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Parental values in the U.K.¹

Abstract

This article investigates the extent to which parental values differ between social groups in the U.K. at the start of the 21st century. The study of parental values is an important area of sociological enquiry that can inform scholarship from across the social sciences concerned with educational inequality and cultural variability in family life. We draw on data from the Millennium Cohort Study to show how parent's social class, religion, religiosity, race and ethnicity, and education are related to the qualities they would like their children to have. Our rank-ordered regression models show that parents in service class occupations place significantly more importance on 'thinking for self' than 'obey parents' compared to those in routine manual occupations. We also show that although class matters, the relationship between education and parental values is particularly strong. Parenting values also differ by parental racial and ethnic background and by levels of religiosity.

Introduction

Parents want their children's lives to go well - they typically want their children to be happy, to have jobs that they find fulfilling, and enjoy financial security. Clearly though, the concerns parents have for their children extend far beyond worries about socio-economic outcomes. They care about the sort of person their child is – they want them to have certain qualities – they take a stance on the sort of person they want them to be. That is, they hold *parental values*. As Brighouse and Swift (2014) note, the processes and interactions involved in the shaping of values are a central part of family life. Parental values are also a significant manifestation of cultural variation between social and economic groups that can motivate different patterns of behaviour.

This paper provides a detailed analysis of the relationship between social structure and parental values in the U.K. Using data from the Millennium Cohort Study, we assess how parental values are related to parents' social class, religious background, religiosity, ethnic and racial background and educational attainment. In doing so, we refocus attention on a once vibrant area of sociological scholarship. Kohn's influential program of research, which began in the 1950s, revealed that middle class parents were more likely to value self-direction in their children whereas working class parents were more likely to value conformity to authority (Kohn 1959, 1967, 1976 and 1977). In Lenski's classic study of the impact of religion on family life, he found that Catholic parents in Detroit were more likely than Protestants to prioritise obedience over autonomy (Lenski 1963). Although some

subsequent research attempted to build on this seminal work (Alwin 1984, 1986 and 1990; Sieben and Halman 2015; Starks and Robinson 2005), there have been relatively few recent studies of parental values, even fewer that focus on the U.K., and none that make use of high quality, nationally representative data.

In the decades since the seminal studies of parental values were carried out, the U.K. has changed considerably. In particular, we have seen shifts in the occupational structure and the nature of work, growing religious, racial and ethnic diversity, changing attitudes towards child-rearing, and an alleged weakening of traditional class identities (Bruce 2016; Bottero 2004; Gallie et al. 2018; Heath and Cheung 2007). This raises the question of whether the claims advanced by Kohn, Lenski and others about the relationship between social structure and parental values retain empirical support and whether they apply to the U.K. at the start of the 21st century. We therefore re-evaluate existing theories in the light of significant social, economic and cultural change.

By investigating the social distribution of parental values, this paper makes an important contribution to diverse literatures concerned with describing and explaining variability in family life, parental and religious socialization, the relationship between class and cognition and the micro-level mechanisms that may generate educational and social inequality (Ball et al. 2004; Harkness and Super 2002; Irwin and Elley 2011, Lareau 2006, 2011; Rollock et al. 2015; Scourfield et al. 2013; Starks and Robinson 2005; Tudge et al. 2000). Moreover, the sociological study of values has enjoyed something of a revival in recent years, with researchers investigating the social patterning of values, how they can motivate action, and arguing for the need to integrate values into our models of culture (Hitlin and Piliavin 2004; Miles 2015; Wuthnow 2008). This paper contributes to these on-going efforts. Studies of parental values have tended to focus on accounting for the relative importance parents place on autonomy and obedience to authority. Although we too focus on these values, our analyses focus on a broader range of values parents ascribe importance to, including the more prosocial value of ‘helping others’ and also the ‘learning of religious values’.

Class and parental values

The work of Kohn and his collaborators represents the most sustained analysis of how social class is related to parental values (Kohn 1959, 1976, 1977, 2006; Kohn and Schooler

1969). Kohn defines parental values as ‘...standards of desirability – criteria of preference’ (Kohn 1977: 18) and as ‘those standards that parents would most like to see embodied in their children’s behaviour’ (Kohn 2006: 18). He argues that middle- and working-class parents differ with regard to the relative importance they place on two values:

...the higher social class positions, the more likely they are to value self-direction for their children, and that the lower their social class positions are, the more likely they are to value conformity to external authority... (Kohn 1977: xxviii)

Moreover, Kohn contends that these value orientations influence parents’ behaviors - for example, how children are disciplined and how roles and responsibilities are allocated within the family. The relationship between class and parental values was observed not only in the United States and Italy, where Kohn conducted his early studies, but also in later work that included Poland and Japan – societies with strikingly different cultural and economic conditions (Kohn 2006).

What are the mechanisms that link parental values to social class? For Kohn, the answer lies in the division of labour: people in particular class positions are exposed to distinctive occupational conditions and experiences that influence their personalities and value orientations (Kohn and Schooler 1969, 1982, 1983). He argues that a defining characteristic of professional and middle-class occupations is the opportunity to exercise discretion and self-direction. In contrast, working-class occupations are more likely to be characterized by close supervision, a lack of task discretion, a routinized flow of work, and the need to follow the demands of supervisors and managers. Kohn accorded particular significance to the ‘substantive complexity of work’ itself. That is, ‘the degree to which performance of the work requires thought and independent judgment’ (Kohn and Schooler 1982: 1261). The formation of parental values occurs through a generalized learning process whereby ‘the lessons of work are directly carried over to non-occupational realms’ (Kohn 1977: liii). It is for this reason, according to Kohn, that we see parental values track social class background.

More recently, Lareau has returned to Kohn’s ideas in her work on class-specific parenting strategies. Lareau (2011) argues that working class and middle-class parents, guided by distinct cultural dispositions and *values* (see Weininger and Lareau 2009 and also Lareau 2006), adopt contrasting approaches to child-rearing: middle class parents engage in ‘concerted cultivation’ whereas working class parents typically follow a ‘natural growth’

model of parenting. Such parenting strategies are taken to be a key mechanism through which educational and social inequality is generated. Weininger and Lareau argue that their ethnographic data broadly supports Kohn's central finding:

...we find abundant evidence that in the day-to-day business of childrearing, middle-class parents tend to stress the importance of self-direction... Working-class (and poor) parents, by contrast, tend to stress conformity to external authority (2009: 681).

Values form part of the content of the cultural repertoires and logics of childrearing they identify; they are taken to matter because they are connected to distinct patterns of socialization and parenting strategies which influence the transmission of advantage and disadvantage. Interestingly, Weininger and Lareau highlight the 'paradoxical pathways' parents take in attempting to develop these values in their children: although middle class parents valued self-direction, they routinely placed their children in situations where they were subject to 'adult micro-management and control'. In contrast, working-class children 'are often placed in settings that leave them largely free of parental control' (ibid: 681).

Although Lareau's work suggests that Kohn's insights retain importance, her research draws on a small sample of parents in the U.S. Quantitative analyses, and studies focusing on other countries, can therefore complement this research. Moreover, much of Kohn's empirical work is now decades old and this raises the question of whether his findings still hold true. For example, shifting cultural ideals about how parents should support the emotional and cognitive development of their children (Schaub 2010), increased participation in higher education, and a rise in 'post-materials values' (Inglehart and Welzel 2005) - whereby people place increasing importance on self-expression, autonomy, and 'self-actualization' (Held et al. 2009) - may have vitiated some of Kohn's core theoretical claims. Of particular significance is evidence suggesting a decline in workplace autonomy and task discretion in the U.K. Gallie et al. (2018: 4) provide evidence that the decline in task discretion is particularly striking for those in 'intermediate' occupations - those employed in 'administrative, skilled manual and personal service' occupations. It might be expected, therefore, that class-based differences in parental values may have decreased. Based on the existing literature we derive the following hypothesis:

H1: The higher a parent's social class the more likely they are to value 'thinking for self' and less likely to value 'obedience to parents'.

Beyond class: religion, religiosity and racialised groups

Kohn's work mainly focused on the relationship between class and values but he also recognized that parental values were connected to a range of socio-demographic characteristics. We also look beyond class to consider how other key social and demographic traits, including religion, religiosity, race and ethnicity, and education are related to parental values. Not only are these factors all important sources of cultural variation associated with differences in parenting practices and family life, they also play a key role in shaping life-chances. For example, religious identity and beliefs shape job preferences, patterns of family formation, educational decision making and attitudes to work and money (Keister and Sherkat 2014; and see Keister and Eagle 2014 for a review). The parental values of religious parents may inform patterns of socialization that influence these broader socio-economic processes.

Existing evidence suggests an enduring connection between religion and parental values (Alwin 1986; Ellison and Sherkat 1993; Lenski 1963; Sieben and Halman 2014). Lenski found that Catholic parents in Detroit were more likely to value obedience to authority and less likely value autonomy than Protestant parents. He partly attributed this to the emphasis Catholics placed on the authority of the church and religious leaders. Later studies focused on evaluating trends over time and highlighted how parental values are intertwined with broader processes of social, cultural, demographic, and economic change (Alwin 1984, 1988, 1990). Alwin found convergence between Protestants and Catholics between 1964 and 1984 and showed that parental values 'increasingly reflect desires for autonomy or independence in children and decreasingly a desire for conformity and independence' with the change being particularly pronounced between 1964 and the mid 1970s (1989: 228). This trend, he suggested, was related to the liberalizing impact of the 2nd Vatican Council. The general shift towards valuing autonomy over obedience may also have reflected broader secular process of 'modernization' that leads to an increasing emphasis being placed on what Inglehart and Welzel (2005) call 'self-expression' and post-material values.

More recently, Starks and Robinson (2005) used data from the General Social Survey in the U.S. to show that:

Evangelical Protestants and members of Black Protestant denominations are less likely to value autonomy in children than are Catholics, Mainline Protestants, and people with no religious affiliation (Starks and Robinson 2005: 356).

They speculate that evangelical congregations stress the importance of obedience in response to the perceived threat to ‘traditional’ family and moral values. This suggests that parental values vary not only between religious denominations but also by levels of religiosity. Sieben and Halman’s (2014: 131) study of the Netherlands found ‘the more one attends religious services, the less one values autonomy as important child quality, and the more one values obedience’. The value orientations amongst evangelical congregations and the highly religious may be reinforced through high levels of participation in religious institutions and if their social networks are largely comprised of people from the same religious group. The values promoted by religious communities are also grounded in their distinctive ideologies and teachings (Burch-Brown and Baker 2016).

The U.K. is a theoretically interesting case to explore variation in parental values between religious groups *and* between religious and non-religious parents due to its high degree of religious diversity and increasing levels of secularization (Wilkins-LaFlamme 2016). Scourfield et al. (2013) found that the intergenerational transmission of religion, and religious values and practices, was particularly strong in Muslim families. Research on ‘religious polarization’ may be useful for explaining important cleavages in parental values. According to the religious polarization thesis, growing secularization in many societies, including the U.K., does not simply translate into the disappearance of religion but an increasingly sharp divide between a ‘large secular group of individuals on the one hand and smaller actively religious communities on the other’ – who each hold distinctive beliefs, attitudes and values (Wilkins-LaFlamme 2016: 650). This may mean that the largest differences in parenting values are simply between religious and secular parents. We therefore hypothesize that:

H2: There are differences between religious groups with regard to the importance given to the value ‘obedience to parents’.

H3: Higher levels of religiosity are associated with increased importance being placed on obedience to parents and on learning religious values and less importance being attached to ‘thinking for self’.

Evidence suggests that parenting practices, beliefs and strategies differ between racialised groups although much of the literature focuses on the U.S. (Brooks-Gunn and Markman 2005; Tajima and Hirachi 2010). Existing research suggests that African-American and

some ethnic minority parents may place particular emphasis on discipline and parental authority (Robinson and Harris 2013). An important strand of literature has explored the parenting practices of racialised groups and how they have developed distinctive strategies for challenging systematic and institutionalised racism, discrimination and economic marginalization (Robinson and Harris 2013; Rollock et al. 2015). Studies of ‘immigrant optimism’ indicate that immigrant groups may hold particularly optimistic beliefs about prospects for educational success and socio-economic advancement (Butler and Hamnett 2011; Fernández-Reino 2016). This optimism may be expressed through meritocratic beliefs about the value of hard-work (Tajima and Hirachi 2010)

Education and parental values

Prior studies suggest that parents with higher levels of education are more likely to stress the importance of self-direction and autonomy (Kohn 1990; Alwin 1989). Given the well-known relationship between educational attainment and social class, an important consideration is whether this association is driven by class-based mechanisms. Kohn cautiously argued that the effect of education on parental values was additive and independent of class (Kohn 1977: xxvii). The parental values-education link is consistent with research in finding a relationship between education and a range of political orientations, attitudes and values (Van de Werfhorst and de Graaf 2004; Stubager 2008). Typically, those who have attended university are more likely to consistently adopt ‘liberal’ positions than those with lower levels of education (Gross 2013). Evans and Tilley argue that when it comes to ‘Issues of moral ‘rights’ and ‘wrongs’, such as attitudes towards homosexuality and child rearing...’ (2017: 59) education rather than social class has greater explanatory power.

Why might parental values track levels of education? In summarising research on the formation of authoritarian-libertarian values, Stubager states that ‘The unequivocal finding of these analyses has been that high education groups tend towards the libertarian pole while low education groups tend towards the authoritarian pole’ (Stubager 2008: 328). He argues that socialization processes – where individuals learn and internalize ‘libertarian’ values through their experiences and interactions in the education system – are the most likely explanation for the finding. Moreover, class does not play ‘any major role as a mediator between education and the value dimension as had been hypothesized’ (ibid: 343). Therefore, one possibility is that the dispositions that people acquire through

education informs their parental values and beliefs about how children should be raised.

Kohn argued:

...education provides the intellectual flexibility and breadth of perspective that are essential for self-directed values and orientation; lack of education must seriously interfere with men's ability to be self-directed (Kohn 1977: 186).

Education, in this view, develops both people's cognitive skills and also promotes a broader range of intellectual capacities that help people exercise autonomy. An alternative explanation, however, is that schools simply promote the internalization of dominant social norms, including independence, through institutional expectations that stress the importance of working free from supervision (Dreeben 1968).

Bowles and Gintis (2011) develop this line of criticism against Kohn in *Schooling in Capitalist America*. Central to their theory of social and cultural reproduction is the claim that educational institutions socialize young people to fit into the existing class structure and therefore 'the school produces, rewards, and labels personal characteristics relevant to the staffing of positions in the hierarchy' (2011: 130). They question Kohn's account of self-direction and stress how dominant social norms are internalized by actors: the highly educated, rather than genuinely valuing intellectual independence are in fact 'supersocialised so as to internalize authority and act without direct and continuous supervision' (ibid: 145). However, this line of argument may overemphasize the importance of socialization processes and neglect the importance of self-selection mechanisms: people chose educational pathways and subjects based on their preexisting beliefs and values which are formed before they enter educational institutions (Gross 2013; Gandal et al. 2005). Inglehart and Welzel (2005: 37) suggest that the reason the highly educated give '...top priority to autonomy, individual choice, and self-expression' is that university students are disproportionately from advantaged social groups who are likely to have experienced high levels of economic and existential security – which they take to provide fertile ground for developing these values. We hypothesize that:

H4: The higher the levels of parental education the more likely they are to value 'thinking for self'.

Data, variables and method

We use data from the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS), which follows around 19,000 children born in 2000-01 in the U.K. (Hansen 2012). The study collects rich information on family life including parenting, children's outcomes, parental religion, occupation and

education. Six surveys – or ‘sweeps’ – have been completed, occurring every 2-4 years from birth.

We mainly use data from sweep 2 (SN 5350, University of London 2017a) when the cohort children were around 3 years old. In this sweep information was collected on the three most important qualities parents would like to instil in their child. The main parent – who in almost all cases is the mother – was asked to indicate the first, second and third most important quality. Six possible qualities were listed: (i) ‘being well liked or popular’, (ii) ‘think for him- or herself’, (iii) ‘work hard’, (iv) ‘help others when they need help’, (v) ‘obey parents’, and (vi) ‘learn religious values’. ‘Think for self’ and ‘obey parents’ track the values Kohn describes as self-direction and conformity to external authority. Table 1 shows the distribution of ranks by the possible values and mean ranks for each quality, where 0 indicates a quality was not ranked at all and 3 indicates that it was ranked as most important. The values ‘think for self’ and ‘help others’ are very likely to be listed as one of the three selected qualities. The mean rank of ‘think for self’ is 2 and 50 percent of parents indicated this quality as the most important one. In contrast, the qualities ‘being popular’ and ‘learning religious values’ are the least likely to be ranked at all.

Insert Table 1 here

We operationalize social class through the U.K. National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (*NS-SEC*) that is directly related to the EGP-class schema and was developed to capture differences in employment relations (Erikson and Goldthorpe 2002). We use main parent’s class information and information on the partner. The family’s class is defined by the family member with the highest social class. We use information on NS-SEC-class from sweep 2 and if this is missing we use information from sweep 1 (SN 4683, University of London 2017b). Our variable consists of seven NS-SEC categories and an eighth category including families where the partner with the ‘higher’ class is not on leave and not working in both sweeps 1 and 2, and not providing any occupation information:

- 1) Higher managerial and professional occupations (higher service class);
- 2) Lower managerial and professional occupations (lower service class);
- 3) Intermediate occupations;
- 4) Small employers and own account workers;
- 5) Lower supervisory and technical occupations;
- 6) Semi-routine occupations;

- 7) Routine occupations;
- 8) No occupation/not working/not on leave.

To study the relationship between religion and parenting values we use a variable that is based on the main parent's religion and consists of the categories: (1) no religion, (2) Christian (no denomination), (3) Christian (other Christian groups), (4) Roman Catholic, (5) Protestant, (6) Muslim, and (7) other religion including Hindu, Sikh, Jewish, Buddhist and other religions. Category (3) includes participants who indicated for instance Orthodox, Jehovah's Witnesses, or Baptist. Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for all independent variables included in the analysis.

Insert Table 2 here

To operationalize religiosity, we employ a variable that is based on the main parent's report of how often they attend religious services. The variable has three categories: (1) no religion and very rarely or no attendance at religious meetings, (2) sometimes attending religious meetings and up to more than once per month (but less than once per week), and (3) at least once per week.

We also look at the racialised and ethnic composition of the household. We include a variable that combines data derived from asking the main parent and partner to state their ethnicities. The variable we constructed has four categories: (1) both parents are 'White', (2) both parents are of 'mixed' ethnicity or the two parents have different ethnic and racialised backgrounds, (3) 'Black or Black British', and (4) both respondents are Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi, or have selected 'other ethnic group'. We define the fourth category in the present way in order to minimise strong overlapping with some of the categories of the religion variable.

Education is operationalized using information on both the main parent and partner. The variable corresponds to the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level or its equivalent and, as for the social class variable, is defined through the parent with the higher educational level. We use information on both parents in order to capture the likely overall influence of education on parental values. The NVQ is a competence-based classification that consists of five categories and takes into account academic and vocational qualifications. We also include main parents who acquired a qualification overseas and who have none of the listed qualifications. Thus, the variable has the following categories:

1. None of these;
2. Overseas and other qualification;
3. NVQ level 1 (lowest level) – corresponds for instance to GCSE-grades¹ D to G;
4. NVQ level 2 – corresponds for instance to GCSE-grades A to C;
5. NVQ level 3 – corresponds for instance to A-level;
6. NVQ level 4 – includes for instance diplomas of higher and further education;
7. NVQ level 5 (highest level) – includes postgraduate degrees and doctorates;

We also include a number of theoretically relevant control variables: net family income, number of siblings, whether the child lives in a one-parent family, the child's gender, main parent's age at interview in sweep 1 and the child's total score on the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) as a measure of behavioural and emotional problems (Goodman 1997). A family's economic resources are strongly associated with social class. A higher income usually comes with more opportunities and freedom in various areas of life, which may in turn shape parents' plans, values and aspirations for their children. Child's gender may be related to parenting values because of how gender stereotypical beliefs and norms influence what qualities parents think it is important for children of different genders to possess. The age of the parent is included because young parents might have lower education levels and social class positions than older parents because they are at the beginning of their occupational careers and may still be in the process of acquiring further qualifications. Children's socio-emotional behaviour can be expected to be associated with social class and parental education as well as with parental values (Flouri et al. 2016).

In terms of sampling, the number of children who were surveyed in sweep 1 was 18818 including 246 sets of twins and 10 sets of triplets. In sweep 2 the survey size was 15808 and after list wise deletion of cases with missing values on the variables of interest the sample size was 13250. Hence, the initial sample is reduced by around 29.6 percent. Survey design is taken account of through sampling- and non-response weights and clustering at ward-level.²

As we have information on how the main parent ranks three out of six parental values we conduct rank-ordered logistic regressions. We therefore take advantage of the additional

¹ GCSE stands for 'General Certificate of Secondary Education'.

² We follow Hansen (2012) for guidance on survey data analysis with the MCS. Robustness analyses were run also with clustering at family-level to take into account the embedding of twins and triplets in same households. These additional results are almost identical to the presented results; in few instances the present results are more conservative regarding standard errors.

information associated with how individuals rank a given set of alternatives rather than only focusing on what value is classified as the most important (Allison and Christakis 1994; Long and Freese 2006). This enables us to study whether parents find a value relatively important even if they have not listed it as the most important value. The rank-ordered regression model provides effects on whether an alternative is ranked over a base alternative. In our analysis this is whether a parental value is ranked over the reference value, which we set to ‘think for self’ – the most popular quality in the analysis sample (see Table 1). To conduct our analysis, we use the *rologit*-package in Stata (Long and Freese 2006). For the use of the package the data is organised with one value per row increasing the number of observations to 79500.

Results

We start with presenting the mean ranks for values across the core independent variables (Table 3). The bivariate analysis provides some initial support for our hypotheses and existing theories. The mean rank for ‘thinking for self’ increases with social class position and educational level: for instance, higher service class parents and parents with NVQ level 5 rank this value on average at around 2.28 and hence higher than the average of all parents in the sample with a rank of 2 (see Table 1). Parents who attend religious meetings frequently, and who indicated a religious affiliation (except Protestants and Christians with no denomination) tend to value obey higher on average than parents who did not indicate a religion. For race and ethnicity, we find the lowest average ranking of obedience among ‘White’ parents.

Insert Table 3 here

In order to conduct a multivariate analysis of the relationships between parental values and social class, religion, religiosity and education we run one rank-ordered regression model containing all these variables and the control variables family income, number of siblings, one-parent household, age of the main parent and child’s gender and strengths and difficulties score (Table 4).³

Social class

³ Multicollinearity tests produce variance inflation factors at low and non-problematic levels.

Table 4 shows the differences between each NS-SEC-class and the reference category (routine-class) in terms of giving a higher rank to a parental value compared to the reference value ‘think for self’. Providing support for Hypothesis 1, and in line with the results presented in Table 3, we find an association between social class and the importance attached to thinking for self. The odds that higher service-class parents rank individual obedience over individual thinking are around 47 percent lower (1-0.528) than the odds that routine-class parents do so. We find similar but smaller effects for the lower service-class (0.650; $p < 0.001$).

Insert Table 4 here

For all the other parental values we also find that higher service class parents rank independent thinking higher than working-class parents. Table 4 shows that relatively small differences between the higher service-class and the routine-class appear in terms of the odds of ranking independent thinking higher than ‘help others’ (0.757; $p < 0.01$) or ‘work hard’ (0.679; $p < 0.01$) while the corresponding class differences are the largest for ‘obey parents’ (0.528; $p < 0.001$).

Religion, religiosity and racial and ethnic background

The relationship between religion and parental values is evaluated by contrasting no religion, Roman Catholic, other Christian, Christian (no denomination), Muslim, and other religion with the reference category Protestant. Unsurprisingly, non-religious parents rank ‘learning religious values’ lower than ‘thinking for self’ compared to parents who indicated a religion. Significant differences appear for Protestant parents compared to other Christian, Christian (no denomination) and Muslim parents: members of these religious groups place more importance on learning religious values than on self-directed thinking compared to Protestants. We also find that the odds of ranking ‘obey parents’ higher than ‘thinking for self’ are on average 2 times higher ($p < 0.01$) for Muslim parents than for Protestant parents holding constant the other variables in the model. These results support Hypothesis 2.

With regard to religiosity, as measured through frequency of attendance at religious meetings, we find evidence in favour of Hypothesis 3: very religious parents consistently rank ‘thinking for self’ lower than most other values. Compared to parents who never or

rarely go to religious meetings, parents who indicated that they go to religious meetings at least once per week place significantly more importance on qualities such as helping others, working hard, obeying parents and learning religious values than on thinking for self. Similar to the results we find for religion, the odds ratios of ranking learning religious values higher than thinking for self are large and highly significant across all categories of the religiosity-variable. Another result with high statistical significance is that very religious parents (parents who attend religious meetings at least once per week) place more importance on helping others than on thinking for self (1.512; $p > 0.001$) as compared to parents rarely or never attending religious meetings.

We find differences between how ethnic and racialized parents rank 'obey parents', 'working hard' and 'learning religious values' over 'thinking for self'. To take one example, in comparison to 'White' parents, parents in the category 'other ethnic group' rank 'obey parents' higher than 'thinking for self' (2.55, $p > 0.001$). For 'Black and Black British' parents the corresponding odds ratio is 3.46 ($p > 0.001$). Moreover, the odds that 'Black and Black British' parents place more importance on 'working hard' than 'thinking for self' are 2.23 times ($p > 0.001$) the odds that 'White' parents do. All ethnic and racialised groups place greater emphasis on learning religious values when compared to 'White' parents and with regard to thinking for self.

Education

To study the stratification of parental values in relation to parents' educational attainment, we look at contrasts between educational groups. As we can see from Table 4, the relationship between education and the ranking of values is similar to the relationship with social class but the significance levels are higher across most education categories. The higher the main parent's level of education the greater the difference in the odds of rating 'think for self' over 'obey parents': highly educated parents systematically rank the former higher than the latter, as compared to lower educated parents. This offers support for Hypothesis 4. Similarly, for social class the odds ratios of ranking 'help others' and 'work hard' when comparing parents with the highest educational level to the lowest are relatively modest, in comparison to the corresponding changes for 'obey parents'. The fact that our model controls for social class, religion and racial and ethnic background, which are associated with educational attainment, suggests

that educational attainment is a particularly powerful driver of differences in parenting values.

Control variables

The control variables reveal further interesting results. Table 4 shows for instance that very young parents (under 20 years) place more importance on obedience, helping others and working hard than on self-direction when compared to parents who are between 20 and 29 years or in their 30s and 40s. Only for being popular do we find that parents aged between 30 and 39 rank this value higher than thinking for self compared to parents in their 20s. Child's gender also has an effect on the quality 'being popular': the odds that parents rank this value over 'thinking for self' are 1.14 times higher ($p > 0.05$) when their child is male instead of female. Parents with a relatively high family income rate independent thinking over obedience and if the child lives in a family where only one parent is present the parent tends to rank 'thinking for self' significantly higher than obedience, helping others and being popular. Number of siblings is also positively associated with rating learning religious values, helping others and working hard over thinking for self. Finally, as a child's rated social and emotional problems increase – as measured by the SDQ score – the likelihood of parents ranking obedience and working hard over thinking-for-self increases.

Discussion and conclusion

Values play an important role in our lives: we care deeply about them, they are central to our identities, they help us to evaluate how well our lives are going, and how we should treat other people (Tiberius 2018). In many situations they also influence what people do (Miles 2015). Using the best available quantitative evidence in the U.K., we have analysed how *parental values* in the U.K. vary between key social and demographic groups at the start of the 21st century. In particular, we find that parental values differ strongly by level of education, religiosity and racial and ethnic background. We find important but modest association between parental values, social class, and religion. By providing new evidence on these important manifestations of social and cultural difference between parents, we contribute to research from across the social sciences interested in studying variability in family-life and parenting. Moreover, by drawing on recent and nationally representative data we make a major contribution to updating research on parental values – a topic that was once a major topic of sociological research.

We find support for Kohn's main finding insofar as higher service class parents place greater importance on 'think for self' and correspondingly less emphasis on 'obey parents' compared to parents employed in routine manual occupations. This is striking given the major social, cultural and economic transformations of the last half-century. We suggest that this continued association reflects the influence that the class and occupational structure has on what people think and come to value. Our findings contribute to extensive research highlighting class-based differences in parenting and how these differences are implicated in the reproduction of educational and social inequality (Ball et al. 2004; Lareau 2011; Richards et al. 2016; Weininger et al. 2015; Weininger and Lareau 2009).

Although our analysis cannot disentangle the class-based mechanisms shaping parental values, it is worth noting that our measure of class was designed to capture differences in employment relations and conditions of employment (Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992, 2002). The results are therefore in keeping with Kohn's suggestion that conditions of employment and the nature of work are central to understanding why parental values differ between social classes. However, one possibility is that our measure of class may obscure the fact that parental values are in fact structured at a more occupationally disaggregated level. A plausible way of meeting this challenge is to adopt a 'micro-class' perspective when analysing parental values (Weeden and Grusky 2012). In future work we aim to explore this possibility. An important direction for future research is also to evaluate the extent to which parental values influence how parents raise their children.

Our results with regard to religiosity are consistent with research finding that religion has an impact on values and that religious parents are remarkably effective at transmitting their faith to their children (Bengston et al. 2017; Lenski 1963; Scourfield et al. 2013; Sieben and Halman 2014). The results presented in this paper show that parents with high levels of attendance at religious services differ strongly to non-religious parents in the values they rank as being important. Another important finding is that the values orientations of racialized and ethnic minority parents differ substantially from those of 'White' parents. The importance these groups attach to hard work may partly reflect 'immigrant optimism' or a reaction to the experience of discrimination and racism that requires them to 'work twice as hard' than the majority population to succeed in education and the labour market.

These findings are of considerable interest given the widespread political and public debates about social integration, the extent of cultural and social differences between religious, racial and ethnic groups, and how such differences relate to the socialization of children. It might be tempting to think that the strong emphasis religious parents place on the learning of religious values means that they see the other values as significantly less important. However, it might be the case that they do see the other values as important but view the learning of religious values as providing the necessary building blocks for developing other value commitments.

A particularly striking finding is that parental values are significantly patterned by parental level of education. These large differences are consistent with studies finding that social and political values are more strongly structured along educational rather than class lines (Stubager 2008; Van de Werfhorst and de Graaf 2004). It is clear that highly educated parents place a very strong emphasis on thinking for self. Compared to parents with lower levels of education, the highly educated attach correspondingly less importance to the values of obeying parents, working hard and helping others. This suggests that education is important to people's identities and powerfully related to parent's value orientations.

Notes

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Tables

Table 1: Distribution of ranks and mean rank for each parental value

	Popular	Think for self	Work hard	Help others	Obey parents	Learn religious values
	<i>Percent</i>					
Value not ranked	79.9	18.6	31.8	18.3	60.3	91.1
Third important	10.0	12.5	30.2	28.2	15.4	03.6
Second important	5.8	18.9	24.8	35.1	13.0	2.4
Most important	4.3	50.0	13.2	18.4	11.3	2.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
	<i>Mean rank (0-3)</i>					
	0.343	2.004	1.194	1.536	0.752	0.171
N	13250					

Table II: Distribution of independent variables included in the analysis

Variable	Percent	Variable	Percent
<u>Social class</u>		<u>Education</u>	
Higher service class	16.8	NVQ level 1	5.2
Lower service class	30.8	NVQ level 2	24.5
Intermediate	14.2	NVQ level 3	16.7
Small employer	7.8	NVQ level 4	38.5
Lower supervisory and technical	8.7	NVQ level 5	07.8
Semi-routine	12.5	None of these	5.9
Routine	6.9	Overseas qualification	1.4
Not working/not on leave/no occupation	2.3		
<u>Religion</u>		Male	50.5
No religion	47.1	<u>Age of main parent</u>	
Christian (no denomination)	7.8	40 years or older	3.4
Christian (other)	3.0	30-39 years	50.6
Roman Catholic	11.0	20-29 years	41.0
Protestant	25.8	Younger than 20 years	5.0
Muslim	3.3	One-parent household	16.6
Other religion	2.0	Number of siblings (mean)	1.14
<u>Attendance at religious meetings</u>		<u>Family income (pounds per annum)</u>	
No religion, Very rarely, never	74.4	Less than 3300	3.4
Sometimes and Less than 1 per week	17.2	3300-11000	18.0
1 per week or more	8.4	11000-22000	27.9
		22000-33000	23.1
		33000-55000	19.7
		More than 55000	7.9
<u>Ethnicity</u>		Strength and difficulties questionnaire score (min= 0, max=32)	9.48 (mean)
White	90.3		
Mixed	3.5		
Black, Black British	2.0		
Other ethnicity	4.2		
N	13250		

Table III: Mean rank for each parental value by core explanatory variables

	Popular	Think for self	Work hard	Help others	Obey parents	Learn religious values
<u>Social class</u>						
Higher service class	.440	2.279	1.040	1.552	.469	.221
Lower service class	.334	2.124	1.175	1.596	.605	.166
Intermediate	.362	1.965	1.263	1.485	.795	.131
Small employer	.381	1.904	1.141	1.513	.858	.202
Lower supervisory and technical	.318	1.878	1.230	1.552	.902	.121
Semi-routine	.271	1.799	1.294	1.473	1.029	.134
Routine	.254	1.708	1.273	1.473	1.089	.203
Not working/not on leave/no	.265	1.433	1.410	1.489	1.095	.308

occupation						
<u>Religion</u>						
No religion	.353	2.044	1.266	1.567	.740	.030
Christian (no denomination)	.350	1.977	1.032	1.512	.725	.406
Christian (other)	.224	1.751	.932	1.375	.871	.847
Roman Catholic	.273	2.036	1.133	1.540	.793	.225
Protestant	.384	2.110	1.156	1.582	.665	.104
Muslim	.217	.989	1.191	1.052	1.326	1.225
Other religion	.328	1.680	1.356	1.351	.912	.373
<u>Attendance at religious meetings</u>						
No religion, Very rarely, never	.361	2.028	1.249	1.554	.740	.068
Sometimes and Less than 1 per week	.336	2.092	1.106	1.555	.696	.216
1 per week or more	.196	1.610	.888	1.342	.975	.990
<u>Ethnicity</u>						
White	.357	2.058	1.186	1.578	.713	.108
Mixed	.248	2.009	1.264	1.325	.802	.352
Black, Black British	.099	1.413	1.274	.922	1.334	.958
Other ethnicity	.239	1.128	1.259	1.130	1.272	.973
<u>Education</u>						
None of these	.343	1.590	1.365	1.371	1.101	.230
Overseas qualification	.356	1.432	1.300	1.381	1.108	.423
NVQ level 1	.237	1.654	1.283	1.551	1.134	.141
NVQ level 2	.318	1.848	1.253	1.5161	.954	.111
NVQ level 3	.319	2.013	1.231	1.537	.790	.111
NVQ level 4	.364	2.175	1.126	1.582	.562	.191
NVQ level 5	.439	2.281	1.050	1.517	.392	.321
N	13250					

Table IV: Results of rank-ordered logit (odds ratios)

	Obey parents	Help others	Work hard	Learn religious values	Be popular
	Odds ratio	Odds ratio	Odds ratio	Odds ratio	Odds ratio
Basic value effect	0.484***	0.856	0.616**	0.028***	0.097***
<u>Social class</u> (Ref. routine)					
Higher service class	0.528***	0.757**	0.679**	0.633*	0.822
Lower service class	0.650***	0.908	0.909	0.621*	0.788
Intermediate	0.824	0.945	1.058	0.662	1.076
Small employer	0.786	0.945	0.891	0.718	1.153
Lower supervisory and technical	0.879	1.022	0.995	0.762	1.025
Semi-routine	0.946	0.959	0.994	0.633*	0.973
Not working/not on leave/no occupation	1.026	1.282	1.139	0.979	1.425
<u>Religion</u> (Ref. Protestant)					
No religion	0.938	0.991	0.955	0.551***	0.963

Christian (no denomination)	1.032	1.123	0.902	2.344***	1.084
Christian (other)	1.290	1.070	1.023	3.937***	0.885
Roman Catholic	0.978	0.952	0.931	1.173	0.823
Muslim	2.015**	1.414	1.384	7.928***	1.475
Other religion	1.270	1.209	1.379	1.729	1.211
<u>Attendance at religious meetings (Ref. never/very rarely)</u>					
Sometimes/< 1 per month, less than once per week/> 1 per month	1.166	1.037	0.944	2.098***	0.872
Once a week or more	2.820***	1.512***	1.221*	12.750***	0.981
<u>Education (Ref. NVQ level 1)</u>					
None of these	0.925	0.784*	1.020	0.936	1.393
Overseas	0.837	0.885	1.053	0.824	1.412
NVQ2	0.775*	0.815*	0.868	0.591*	1.004
NVQ3	0.579***	0.720**	0.757**	0.580*	0.855
NVQ4	0.372***	0.641***	0.600***	0.629*	0.742
NVQ5	0.227***	0.516***	0.509***	0.572*	0.694
<u>Parents' ethnicity (Ref. White)</u>					
Mixed	1.337	0.847	1.199	2.245***	0.739
Black, Black British	3.457***	0.996	2.229***	4.867***	0.584
Other ethnic group	2.547***	1.247	1.842**	4.949***	1.146
Strength and difficulties score	1.023***	1.008*	1.013**	1.012	1.013
Male	1.017	1.031	1.075	0.896	1.138*
<u>Age of main parent (Ref. 20-29 years)</u>					
Younger than 20 years	1.565***	1.536***	1.682***	1.438	0.869
30-39 years	0.868*	1.006	0.831***	1.016	1.540***
At least 40 years	0.574***	0.765**	0.587***	1.093	1.152
<u>Family income, pounds p.a. (Ref. 3300-11000)</u>					
Less than 3300	0.806	0.865	0.916	0.705	1.364
11000-22000	0.906	0.926	0.913	0.952	0.936
22000-33000	0.889	0.951	0.921	0.885	1.031
33000-55000	0.734*	0.868	0.898	0.791	1.004
More than 55000	0.788	1.010	1.203	0.642	1.110
One-parent household	0.776**	0.872*	0.916	0.926	0.688***
Number of siblings	1.034	1.073**	1.061*	1.246***	0.987
N (observations)	79500				
N (groups)	13250				

Note: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001; see Table in appendix for logit coefficients and standard errors.