly depicted as bearing the brunt of the tax burden, while the working classes are on the receiving end of family credits and various benefits and the super-wealthy enjoy high pay rises or evade paying tax by being domiciled in tax havens. The phrase “taxed to the hilt” appears quite frequently in this context. There is a marked sense of a betrayal by the Government (primarily Gordon Brown’s New Labour Cabinet, but later also the Coalition government led by David Cameron), which to a large extent owes its election to the coping class vote.
- c) They are shown to be facing an ever-increasing employment and housing insecurity. With the economic recession hitting white-collar jobs particularly hard, the coping classes are at a growing risk of redundancy and inability to find new positions. Interestingly, the vulnerability to joblessness is shown to be affecting not only households on median incomes; higher-income groups are also impacted, with occupations such as lawyers, architects or financial advisers increasingly claiming the jobseeker’s allowance. As the majority of middle-class families depend on two incomes, the loss of one income is revealed to pose the risk of losing the family home due to an inability to pay the mortgage. Thus, logically, employment and housing worries go hand in hand.

Despite the financial squeeze, the awareness of future employment insecurity is shown to have led many coping class parents to invest more in their children’s education, often at the cost of other expenses such as holidays, socializing, new purchases, etc. Where parents are unable to fund private schooling due to rising tuition fees, they often choose to move to areas with good-quality state schools; finding adequate education facilities thus becomes a major relocation factor. In some instances, parents unable to af-

ford private education go so far as to “play the religion card”,³ i.e. pretend to be affiliated with a particular religious denomination in order to secure their children a place in one of the faith schools, believed to provide a higher educational standard than regular comprehensive schools. This practice is rarely criticized by the articles sympathetic towards the coping class; rather, it is treated as an indicator of how desperate the situation of those in the middle has become (Randall 2009). Furthermore, the material insecurities are shown to be having psychological impacts on the coping class members, with the occurrence of anxiety, depression, binge drinking and domestic disagreements on the increase.

- d) They are portrayed as the so-called *sandwich generation*. In addition to financial and employment insecurities, coping class couples (especially those in their forties) face the double burden of having to care for their elderly parents while still providing for their children. In this context, again, coping class members are presented as the victims of the government’s injustice, the argument being that the present system penalizes families with savings, who, having been fiscally responsible, are now having to pay for the care of their elderly family members while people with no savings are entitled to state assistance in covering care costs (Woods 2008a). In other instances, however, coping class couples are shown to be growing more reliant on the financial support of their parents, the Baby Boomers, who were fortunate enough to spend their productive years in a period of prosperity when purchasing property and saving money posed far fewer problems than today.
- e) They are shown as having to downsize in the face of rising bills. This increasing pressure on the budget has not only economic implications, but also cultural ones, for the coping class members are being forced to give up some lifestyle aspects that have previously constituted a marked part of their identity. The most striking of these changes, perhaps, is the change in shopping habits. In the face of the decline in living standards, many coping class families are having to abandon shopping at their previously preferred chains (Waitrose, Sainsbury’s, M&S) or to give up ethical shopping, such as buying organic or Fair Trade food. Instead, they are turning

3) Interestingly, the practice of “faking faith” in order to get to a better school has even been publicly condoned by Prime Minister David Cameron, who commented: *“I think it’s good for parents who want the best for their kids. I don’t blame anyone who tries to get their children into a good school. Most people are doing so because it has an ethos and culture. I believe in active citizens”* (Cockroft 2008).

towards discount or clearance chains of various kinds, such as Lidl or Aldi for groceries and Primark or Matalan for clothing. The rising preference for lower-price food retailers has led to the coining of the catchphrase "Lidl Britain!" (a paraphrase on the TV series *Little Britain*) by *The Telegraph* to refer to a whole new attitude to shopping among middle-class Britons (Blythmann 2008). Amidst the economic pressure, shopping at discount stores appears to have lost its inferior status and has become a new shared indicator of being part of the coping class: "there's been a major shift from status to value. People are less concerned about what their choice of supermarket says about them and more about what their choice of supermarket can do for them. Shopping at a discount store has a sort of 'I'm not-proud' inverted chic about it" (Blythmann 2008). Other aspects of downsizing and cutting back on the previous middle-class lifestyle include taking lodgers (thus sacrificing the much-cherished privacy of the home), eating in rather than out, choosing home entertainment (TV, the Internet) over socializing or attending cultural events, giving up weekend trips to save fuel, leaving out foreign holidays and, alarmingly for the society, ceasing charitable donations.

4. Criticism of the coping class

Not all debate on the coping class, however, has been sympathetic towards this group. A number of commentators, especially those writing for the left-leaning periodicals (*The Guardian*, *The Independent*, etc.), have described the coverage of the plight of the class as exaggerated, pointing out that other groups have been far more severely affected by the recession. In her *Observer* article *Pity those poor souls who have to cut back and let the nanny go*, author Catherine Bennett argues that despite their complaints, which are unlikely to arouse any sympathies outside the group, coping class members actually remain wealthy and privileged, their grievances being of little real substance (Bennett 2008).

On a similar note, diplomat, journalist and Labour Party member Tim Collard argues in his article *To hell with middle-class self-pity. Let's hear it for the real coping classes* (Collard 2010) that the term coping class has been undeservedly applied to the comfortable middle class, when the real "copers" are poor families from disadvantaged areas, especially in the unemployment-stricken North of England. According to Collard, while working-class families in the North found themselves sudden victims of Thatcherite policies involving the abolition of the staple industries, the middle cases enjoyed prosperity for an extended period of time, thus being able to save and prepare for more difficult times, an opportunity they missed in favour of consumerism and life on the credit card.

The voices downplaying or relativizing the problems of the British middle class in the face of the current economic recession appear to be in the minority, however. In the political circles, the risks of the impoverishment of the coping class seem to be gaining urgency, regardless of party affiliation. Probably the most striking example is the recent speech by Labour Party leader David Milliband in which the phrase "squeezed middle"⁴ appeared referring to refer to a group of citizens who, despite their strenuous effort, find it increasingly difficult to keep up with the rising costs of living: "The squeezed middle are working people. People bound together, now as in the past, by a set of values. The value of working hard. Whether it is in a factory, a mine, on a shopfloor, or a barracks. Whether it is on the railways, at a supermarket checkout, or at a call centre. The value of making an effort, of taking responsibility for yourself and your community. A hope that work should earn you the chance to give your kids a better start in life than you had. And the simple belief that you should not have to battle vested interests which use their power to rig the system, that everyone deserves a fair shot" (Milliband 2012).

Ed Milliband was by no means the first to put forward a term referring to a hard-working yet burdened social group. Earlier on, the former Labour leader Gordon Brown would use the term "hard-working families" whereas in 2011, the LibDem leader Nick Clegg spoke about "alarm clock Britain" to describe those individuals who "get up in the dark, get their children ready for school and then they go out to work" (Smith 2001). However, it was Milliband's phrase "squeezed middle" that appears to have had the greatest impact on the general public, being well-timed to coincide with the rising tide of opposition to the austerity policies of the coalition government.

In addition to the newspaper commentariat (in search of readers) and politicians (in search of voters), the changing conditions of the middle class have been subject to the scrutiny of social researchers of various kinds. Among the most informative studies available are the TUC Touchstone pamphlets, a series of research projects aimed at developing ideas and raising public debate concerning some of the most urgent social issues of contemporary Britain. A number of these pamphlets, including *Life in the Middle* and *Unfair to Middling* penned by economist and social analyst Stewart Lansley, analyze the phenomenon of the hollowing out of the British middle classes (Lansley 2011a and 2011b).

Although Lansley, writing for the Trade Union Congress, can hardly be described as right-wing, his conclusions are very much in line with the above-discussed picture of the coping class as portrayed by *The Telegraph* and newspapers of similar orientation. Interested in the economic rather than cultural background of the

4) Milliband's "squeezed middle" appears to be a more inclusive term than "coping class", comprising not only the middle class, but also members of the working class in possession of jobs. The term has since entered the Oxford English Dictionary.

phenomenon, he seeks to provide the reasons for the present middle-class squeeze. In addition to the impact of the current economic crisis, he finds several other major trends, more general and long-term.

The first of these trends, in his view, is the so-called “wage squeeze”, a development over the past three decades where the share of national income going to wage earners has decreased, while the share going to profits has increased, i.e. the rise in wages has lagged behind the rise in productivity. This has had, among others, the following implications:

- Increase in the concentration of income and wealth, with top earners benefiting from the increasing profits while middle-earners and low-earners have found themselves worse off due to the slower wage growth.
- Sharp increase in private debt in order to maintain spending power, with all concomitant social impacts.
- Declining living standards and the resulting increased reliance on welfare, where being employed (or, indeed, having a white-collar job) no longer guarantees being able to cover all life expenses, such as housing, energy bills, transport, etc. (Lansley 2011b, 410).

The second major trend observed by Lansley is a phenomenon he calls “rising wage inequality”, caused by:

- Changing structure of the workforce (as a result of the changing labour market), with a growing number of people in high-earning professional and managerial jobs but a decreasing number of middle-skill and average-paying jobs, i.e. increased risk of unemployment, and thus impoverishment, for those sections of society that were securely middle-class in the past (resulting in the “hollowing out” of the middle class).
- Increasing relativities between jobs, with earnings in highly-paid jobs growing considerably faster than in middle- and lower-paying jobs, with the fastest growth of earnings experienced in financiers, bankers and company executives (Lansley 2011b, 4–10).

Here, a difference emerges between the press coverage of the coping class and the evidence put forward by Lansley. While the newspaper articles analyzed argue that the adverse economic conditions are affecting both higher professionals and median earners, Lansley demonstrates that the gap between higher professionals (especially those employed in finance) and the lower sections of the middle class is growing wider, with the former drifting towards the upper-class status and the corresponding living standards and the latter slipping into ever greater economic difficulty and social uncertainty. Thus, the middle (or coping) class cannot be treated as a whole, but the split caused by the above-mentioned factors must be taken into account. As argued in *Unfair to the Middling*: “Today the social map has changed again. In just three decades, Britain has moved away from a ‘diamond’ to an ‘onion-shaped’ society with a small super-elite of the

very rich, a minority group of the affluent and a large bulge below the middle” (Lansley 2011b, 4).

5. Conclusion

For decades following the Second World War, the tripartite arrangement appeared to be the most representative of the structure of British society, with some changes resulting from economic and employment conditions (the enlargement of the middle class as a result of Thatcher’s enterprise policies and the simultaneous growth of an underclass as a result of the de-industrialization of regions and other social factors). Despite the highs and lows of Britain’s post-war economy, the middle-classes experienced decades of relative prosperity, social prestige and independence of the state. However, with the recent developments, as discussed above, the traditional structure appears to be changing into something not dissimilar to the “two nations” model, with the high-earning sectors of the middle class, especially those with high positions in the financial sector, being able to benefit from the rises in profits, while the middle- and lower-earning members of the middle class (white-collar workers, lower professionals, the self-employed, etc.) slipping into financial and employment insecurity due to the wage squeeze, changes in the job market, rising costs of living and increasing taxation.

As a result, the lifestyle once taken for granted as an attribute of the middle-class status (house ownership, quality food, good education for children, secure employment, private pensions) is becoming increasingly beyond the means of many members of the middle-income group. In addition, the economic self-sufficiency (i.e. independence of welfare), once a source of middle-class pride, is also proving more and more difficult to maintain. The implications of this development for the social and economic stability of Britain are far-reaching.

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Resumé

Studie si klade za cíl postihnout změny, kterými prochází britská střední třída v důsledku současné ekonomické krize na ni navazujících sociokulturních jevů. Pozornost je věnována zejména fenoménu tzv. coping class (v doslovném překladu „zvládající třída“). Tato skupina se přibližně kryje se střední třídou, avšak název coping class, jehož autorem je irský novinář Eoghan Harris a jenž se v médiích rychle ujal, výstižněji označuje situaci, které příslušníci středních vrstev v současné době čelí ve snaze uchovat si ekonomickou soběstačnost a středostavovský životní styl tváří v tvář vzrůstající pracovní nejistotě a rostoucím životním nákladům. Na základě analýzy dostupných zdrojů, mezi nimiž jsou i relevantní články z britského tisku (deníky *The Times*, *The Independent*, *The Guardian* a *The Telegraph*), se studie pokouší o prezentaci základních charakteristik a postojů této skupiny, přičemž pozornost je věnována i kritice konceptu coping class. Z analýzy vyplývá, že příslušníci této vrstvy na ekonomicky ztíženou situaci reagují celou řadou záchovných mechanismů, například omezování kdysi klasických atributů středostavovského životního stylu nebo například ještě větším důrazem na vzdělání svých dětí, a to i za cenu osobního zadlužení. Silně patrný je u nich pocit nevole vůči daňové politice vlády (ať už labouristické nebo koaliční) i narůstající existenční obavy narušující kvalitu jejich života (deprese, alkoholismus, rodinné tenze).

Situace, kdy zejména příslušníci nižší střední vrstvy mají problém „zvládat“, tj. udržet si svou středostavovskou pozici a nezávislost na sociálním státu, je ve studii prezentována jako jeden z možných ukazatelů konce třívrstvé struktury britské společnosti, tradované od dob průmyslové revoluce; namísto něj znovu ožívá koncept formulovaný v 19. století Benjaminem Disraelim – dualistický model „dvou národů“ (two nations).