50 years of British accent bias:
Stability and lifespan change in attitudes to accents

Devyani Sharma
Queen Mary University of London

Erez Levon
University of Bern

Yang Ye
University of Greenwich

Abstract

Do accent biases observed half a century ago (Giles 1970) and 15 years ago (Coupland & Bishop 2007) still hold today in Britain? We provide an updated picture of national attitudes to accent labels by replicating and extending previous studies. Mean ratings and relative rankings of 38 accents for prestige and pleasantness by a large representative sample of the British population (N = 821) attest to a remarkably stable, long-standing hierarchy of accent status. We find little evidence of demotion of conservative prestige varieties or reranking of accents, although we do observe a slight improvement in lower rankings. We focus in detail on age and life stage, finding that most of the age patterns observed in earlier studies were in fact instances of age-grading (lifespan effects), not real-time change in attitude. The midlife phase of life corresponds to conservative shifts in the perception of global, migrant-heritage, and stigmatised varieties. Our findings add **change in speech evaluation** to the growing body of research on lifespan change in speech production. Finally, although effects of ethnicity, social class, regional self- and other-bias, and age remain firmly in place, earlier gender differences in respondent behaviour have more or less disappeared.

Keywords

Language attitudes, British accents, region, ethnicity, social class, bias, prestige, lifespan change, age-grading, real time change.

Acknowledgements

1. Introduction

Fifty years ago, Giles (1970) conducted the first large-scale survey of attitudes to British accents, examining several dimensions of evaluation for both vocal and conceptual (accent label) stimuli. Giles's work revealed systematic rankings of accents, influenced by the age, sex, social class, and region of the listener. He concluded: "dialects not only confine their speakers geographically, they confine them socially. Almost every dialect in England is a class dialect—a shibboleth that limits and perhaps frustrates its user" (Giles 1970: 225, quoting Sansom 1953).

Is the same accent hierarchy in place in British society nearly 70 years since Sansom's description? Thirty-five years after Giles (1970), Bishop, Coupland, and Garrett (2005) expanded and re-tested his findings for conceptual stimuli and found strikingly similar patterns of accent preference. In the present study, we assess the current state of national attitudes to accent labels in Britain 50 years since Giles's study, and 15 years since Bishop et al.'s work. Our findings add a third time point and new insights into changing—but also unchanging—social structures in the UK.

What might we expect to see? The prevailing social climate in the UK could either have sustained earlier attitudes or altered them. Social mobility has been widely described as stagnant in the UK since 1970 (Social Mobility Commission 2019; The Sutton Trust and Social Mobility Commission 2019). Despite repeated government commitments to tackle the issue (Cabinet Office 2011; Mason 2013; Baxter 2016; Coates 2016), research has shown that the problem persists: upward income mobility in Britain has declined over the past 50 years (e.g., (Blanden et al. 2004; Blanden, Gregg, and Machin 2005), elite professions continue to be dominated by people from socially and economically privileged backgrounds (Friedman, Laurison, and Miles 2015; Wakeling and Savage 2015; Buscha and Sturgis 2018), and the social status of one's family remains the strongest predictor of attained levels of wealth, education and asset ownership in the UK (Clark and Cummins 2013; Clark 2014). These trends predict a sustained, class-based hierarchy of attitudes. By contrast, Britain has seen significant improvements in gender equality over the past half century, including increases in rates of women in employment and higher education, and significant reductions in the full-time gender pay gap since the Equal Pay Act of 1970 (Egerton and Halsey 1993; Perfect 2012; Francis-Devine, Foley, & Ward 2020). It is difficult to predict whether large-scale societal change of this type directly affects gendered perceptions of language (a robust finding in Coupland and Bishop 2007), but we might expect to see some reduction in gendered differences in behaviour.

We replicate the previous survey designs in order to facilitate a direct comparison of attitudes over the past half century. After presenting mean ratings for perceived prestige and pleasantness of 38 accents, we compare findings from three datasets spanning 50 years to discuss a number of key factors that influence attitudes to accents in Britain: stance towards accent diversity, age grading and midlife conservatism, stable age-graded ideologies of distinct accent types over the lifespan, regional loyalty but also self-directed bias, and diminishing gender effects.

2. Previous studies

Two key studies form the basis for the present survey: Giles (1970), based on data gathered in 1969, and Coupland and Bishop (2007; henceforth C&B), based on data gathered in 2004. As these two previous projects represent the two most substantial surveys of national attitudes to date, and also underpin the design and comparative analysis of the present study, we review them in detail here. In the analysis that follows, we compare our results directly to these two studies.

As part of an intensive early phase of research on attitudes to accents in Britain (Giles 1970, 1973; Giles and Powesland 1975), Giles (1970) asked 177 subjects to rate 16 different accents on a 7-point Likert scale according to three dimensions: status content (prestige), aesthetic content (pleasantness), and communicative content (comfort, i.e. how comfortable a person would feel interacting with the person, and intelligibility). Giles's study consisted of two types of stimuli, conceptual stimuli (accent labels) and vocal stimuli (audio recordings). In the present analysis, we focus on Giles' results for conceptual stimuli (see Levon et al. under review and Cole fc. for a recent examination of vocal stimuli).

Acknowledging that these evaluative reactions depend on "a complex matrix of sender-receiver attributes including age, sex, and social class" (1970: 211), Giles examined a range of listener attributes. His 177 subjects varied by age, sex, social class, and geographical region. As Giles worked through schools to create his sample, the mean ages for the two age groups—age 12 and age 17—were very low compared to C&B and the present work. Giles treated all listener attributes as binary: sex (male/female), social class (middle/working, based on father's occupation), and region (South West England / South Wales).

Giles's study found clear support for a hierarchy of prestige that closely corresponded to earlier scholars' observations regarding a socioeconomic basis for accent prestige in Britain. He drew on Wilkinson's (1965) tripartite system of accent prestige to characterise the hierarchy he found: First Class (e.g. RP, Scots, Southern Irish, some foreign accents), Second Class (a hierarchy of British regional accents), and Third Class (Town and Industrial) accents. Giles also found an effect of listener factors such as age, social class, and region.

Thirty-five years later, Bishop, Coupland and Garrett (2005) and C&B reported on a large-scale replication of Giles' conceptual stimuli survey. Embedding their questionnaire within a wider survey conducted by the BBC and administered with the assistance of a market research company, C&B gathered attitudes to 34 accents from a UK-wide sample of 5010 respondents and investigated two of the three dimensions that Giles studied, namely prestige and pleasantness. Some aspects of their results bear striking similarities to Giles' observations. Standard accents and accents associated with higher socioeconomic status were perceived as being more prestigious, while many urban, working class and also rural, regionally distinctive accents were rated positively with regard to pleasantness but were not perceived to signal prestige and status. There were also parallels to Giles' results for listener attributes, with older respondents rating RP significantly higher, all respondents rating their own accent well, and similar patterns of strong ingroup loyalty in specific regions (social class could not be investigated as it was excluded from the BBC design). C&B found sex to be a strong factor, with female respondents offering higher prestige and social attractiveness ratings overall, an effect that is only found for a couple of accents among Giles' much younger respondents.

In a recent study, McKenzie and Carrie (2018) use a very different experimental design to explore discrepancies between implicit and explicit attitudes to a set of Northern and Southern English accent labels. Their study finds explicit in-group loyalty to Northern varieties, implicit bias towards Southern varieties, and a lack of main effects of age and gender.

In our wider project (Levon et al. 2017-2020), we explored both conceptual and audio stimuli, as Giles (1970) did, and found that, although listener behaviour differs in some respects with different forms of stimulus, it nevertheless orients to certain shared global prestige associations. The present article focuses only on reactions to conceptual stimuli, or accent labels. We do not review research that has used audio stimuli in detail here (see Garrett, Coupland and Williams 1999; Fabricius 2005; Hiraga 2005; Llamas, Watt, and Johnson 2009; Watson and Clark 2013; Levon and Fox 2014; Montgomery and Moore 2018; Cole fc.; Levon et al. under review). Many of these studies confirm aspects of the literature on conceptual stimuli. For example, Hiraga (2005) found for vocal simuli for three British varieties that RP is top-ranked for status, followed by (rural) West Yorkshire and (urban) Birmingham. For status and likeability she identified the same basic hierarchy, with RP at the top and regional and urban varieties ranked lower.

3. Methodology

We aimed to replicate C&B as closely as possible, a study which itself partly replicated Giles (1970). C&B tested judgments of 34 accents. We used exactly the same accent labels in our survey, with three minor amendments: (i) 'London' was divided into 'Cockney', 'Essex', 'Estuary, and 'Multicultural London English', (ii) 'Asian' was divided into 'Chinese' and 'Indian, and (iii) 'A standard accent of English' was expanded to 'A standard accent of English (i.e., "Received Pronunciation")'.

Like C&B and Giles, we focused on the judgement of prestige and pleasantness along a seven-point rating scale, using the same phrasing as in their surveys (*How much prestige do you think is associated with this accent?* 1 = Very low; 7 = Very high. *How pleasant do you think this accent sounds?* 1 = Extremely unpleasant; 7 = Extremely pleasant).

For respondents' social background, we gathered information on age (continuous), gender (4 levels), region (12 levels), and stance towards accent diversity (7-point scale of agreement with the statement *I like hearing a range of accents of English,* replicating the wording of C&B). These were then recoded to ensure an exact match to the categories used in C&B; see Table 1. Sex was replaced by gender in our study ('woman/man/other/prefer not to say' as opposed to 'male/female' in C&B). We did not recode our categories of 'other' and 'prefer not to say' into C&B's categories of 'male' and 'female', but rather omitted them for the present analysis (6 respondents).

Table 1. Independent factors analysed for *prestige* and *pleasantness* ratings, based on Coupland and Bishop's (2007) categories

Factor	Levels
Accent	38 accents
Respondent Region	Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, North/Mid England, South East England, South West England
Respondent Gender	Woman, Man
Respondent Age	15-24, 25-44, 45-64, 65+
Respondent Stance towards Diversity	High (6-7), Medium (4-5), Low (1-3)

Responses were gathered from a representative sample of 821 adult members of the UK general public (ages 18-79, mean age = 41.6, median age = 42). Respondents were recruited with the help of a professional market research firm so as to obtain a sample that matches the demographic distribution of the UK adult population in terms of age, gender, region and ethnicity (see Table 2). This allowed us to obtain a representative snapshot of UK-wide attitudes to accents, as was done in C&B's survey.

Table 2. Demographic distribution of respondents

Gender	N	%
Woman	410	49.9
Man	411	50.1
Age		
15-24	123	14.9
25-44	349	42.2
45-64	338	40.9
65+	17	2.1
Region		
Wales	39	4.7
Scotland	70	8.5
Northern Ireland	12	1.5
North/Mid England	326	39.4
South-East England	310	37.5
South-West England	70	8.5
Diversity		
Low	85	10.3
Medium	543	65.7
High	199	24.1

The distributions in Table 2 closely parallel those in C&B, so differences in results are not likely due to differences in sample composition. Sample size, by contrast, is somewhat

different: Although our study is large (821 participants), it is a sixth the size of the larger C&B survey (5010 participants), and this can affect the extent to which statistical significance obtains in marginal cases.

We gathered a number of further personal and biographical details, but do not investigate these in detail here in order to facilitate direct comparison to C&B's four main factors. Further details that were gathered included: an index for Motivation to Control a Prejudiced Response (Dunton and Fazio 1997), based on three statements; an index indicating self-esteem from the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Inventory (Rosenberg 1965), based on ten statements; highest educational qualification (5 levels); current or most recent occupation (17 levels based on the Standard Occupational Classification from the Office for National Statistics, UK); ethnicity; whether English is a native language for the respondent and what other languages they speak; own accent description (38 accent labels); and complete unfamiliarity with any accent label (38 accent labels).

C&B were unable to examine ethnicity or social class due to limitations of the BBC survey they participated in. As we run the same statistical models as C&B for a real-time comparison here, we exclude these factors in the present analysis too. However, we note a few points here for future analysis. As our sample is demographically representative of the UK, 88.9% of respondents identify as White. Despite small numbers for respondents from other ethnic groups, we observed that, overall, accents were rated the highest by Black respondents and the lowest by White respondents, with significantly higher ratings given by Black and Asian respondents for most ethnic minority varieties (Intriguingly, for *vocal* stimuli, Cole (fc.) does not find ethnic in-group loyalty but rather self-directed bias.). Similarly, we do not present an analysis based on the social class of respondents, but exploratory analysis showed evidence of class loyalty such that those from lower income occupations gave significantly higher ratings to some working-class varieties and lower ratings to some high-prestige varieties. Giles (1970: 222) reports a similar finding of working-class regional and class loyalty.

Stimuli were presented via an online Qualtrics survey. Respondents were required to complete the survey on a desktop or laptop computer, not a mobile phone, and were told that the survey would gather their personal opinions on accents of English along with a short questionnaire on personal details and opinions. The market research firm compensated its respondents directly for their participation. For readability on the screen, participants were shown four grids of accent labels in a randomised order and asked to rate each on a seven-point rating scale in response to the two key questions *How much prestige do you think is associated with this accent?* and *How pleasant do you think this accent sounds?* They were able to view all accent labels simultaneously while providing ratings (See Appendix; full data and details of the survey design are available for download via the UK Data Service).

In order to permit a direct comparison to C&B's study, we replicate their analytic approach and employ separate multivariate (MANOVA) analyses for prestige and pleasantness, with the 38 accents as dependent variables and four independent factors—age, gender, region, and stance towards diversity—along with Tukey and Fisher LSD (Least Significant Difference) pairwise comparisons for post hoc testing of significant dimensions of difference.

4. Overall ratings

We first present average ratings for the two key traits: prestige and pleasantness. Mean scores for each accent label are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Mean ratings of accent labels

Rank	Label	Mean Rating *prestige*	Label	Mean Rating *pleasantness*
1.	Queen's	5.59	RP	4.85
2.	RP	5.23	Queen's	4.83
3.	French	4.56	French	4.57
4.	Own	4.37	New Zealand	4.55
5.	New Zealand	4.35	Own	4.54
6.	Edinburgh	4.34	Southern Irish	4.48
7.	Australian	4.17	Australian	4.44
8.	Scottish	4.12	Edinburgh	4.44
9.	Estuary	4.10	Spanish	4.42
10.	Spanish	4.09	Scottish	4.38
11.	American	4.07	Welsh	4.31
12.	Southern Irish	3.99	Northern Irish	4.12
13.	Nottingham	3.88	Cornish	4.11
14.	German	3.88	Cardiff	4.10
15.	Welsh	3.87	Lancashire	4.06
16.	Cardiff	3.85	American	4.06
17.	South African	3.83	Afro-Caribbean	4.02
18.	Norwich	3.81	West Country	4.01
19.	MLE	3.81	Nottingham	3.97
20.	Bristol	3.81	Estuary	3.96
21.	Cornish	3.80	Bristol	3.96
22.	Northern Irish	3.77	Swansea	3.94
23.	Lancashire	3.76	South African	3.92
24.	West Country	3.73	MLE	3.89
25.	Swansea	3.67	Norwich	3.88
26.	Leeds	3.64	Newcastle	3.87
27.	Belfast	3.63	Belfast	3.87
28.	Manchester	3.58	Leeds	3.86
29.	Chinese	3.56	German	3.77
30.	Afro-Caribbean	3.52	Manchester	3.74
31.	Glasgow	3.46	Glasgow	3.66
32.	Newcastle	3.44	Cockney	3.59
33.	Black Country	3.39	Black Country	3.56
34.	Indian	3.38	Indian	3.54
35.	Cockney	3.31	Chinese	3.50

36.	Liverpool	3.28		Liverpool	3.45
37.	Essex	3.22		Birmingham	3.30
38.	Birmingham	3.20		Essex	3.22

Note: Standard deviations (prestige): 1.36-1.72. Standard deviations (pleasantness): 1.38-1.74. Standard deviations are higher for lower ranked accents.

Table 3 shows a clustering of established high prestige accent labels such as RP and Queen's English at the top for both traits. It is notable that these do not receive a penalty for pleasantness or solidarity associations, which is sometimes found for high status varieties. Cole (fc.) has also recently found that certain South Eastern accents rate high on both social status and solidarity measures. Giles et al. (1974) proposed an imposed norm hypothesis for this effect, whereby standard varieties—by virtue of their high status—are ideologically imagined as being not only the most correct, but also the most aesthetically pleasing and, hence, the most likeable (see also Hiraga 2005).

The key initial finding here is that the overall mean ratings in Table 3 replicate to a very close degree the British accent hierarchy documented over the past half century, and in place societally for far longer (Sheridan 1762; Shaw 1916; Milroy & Milroy 1985; Mugglestone 2003; Fox 2004). At the bottom of the prestige hierarchy we see a combination of British ethnic minority varieties (Indian and Afro-Caribbean) and working-class varieties, particularly those with what Giles termed "town and industrial" associations. At the top, we see RP and a cluster of other high prestige varieties. The overall organisation of status here echoes Wilkinson's (1965) tripartite distinction from over half a century ago, of First Class (RP and selected national accents, e.g. Scots and Southern Irish, and unnamed foreign accents), Second Class (ranked British regional, particularly rural, accents, e.g. rural Yorkshire), and Third Class (Town and Industrial, e.g. Birmingham) accents.

A few accents in Table 3 have markedly different ranks for prestige and pleasantness. The largest such difference is for Afro-Caribbean, which is in the top half for pleasantness but the lowest third for prestige. Indian English has no such discrepancy, and Chinese English has the reverse discrepancy; neither receives the 'popular culture' boost in pleasantness ratings that Afro-Caribbean does (cf. Rampton 1995 on differences in the social associations of Afro-Caribbean and South Asian varieties of English in the UK). Many home nations or traditional accents also receive higher pleasantness than prestige ratings, including Cornish, Welsh, Southern Irish, Northern Irish, and West Country. We discuss these individual differences in detail below.

Figures 1 and 2 compare the prestige and pleasantness ratings in Table 3 to the previous data from 2004 (C&B) and 1969 (Giles 1970), ordering accents according to the 2019 results.[1] Although the labels are categorical, we opt for line graphs here in order to highlight how few re-rankings occur across the three time points. We only present mean ratings of the 14 accents for which we have data from all three time points. However, these parallel trends hold for the 24 other accents examined in our data and C&B's study.

---

[1] Giles's study used an inverse polarity for its seven-point Likert scale, with '1' as the highest, not lowest, rank. We inverted these rankings to allow a direct comparison.
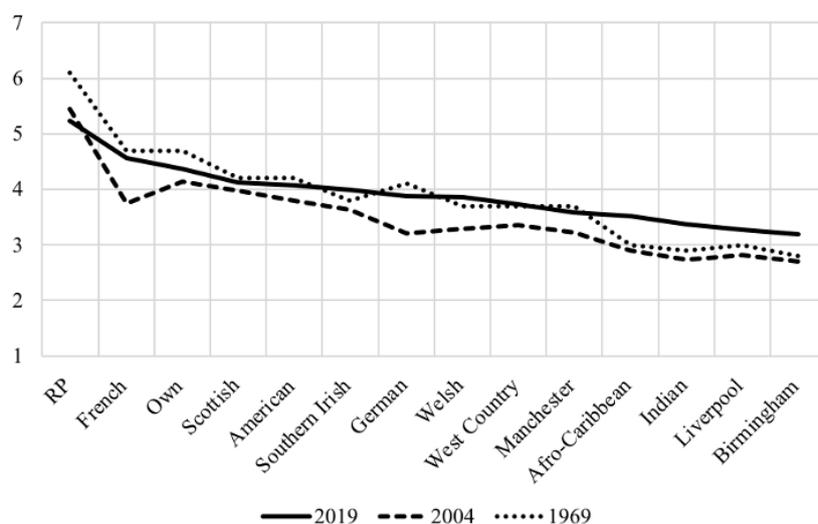
Figure 1. Mean ratings of accent labels for prestige over 50 years

Figure 1 shows that there has been almost no reorganising of the attitude hierarchy. The order of accents is nearly identical. The only marginal change is a very slight improvement in the rating of lower ranked accents and a very slight decline in the rating of RP, giving rise to a slightly flatter overall slope to the line for 2019. However, RP shows no change in its top ranking across the 50-year timespan.

Figure 2 similarly shows very little reorganisation in ratings for pleasantness. RP and 'Accent identical to your own' are within the top three for pleasantness across all three studies, and the overall ranking of accents remains stable. Relative to 2004, we see a very slight relative 'demotion' in 2019 of certain home nations and regional accents—Irish, Scottish, West Country (but not Welsh)—and a 'promotion' of certain overseas accents, e.g. French, German, and Indian. The marked difference between prestige and pleasantness ranking for Afro-Caribbean, noted above for our data in Table 1, is observable in both previous studies, so is also a very stable British ideology.
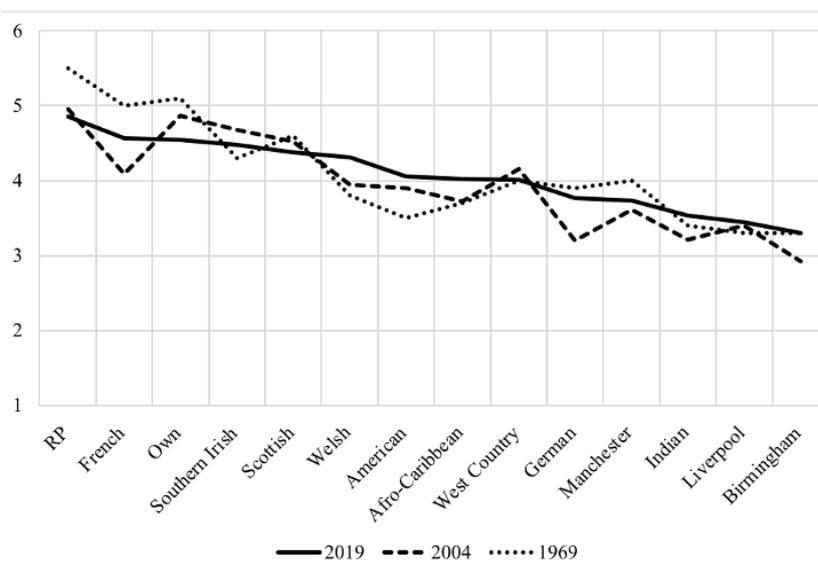
Figure 2. Mean ratings of accent labels for pleasantness over 50 years

In order to test for statistically significant influences on accent judgements while retaining the ability to make direct diachronic comparisons to C&B, we directly replicated their statistical approach, namely multivariate general linear model (MANOVA) analyses with post-hoc Tukey and Fisher LSD tests for pairwise comparisons.[2] For reasons of space and due to our interest in implications for social mobility, our discussion focuses primarily on prestige ratings but reports on pleasantness results where relevant.

In the sections that follow, we limit our comparison to C&B, due to their more extensive range of accents and our close replication of their overall research design. We take a closer look at four key factors that have structured patterns of social bias in Britain over an extended time span of 50 years. First, we note briefly that *stance towards accent diversity* shows the most significant influence on accent ratings, as was the case in C&B. Although this is a strong effect, it is not surprising and we only report on it briefly. Next, we examine stable age-grading effects in accent evaluation. We discuss these in terms of *life stage* playing a key role, with a midlife shift towards normative orientations. We also find that life stage shows a systematic and inverse effect on how foreign (or 'global') accents as opposed traditional (or 'local') British accents are valued, an intriguing pattern that, although not noted by C&B, can be observed in their data too. The availability of multiple time points across studies now allows us to recognise most of these as stable age-graded patterns, not primarily changes in progress across age groups. Third, we confirm some stable patterns of *regional loyalty* in accent bias, but also evidence of self-directed bias. Finally, we close by observing one marked change in British attitudes, a decline in *gendered* effects.

5. Factors influencing attitudes
5.1 Stance towards accent diversity
C&B observed that the prestige rating of all but one of the 34 accents in their study shows a significant effect of the respondents' stance towards accent diversity. We find a nearly identical result in the MANOVA analysis, namely that all but two of the 38 accents in our study show an effect on prestige ratings of this factor. All but one accent (Queen's English) showed a significant effect of stance towards accent diversity on pleasantness ratings in our data; all without exception did in C&B's 2004 results for pleasantness.

The consistent tendency in both datasets is a linear effect, such that those who are more positively oriented to accent diversity are more positive in their evaluation of an accent. C&B report a reverse ordering for RP, such that more positive stances to diversity correspond to lower ratings of RP. We do not see a strict reversal; however, the one accent with no

---

[2] C&B describe their procedure as follows: "we carried out eight separate MANOVA (multiple analysis of variance) analyses, four for prestige and four for social attractiveness, with the 34 accents as dependent variables, and with informant age, region and sex, plus the 'diversity' dimension, as independent variables… For the MANOVA using region as an independent variable, we included age, sex and diversity as covariates in the analysis, and correspondingly for the other analyses." As covariates should be continuous, and all of C&B's variables are ordinal, we ran our MANOVAs with all four variables as independent variables, not covariates.

significance for diversity in our results for pleasantness, Queen's English, shows a flat distribution of ratings across accent ideologies, reflecting a higher degree of consensus than observed for all other accents. Figure 3 illustrates this by contrasting the non-significant effect of respondents' stance towards diversity on Queen's English with the more typical influence of this factor on the lower-ranked Birmingham English.
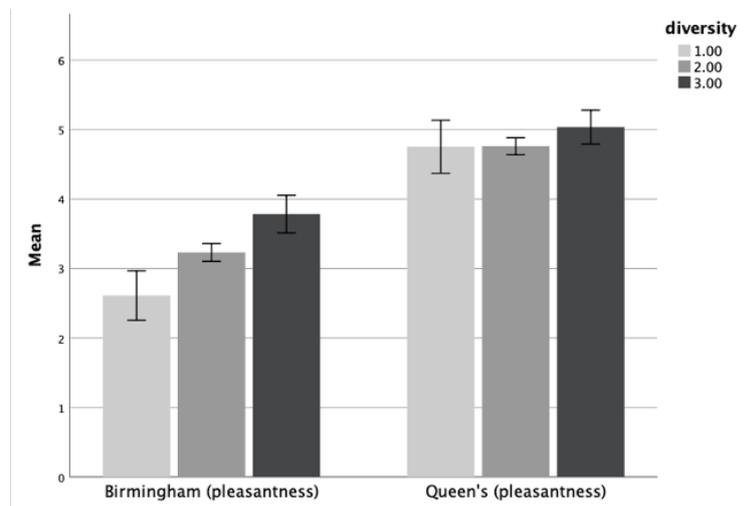

Figure 3. Effect of stance towards accent diversity on the rating of Birmingham English and Queen's English

An effect of ideological stance would be expected in accent judgements (Milroy & Milroy 1985; Lippi-Green 2012), so this first finding is not surprising, but nevertheless notable for its consistency across accents and over time.

5.2 Normativity in mid-life
The second most influential factor—in terms of proportion of accent labels showing a significant effect—in our results as well as in C&B's results is age. The availability of two time points separated by a generation (indeed, three time points where comparisons to Giles' study are possible) allows us to resolve the question of whether age differences in these studies reflect real ongoing change in progress within British society or stable differences in how people behave during their lifespan, i.e. age-grading.

C&B found a significant effect of age for 24 of their 34 accent labels. We find that a third of our accent labels show a significant effect of age, possibly due to a smaller sample and slightly narrower range of ratings given. The accents that show some statistically significant age contrasts on ratings seems a fairly arbitrary list at first: Northern Irish, South African, Manchester, Indian, MLE, French, Chinese, Belfast, Australian, Estuary, Glasgow, and German (a very similar list of 12 accents shows significant effects for pleasantness ratings). However, this section and the one that follows will identify some underlying principles that may govern these groupings.

First, we focus on the overall directional effect of age on accent ratings. When we break down judgements of prestige by age group, we see a subtle patterning according to life

stage (see Figure 4; discussed in more detail in the next section). The youngest group, aged 15-24, covers the life stage of adolescence, student life, and young adulthood. In our data, these participants, along with those in the next age bracket up (age 25-44), have the highest ratings overall for accents (mean 3.92) and a narrower range of differences drawn between accents than other age groups. By contrast, those aged 45-64—people at the life stage of maximal integration into the adult workforce and professional norms—give lower ratings overall to accents (mean 3.80) and draw a wider range of distinctions among accents. It is this age group that sustains the established hierarchy of prestige. The oldest age group, aged 65+ and broadly at the life stage of retirement, has the lowest ratings (mean 3.67); however, this group also has the fewest respondents (17) and so results are less reliable for this group.
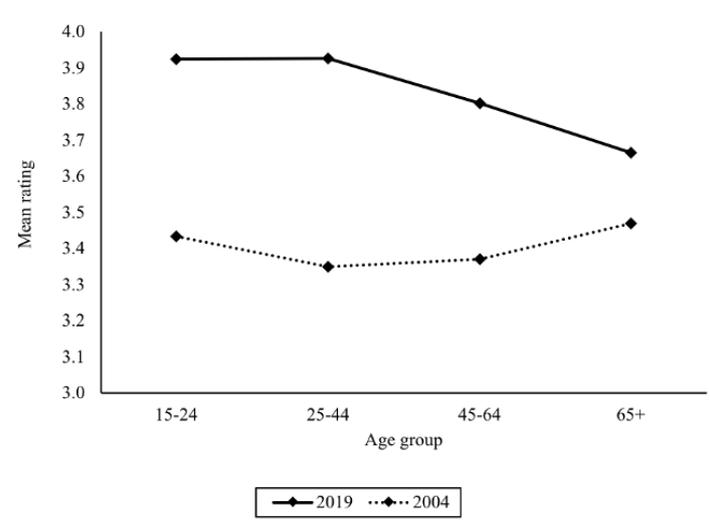
Figure 4. Mean rating of accents by age and year of data collection

This age pattern in our data—whereby younger respondents appear less judgemental overall than those in the prime of their working life— is confirmed in our parallel study of reactions to audio stimuli (Levon et al. under review). In that study too, the youngest group gave the highest and least differentiated ratings to accents, whereas middle-aged adults (age 45-64) gave the lowest mean ratings and exhibited the widest evaluative range across accents.

This observation has two possible interpretations: It could mean that Britain has a stable pattern of increasingly conservative attitudes within the lifespan of each individual (age-grading). Or it could indicate change in real time, such that older people reflect an attitudinal orientation that is disappearing among younger people. Fortunately, we have C&B's 2004 age-stratified data to answer this question. Their results are also provided in Figure 4. Although lower overall, indicating a real-time improvement in overall rating, the 2004 data parallel our contrast between the youngest and middle-aged groups: younger respondents in 2004 gave overall higher ratings (mean 3.43) than those aged 25-44 and 45-64. The oldest group behaves differently in the two studies, but as noted, this is the smallest and most variable group in both cases.

A contrast between the two younger and the two older groups is extremely systematic in our data: Every Fisher LSD test that reached significance, without exception, was between a younger (group 1 or 2) and an older (group 3 or 4) age group. (Direction of effect is more

complicated and covered in the next section.) In no case was the significant contrast between two younger age groups or two older groups. The most common significant contrast found for individual accents is between the group aged 15-24 and the group aged 45-64. RP ('A standard accent of English') illustrates this consistent pattern: C&B found a linear prestige ranking, such that Tukey tests showed that the two youngest age groups diverged significantly from the two oldest age groups, but not from each other. In our data, Fisher LSD tests showed a similar significant difference between the two youngest and the two oldest age groups for RP.

Referring back to Giles' (1970) similar observation of emergent normativity among young adults, C&B observe: "Younger people once again seem to be less embedded in the conservative ideology of positively evaluating 'standard' accents." (p. 83). This broad system is still in place in our study, 50 years later. It confirms a long-standing and stable system of age-graded accent attitudes. Ideologies of accent are consistently different among younger people in Britain as compared to middle-aged people, regardless of the time period being studied.

C&B describe their results for standard varieties in terms of chronological age. However, the fact that the two younger age groups pattern together, with a consistent change point of approx. 40 years of age (confirmed in our study of vocal stimuli, Levon et al. under review) suggests not a consistent linear effect but one that may implicate life stage. We interpret our results as robust real-time evidence of a perceptual analogue to a fundamental sociological principle observed in speech production research: social conformity to standard norms during the middle phase of a person's life (e.g. Buchstaller 2006; Sankoff and Blondeau 2007; Wagner and Sankoff 2011). This conservatism has been "attributed to the pressure for use of standard language in the workplace" (Eckert 1997: 164) and career advancement. Wagner (2012: 375) also describes this life stage as being associated with increased responsibilities at work and at home, a time when middle-aged people have "slowed down their earlier frenetic attempts to 'define' themselves, becoming relatively settled in their tastes and opinions." And Chambers (2003:195) describes this linguistic "retrenchment" as a retreat from the use of non-standard variants used during adolescence.

Our findings suggest that the midlife period, when people are most embedded in the workforce, corresponds with more conventional *attitudinal* stances, not just more standard usage. Research in psychology and sociology has found that the age most saliently associated with the start of middle age is 40, a point at which "investment in socialization on average should have paid off", with individuals generally "socialized into roles and… usually contributing to society" (Staudinger and Bluck 2001: 6; also Lachman 2004). Acceding to prescribed social roles and norms—career, workplace, marriage, parenting, mortgage, taxes— during this phase of life is a common way of confirming identity through social conformity (Hollis 1993: 25), as opposed to the differentiating and non-conformist forces of adolescence. Neugarten (1996) further suggests that midlife is an age at which the self begins to be reinterpreted as the socialiser, rather than as the socialised.

5.3 Global and vernacular orientation in early adulthood

So far, we have only examined overall mean ratings by age group, noting a broad shift in middle age. However, when we look at accents individually, we find a more complex picture.

Although significant differences were consistently found between younger and older groups, the direction of effect was not always the same for each accent. C&B also found this heterogeneity but did not offer an explanation, simply observing that "there are no general tendencies in the direction of difference—significant differences are not linear with age" (p. 81).

In this section, we show that apparent inconsistencies in the age distribution for attitudes towards specific accents in fact masks *two* opposed—yet highly systematic and linked—age-grading patterns: 'foreign', global, and vernacular accents are favoured marginally more by younger respondents, and traditional rural and national British accents by older respondents. The results presented show that, once again, this seems remarkably stable, with the two opposing age slopes identifiable in our data as well as in C&B's data (though not remarked on in detail at the time). We focus on prestige ratings here, but a parallel analysis showed a similar inverted pattern for pleasantness ratings.

As we do not wish to assume *a priori* how accents are grouped for these respondents, and we have a large number of accents, we begin with an exploratory bottom-up analysis to group accents. We opt for exploratory factor analysis as a technique that tries to find groups of variables that are highly intercorrelated, thereby reducing the dimensionality of the data and identifying a few key dimensions of variance while avoiding information loss. The exploratory factor analysis presented here extracts factors using Principal Component Analysis but permits interpretation of the resulting groupings as potentially driven by latent differences in attitudes. The analysis yielded four factors explaining a total of 61.77% of variance, presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Factor analysis of prestige ratings of 38 accents

	Factor 1: *Regional or vernacular*	Factor 2: *Foreign or migrant-heritage*	Factor 3: *Home nations*	Factor 4: *Standard*
Birmingham	**.757**			
West Country	**.744**			
Essex	**.729**			
Manchester	**.726**	.325		
Leeds	**.719**		.302	
Bristol	**.713**			
Lancashire	**.687**			
Newcastle	**.685**			
Norwich	**.677**	.317		
Liverpool	**.674**		.356	
Cornish	**.673**			
Black Country	**.664**	.342		
Cockney	**.664**	.357		
Swansea	**.633**		.344	
Cardiff	**.623**		.430	
Nottingham	**.599**			

Welsh	.532	.343	.428	
Estuary	.489	.341		.333
Belfast	.489	.456	.463	
Spanish		**.713**		
Indian	.480	**.650**		
South African	.430	**.643**		
French		**.641**		.371
Afro-Caribbean	.501	**.625**		
Chinese	.448	**.617**		
MLE	.478	**.571**		
German		**.514**	.396	
Northern Irish	.398	.506	**.503**	
Australian	.403	.494		
American	.357	.492		
New Zealand	.360	.452		.337
Scottish	.306		**.754**	
Edinburgh			**.710**	.345
Southern Irish		.484	**.539**	
Glasgow	.534	.322	**.537**	
Own				
Queen's				**.815**
RP				**.803**
Eigenvalue	18.68	2.33	1.32	1.15
% variance	49.15%	6.13%	3.48%	3.02%

Note: Factor loadings < .3 are suppressed. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation. Only eigenvalues above 1 reported. Total variance explained: 61.77%

Table 4 shows a consistent organisation of attitudes according to four factors, broadly described as vernacular, foreign, home nations, and standard. A particularly striking detail is that varieties that exist within Britain with a migrant heritage (MLE, Afro-Caribbean, Indian, Chinese) or that have postcolonial ties to the UK (South African, Australian, American, New Zealand) load with both the vernacular factor and the foreign factor, whereas those without such ties (French, German, Spanish) do not. The same is true for lower status varieties associated with distinct home nations: varieties such as Glasgow, Swansea, and Belfast load with both the vernacular and the national factors, while higher status varieties such as Edinburgh and Southern Irish load with the home nations factor but not vernacularity.

When we delve into the data further, we find that these broad groupings of accents interact systematically with the earlier life stage effect. The descriptive data that follow are not all statistically significant, as the overall prestige hierarchy of Table 3 'trumps' some of these subtler age effects; we nevertheless demonstrate certain systematic trends and groupings across accents and across the two time points.

Figure 5 first presents a selection of foreign or migrant-heritage accents, (Factor 2 in Table 4), for two time points and in relation to both real and apparent time. Five are presented for readability, but others (e.g. Spanish, German) conform to the same pattern. We see that

some of these accent labels (e.g. Indian, French) have improved their ratings from 2004 to 2019, suggesting a little real time change in status. A single cohort—e.g. the 15-24 age group in 2004, which is the same generation as the 25-44 age group in the 2019 data — sometimes increases its mean rating over 15 years.


a. 2004 data   b. 2019 data
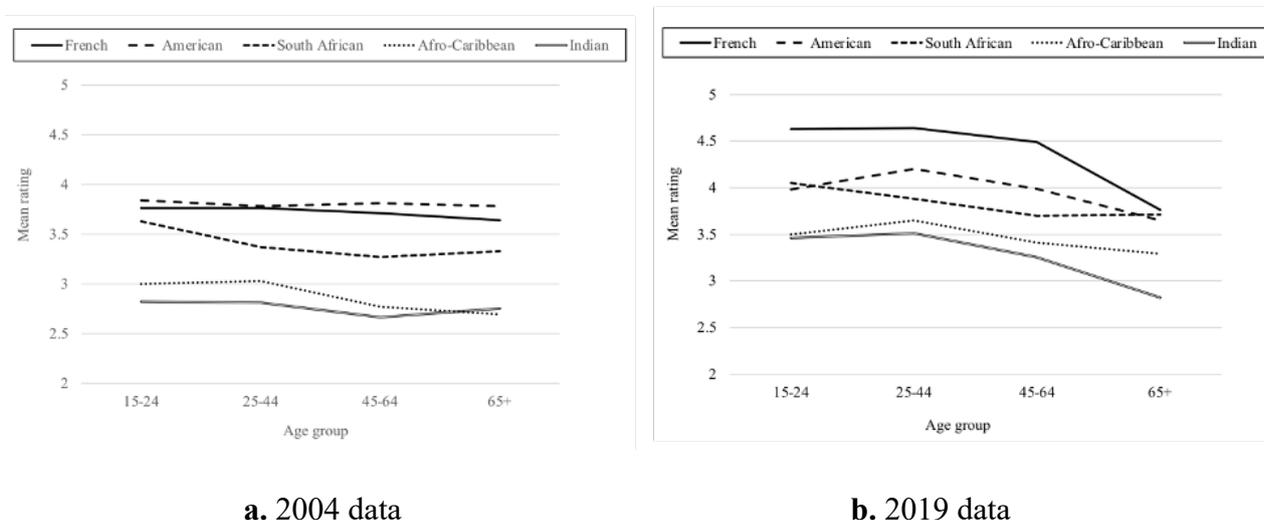
Figure 5. Prestige ratings of foreign and migrant-heritage accents in real and apparent time

Figure 5 also shows that these accents receive marginally higher ratings from younger than older respondents, particularly in 2019 but also for lower ranked accents in 2004, suggesting age-grading. This trend for younger people to rate 'global' accents more positively does not mean that all of these accents are subject to the same ideology. Foreign accents are distributed right across the prestige and pleasantness rankings in Table 3, e.g. with French near the top and Indian near the bottom. Ethnically marked accents also differ in how parallel their prestige and pleasantness rankings are (Afro-Caribbean, Indian, Chinese), as noted earlier. So the age effect for this set of accents does not mean that there is a unified overall rating, just a similar devaluing over the lifespan.

Intriguingly, lower ranked regional, especially urban and industrial, British varieties share this tendency to receive higher ratings from younger respondents. Figure 6 presents the age pattern for Glasgow, Northern Irish, Newcastle, Black Country, and Belfast. All five of these ranked in the bottom half of Table 3 for prestige (a subset of varieties that loaded with Factor 1 in Table 4). All five show an age gradient that resembles the one just seen in Figure 5 for migrant-heritage and foreign accents, namely with younger people ranking these slightly higher than older people do. C&B (p. 83) briefly note an inverse pattern between high prestige and stigmatised British accents, but not the parallel pattern to foreign and migrant-heritage accents. Again, this age pattern is found for both time points (Figures 6a and 6b), so seems a stable age-graded pattern of evaluation. McKenzie and Carrie (2018: 837) also report that younger respondents in their explicit attitudes task were more positively inclined to Northern varieties than middle-aged or older groups.

a. 2004 data   **b.** 2019 data
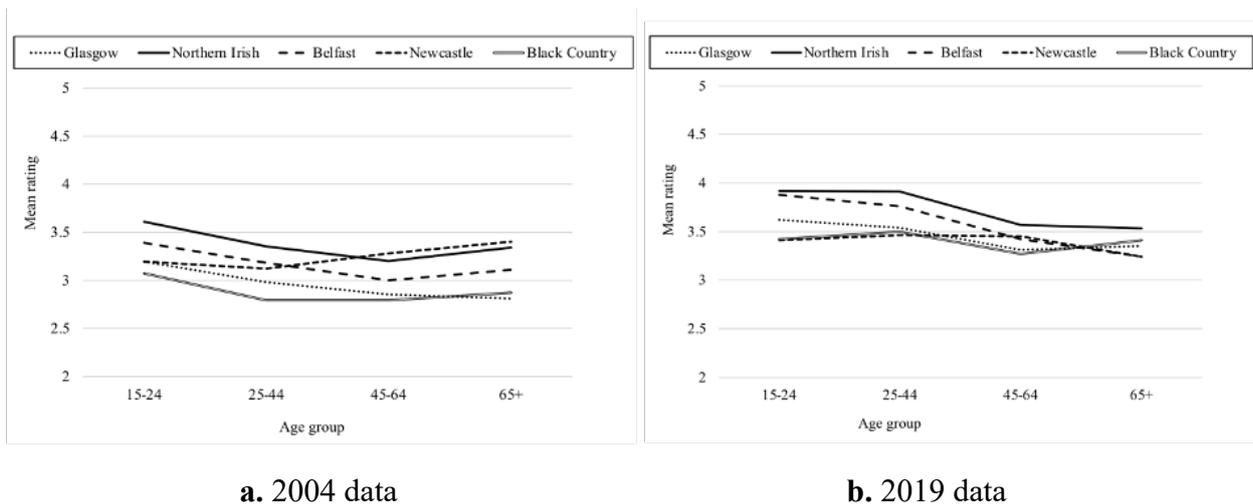
Figure 6. Prestige ratings of lower ranked regional accents in real and apparent time

While the direction of age-grading in Figures 5 and 6 is parallel, the real-time pattern is slightly different, with marginally less improvement over time for lower ranked regional accents than for foreign and migrant-heritage accents.

      In direct contrast to the negative correlation with age in Figures 5 and 6, Figure 7 shows that ratings *increase* with age in both datasets for rural regional and national British dialects that were higher ranked in Table 3. The direction of this age effect is the same as C&B's age distribution for RP in 2004 (in the present data RP has a relatively flat age distribution). And again, we see the same directional effect at both time points. Thus, Figure 7 again points to a stable age-graded pattern over time, but in the reverse direction to the previous two accent sets.[3] Interestingly, the age pattern of how one's own accent is rated patterns with this latter, high-prestige set, with a direct correlation with age.

a. 2004 data   **b.** 2019 data
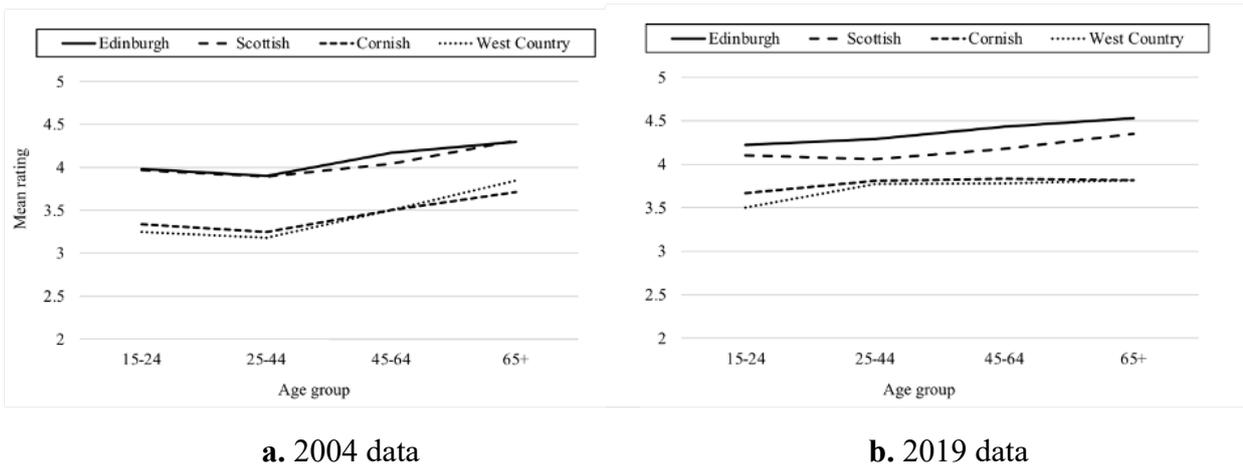
Figure 7. Prestige ratings of traditional regional accents in real and apparent time

---

[3] The one difference is that, in C&B's 2004 data, Welsh shares the pattern in Figure 7, but in our data it has shifted to the pattern in Figure 6. It is not possible without a new time point in the future to establish whether this reflects a shift whereby Welsh now patterns with more stigmatised and foreign accents, or whether it simply reflects a recent real-time improvement in overall rating.

In sum, while a few accents show real-time attitudinal change, the more systematic finding is a set of stable age-graded orientations to distinct accent types. The ranking of prestigious accents is positively correlated with age, and as we move down the prestige hierarchy of accents, we shift to a negative correlation, with lower-prestige accents losing favour as people age. This contrast reinforces and elaborates our initial proposal of midlife normativity. Younger people value stigmatised, working class urban, and foreign accents more than older people do, while older people value standard and traditional accents more than younger people do. We can interpret this as the appeal of egalitarianism but also cosmopolitanism and globalism among the young—regardless of the time period—and, in contrast, a shift to valuing historically acknowledged national accents in later life.

5.4 Regional loyalty and bias

Approximately half of the accents in C&B (16/34) showed some significant effect of the participants' region on their ratings for both prestige and pleasantness. In our data similarly, a little over half of the accents show some significant regional effect on the rating of an accent, as identified through LSD post hoc tests.

As with C&B, we find a number of clear ingroup loyalties. The clearest of these is from Scottish respondents. In a nearly identical result to C&B's, we find that the Scottish participants rate Scottish English and Edinburgh English significantly higher than participants from most other regions do, for both prestige and pleasantness. (Unlike C&B, we do not find this higher rating by Scottish respondents for Glasgow English.) Respondents in the South West rated West Country English significantly higher than those from most other regions. And interestingly South Eastern respondents rated MLE significantly higher than those from the North for pleasantness.

Surprisingly, we do not find the same levels of in-group loyalty among Welsh and Northern Irish respondents. Welsh respondents did not rate Welsh English significantly higher than others did for either prestige or pleasantness, though their ratings are observably higher. The only exception is Cardiff English, rated significantly higher for pleasantness by Welsh respondents than by other raters, in contrast to lowered ratings in C&B. Again, in contrast to C&B, Northern Irish respondents did not rate Northern Irish English higher than others did for either prestige or pleasantness. Working class varieties also miss out on a regional loyalty bias. In neither study did Welsh respondents rate the more working-class variety Swansea English higher than those from other regions, nor did Northern Irish respondents rate the more working-class variety of Belfast English higher than those from other regions, in line with C&B. The working-class Midlands variety of Black Country English was also rated significantly lower for both prestige and pleasantness by North/Mid England respondents than South Eastern respondents. The absence of regional loyalty effects for these three working class accents suggests local participation in a national hierarchy of bias, a form of self-directed bias. Using a very different methodology, Cole (fc.) finds similar evidence of self-directed ethnic and class bias.

One curious feature of our data, not observed in C&B's study, is that Scottish respondents gave significantly *lower* prestige ratings than many other regions' respondents for a large and diverse set of non-Scottish accents: Lancashire, Spanish, Indian, MLE,

Cockney, Chinese, Belfast, French, Cornish, Queen's English, and many others. These disjunct ratings—high for Scottish varieties, low for most others—underpin many of the significant regional contrasts in our data. It may be that our survey tapped into a contemporary peak of Scottish nationalism such that many of the 70 Scottish respondents communicated a polarised, politicised stance through their ratings.

We also find that South Eastern respondents gave a significantly higher prestige rating for Own Accent than respondents in North/Mid England and Wales. Their pleasantness ratings for a number of other accents—MLE, Liverpool, Glasgow, Essex, Bristol— were also significantly higher than those of raters from North/Mid England. It is notable that RP and Queen's English did not elicit significant regional differences in ratings, e.g. there was no significant difference in the ratings given to RP by South Eastern English respondents and those in the so-called Celtic Fringe. This pan-regional agreement on the top two "First Class" accents is further evidence—along with the earlier diversity and factor analysis findings—of their exceptional and long-standing national status.

5.5 Loss of gender difference
Perhaps the most noticeable change over time in attitudes to British accents is the decline in gender differences in how accents are rated. 15 years ago, C&B observed for their data that sex was "a powerful variable differentiating respondents' prestige evaluations, with all but 12 of the 34 accents showing significant differences." They found "a reliable tendency for women to afford a given accent more prestige – with only two accents where men are significantly more positive: An accent identical to my own and West Country English." (p. 80) They conclude that women ascribe more prestige as well as social attractiveness (pleasantness) to most regional varieties, but not to their own speech.

Our results have markedly fewer significant effects for gender. We find significant effects for only five accents in relation to prestige (Lancashire, Southern Irish, Cockney, Liverpool, Glasgow) and only two in relation to pleasantness (Spanish, Cockney). Even more strikingly, we no longer see the gender pattern C&B reported. Mean ratings among women and men are almost identical, with women slightly lower: 3.9 among men and 3.5 among women. The only observable skew in the few significant differences we find are in the direction of men, not women, giving higher ratings. All five of the significant gender differences in ratings for prestige accents involve significantly higher ratings by men, and the two accents with significant gender differences for pleasantness receive higher ratings by men in one case (Cockney) and women in the other (Spanish). A few of these fall in the category of stigmatised vernaculars, which may attract greater alignment by men due to a potential association of vernaculars with masculinity (Trudgill 1972). But if so, this effect is not very robust, as it is not found across the majority of stigmatised accents in the data, and we see little evidence of a reverse orientation among women to prestige varieties. Using a different experimental design, McKenzie and Carrie (2018: 837) also recently found no main effect of gender in implicit or explicit language attitudes.

Overall, the main conclusion appears to be that, despite the maintenance of a longstanding accent hierarchy, it is no longer the case that a gendered skew in accent perception underpins these biases. While gender differences may not be disappearing in general in language use, this particular change may derive from a gradual move away from

very narrow expectations that women "be nice" (Coates 1993), here in the context of judging social groups by accent.

6. Conclusions

Before drawing together the main findings of this study, it is important to step back and ask what kind of information a survey of this type really captures. C&B are rightly concerned about the "extreme level of decontextualisation" that this type of research design requires. They caution that "presenting variety labels to informants starkly and repetitively, then generally restricting responses to numerical markings on seven-point scales, [pares] down informants' social attributions to a minimum. Each informant no doubt has a far richer repertoire of evaluative accounts and experiences that could be brought to the surface by other methods." (p.84) This is precisely what we found in our wider project (Levon et al. 2017-2020). The project ran numerous studies of accent bias using very different methods—vocal stimuli and accent labels, presented with greater or lesser degrees of contextual information, and using a range of types of evaluation methods and dimensions—and found that different types of contextualisation elicited different sub-parts and different degrees of evaluative response within a wider ideological matrix of accent evaluation.

Reactions to accent labels tap into an attitudinal sub-component that is somewhat removed from personal taste and closer to recognised societal norms. We interpret our highly consistent finding of 50 years of a fixed hierarchy of accent prestige as a half century of social recognition of each accent's place in British society, rather than as identical personal tastes. For example, the consistent reporting of Birmingham at the bottom of such surveys and RP or the Queen's English at the top, since at least Giles (1970), is as much to do with an awareness of that collective judgement as with personal agreement with it. The responses have come to embody "tropic ideologies, such as pigeon-holing Birmingham speech as the bête noire of British urban varieties" (C&B, p. 84). Needless to say, this does not mean such results are uninformative: only a society with such a sharply recognisable social order would generate nearly identical rankings over a half century.

Bearing in mind this interpretation of the survey as representative of collective social ideologies, rather than entirely personal preference, what has changed and what has remained the same? The overall mean ratings of accents, particularly for prestige, closely replicated previous studies, even supporting Wilkinson's (1965) old tripartite division. In the details too, we saw many very stable cultural tropes: Afro-Caribbean showing the greatest difference in prestige and pleasantness ratings, and a familiar cluster of strong regional loyalty as well as self-directed bias.

Queen's English ranked high for pleasantness in our study, but only seventh in C&B. At the time, C&B could only guess at whether the slightly lower position of Queen's English in their study was indicative of change. They speculated that if "respondents do take the phrase [Queen's English] to refer to a conservative variety of RP, then the survey supports Lynda Mugglestone's contention that "talking proper" in Britain is gradually coming to be seen as "talking posh" (2003: 274)". Our study shows a sustained high rank for Queen's English on both scales, showing a lack of any general demotion of conservative prestige speech.

Without real-time evidence, C&B were similarly not yet in a position to interpret age patterns in their data. They express the hope that these represent change in progress: "[T]he fact that younger respondents are less negative about the 'stigmatised' varieties – though they are still negative – provides a glimmer of liberal sentiment. If we can read attitudes in apparent time, there may be an indication of ideological value-shift over time here." Disappointingly, our study shows almost exactly the same age patterns, confirming instead that most of the age patterns they observed were age-grading (lifespan effects), not changes-in-progress. We find that midlife corresponds to an intensification of conformity to traditional and prestige varieties, and that this underpins a remarkably robust and consistent set of effects of life stage on orientation to local vs. global (as well as more vs. less stigmatised varieties). This adds the dimension of *perception* change over the lifespan to the growing literature on changes in speech production over the lifespan.

There were two notable changes in patterns of accent bias in the UK over the last half century. First, we observed a marginal reduction in the distance between rankings, despite a maintenance of the overall hierarchy. This reduction is mainly a result of lower rankings improving slightly. This could be due to a real reduction in how negative stances are, or simply an increased reluctance to report such stances (the factor 'motivation to control a prejudiced response', see Levon et al. under review). The second change is the lack of gendered differences in responses. Women were not more generous in their ratings overall than men; indeed, in the few cases where a gender difference arose, almost all involved men giving significantly higher ratings, potentially involving isolated covert prestige effects.

We thus see a change towards less asymmetric gender behaviour over 50 years, in line with advances in gender equality, but a sustained, class-based hierarchy of attitudes, in line with a stagnation of social mobility and a long-standing, entrenched system of signalling social status, one that British residents appear to participate most fully in during the peak of their midlife, working years.

Appendix: Sample randomised grid of accent labels and rating questions.

	How much prestige do you think is associated with this accent? 1 = Very low 7 = Very high							How pleasant do you think this accent sounds? 1 = Extremely unpleasant 7 = Extremely pleasant						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Scottish	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Manchester	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Northern Irish	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Indian English	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
South African	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Lancashire	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Spanish-accented	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Norwich	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Leeds	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Afro-Caribbean	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

References

Baxter, Holly. 2016. May and Social Mobility: Actions Speak Louder than Words. *The Independent*, 13 July 2016.

Bishop, Hywel, Nikolas Coupland, and Peter Garrett. 2005. Conceptual Accent Evaluation: Thirty Years of Accent Prejudice in the UK. *Acta Linguistica Hafniensia* 37: 131–154.

Blanden, Jo, Alissa Goodman, Paul Gregg, and Stephen Machin. 2004. Changes in Intergenerational Mobility in Britain. In Miles Corak (ed.) *Generational Income Mobility in North America and Europe*, 122–46. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Blanden, Jo, Paul Gregg, and Stephen Machin. 2005. Educational Inequality and Intergenerational Mobility. In S. Machin and A. Vignoles (eds.) *What's the Good of Education?: The Economics of Education in the UK*, 99–114. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Buchstaller, Isabelle. 2006. Diagnostics of age graded linguistic behavior. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 10: 3-30.

Buscha, Franz, and Patrick Sturgis. 2018. Declining Social Mobility? Evidence from Five Linked Censuses in England and Wales 1971–2011. *The British Journal of Sociology* 69 (1): 154–182.

Cabinet Office. 2011. Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers: A Strategy for Social Mobility. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/61964/opening-doors-breaking-barriers.pdf.

Chambers, Jack. 2003. *Sociolinguistic Theory: Linguistic Variation and Its Social Significance.* Third edition. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Clark, Gregory. 2014. *The Son Also Rises: Surnames and the History of Social Mobility*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Clark, Gregory, and Neil Cummins. 2013. Surnames and Social Mobility: England 1230-2012. *LSE Economic History Working Papers* 181.

Coates, Jennifer. 1993. *Women, Men and Language: A Sociolinguistic Account of Gender Differences in Language.* London: Longman.

Coates, Sam. 2016. Carry on Cameron - For Another Four Years. *The Times*, 1 January 2016.

Cole, Amanda. Fc. Disambiguating language attitudes held towards socio-demographic groups and geographic areas in South East England. *Journal of Linguistic Geography*.

Coupland, Nikolas, and Hywel Bishop. 2007. Ideologised Values for British Accents. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 11: 74–93.

Dunton, Bridget, and Russell Fazio. 1997. An Individual Difference Measure of Motivation to Control Prejudiced Reactions. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 23: 316–326.

Eckert, Penelope. 1997. Age as a Sociolinguistic Variable. In Florian Coulmas (ed.) *The Handbook of Sociolinguistics*, 151–167. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Egerton, Muriel, and A. H. Halsey. 1993. Trends by Social Class & Gender in Access to HE in Britain, *Oxford Review of Education* 19: 183-194

Fabricius, Anne. 2005. Mobility, Contact and an Accent Norm: The Case of Received Pronunciation. In Bent Preisler, Anne Fabricius, Hartmut Haberland, Susanne Kjaerbeck, and Karen Risager (eds.) *The Consequences of Mobility*, 120–134. Roskilde: Roskilde University.

Fox, Kate. 2004. *Watching the English: The Hidden Rules of English Behaviour*. London: Arnold.

Francis-Devine, Brigid, Niamh Foley, and Matthew Ward. 2020. Women and the Economy. House of Commons Library Briefing Paper No. CBP06838. Accessed (3/3/2021) from: https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn06838/

Friedman, Sam, Daniel Laurison, and Andrew Miles. 2015. Breaking the "Class" Ceiling? Social Mobility into Britain's Elite Occupations. *The Sociological Review* 63: 259–289.

Garrett, Peter, Nikolas Coupland, and Angie Williams. 1999. Evaluating Dialect in Discourse: Teachers' and Teenagers' Responses to Young English Speakers in Wales. *Language in Society* 28: 321–354.

Giles, Howard. 1970. Evaluative Reactions to Accents. *Educational Review* 22: 211–227.

Giles, Howard. 1973. Accent Mobility: A Model and Some Data. *Anthropological Linguistics* 15: 87–105.

Giles, Howard, Richard Bourhis, Peter Trudgill, and Alan Lewis. 1974. The Imposed Norm Hypothesis: A Validation. *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 60: 405–410.

Giles, Howard, and Peter F. Powesland. 1975. *Speech Style and Social Evaluation*. London: Academic Press.

Hiraga, Yuko. 2005. British Attitudes towards Six Varieties of English in the USA and Britain. *World Englishes* 24: 289–308.

Hollis, James. 1993. *The Middle Passage: From Misery to Meaning in Midlife*. Toronto: Inner City Books.

Lachman, Margie E. 2004. Development in Midlife. *Annual Review of Psychology* 55: 305-331.

Levon, Erez, and Sue Fox. 2014. Salience and the Sociolinguistic Monitor: A Case Study of ING and TH-Fronting in Britain. *Journal of English Linguistics* 42: 185–217.

Levon, Erez, Devyani Sharma, Dominic Watt, Amanda Cardoso, and Yang Ye. Under review. Accent Bias and Perceptions of Professional Competence in England.

Levon, Erez, Devyani Sharma, and Dominic Watt. 2017-2020. Accent Bias and Fair Access in Britain. Grant Number ES/P007767/1. www.accentbiasbritain.org.

Lippi-Green, Rosina. 2012. *English with an Accent: Language, Ideology and Discrimination in the United States*, 2nd edition. London: Routledge.

Llamas, Carmen, Dominic Watt, and Daniel Ezra Johnson. 2009. Linguistic Accommodation and the Salience of National Identity Markers in a Border Town. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 28: 381–407.

Mason, Rowena. 2013. David Cameron Admits Ministers Must "Do Far More" to Increase Social Mobility. *The Guardian*, 14 November 2013.

McKenzie, Robert M., and Erin Carrie. 2018. Implicit–explicit attitudinal discrepancy and the investigation of language attitude change in progress. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 39:9: 830-844

Milroy, James, and Lesley Milroy. 1985. *Authority in Language: Investigating Language Prescription and Standardisation*. London: Routledge.

Montgomery, Chris, and Emma Moore. 2018. Evaluating S(c)illy Voices: The Effects of Salience, Stereotypes, and Co-Present Language Variables on Real-Time Reactions to Regional Speech. *Language* 94: 629–661.

Mugglestone, Lynda. 2003. *Talking Proper: The Rise of Accent as Social Symbol,* 2nd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Neugarten, Dail A. (ed.) 1996. *The meanings of age: Selected papers of Bernice L. Neugarten.* University of Chicago Press.

Perfect, David. 2012. Gender Pay Gaps. Equality and Human Rights Commission report. Accessed (3/3/2021) from: https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/briefing-paper-6-gender-pay-gap-2012

Rampton, Ben. 1995. *Crossing: Language and Ethnicity Among Adolescents.* London: Longman.

Rosenberg, Morris. 1965. *Society and the Adolescent Self-Image.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Sankoff, Gillian, and Hélène Blondeau. 2007. Language Change across the Lifespan: /R/ in Montreal French. *Language* 83: 560–588.

Sansom, Clive. 1953. Australian Speech. *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 39: 470-476.

Shaw, George Bernard. 1916. *Pygmalion*. New York: Brentano.

Sheridan, Thomas. 1762. *A Course of Lectures on Elocution: Together with Two Dissertations on Language; and Some Other Tracts Relative to Those Subjects.* United Kingdom: W. Strahan.

Social Mobility Commission. 2019. State of the Nation 2018-19: Social Mobility in Great Britain. Accessed from (20 October 2020): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/798404/SMC_State_of_the_Nation_Report_2018-19.pdf.

Staudinger, Ursula M, and Susan Bluck. 2001. A View on Midlife Development from Life-Span Theory. In M. E. Lachman (ed.) Handbook of Midlife Development, pp. 3-39, New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

The Sutton Trust, and Social Mobility Commission. 2019. Elitist Britain. Accessed (3/3/2021) from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/811045/Elitist_Britain_2019.pdf.

Trudgill, Peter. 1972. Sex, Covert Prestige and Linguistic Change in the Urban British English of Norwich. *Language in Society* 1: 179-195

Wagner, Suzanne Evans. 2012. Age Grading in Sociolinguistic Theory. *Language and Linguistics Compass* 6: 371-382.

Wagner, Suzanne Evans, and Gillian Sankoff. 2011. Age grading in the Montréal French inflected future. *Language Variation and Change* 23: 275–313.

Wakeling, Paul, and Mike Savage. 2015. Entry to Elite Positions and the Stratification of Higher Education in Britain. *The Sociological Review* 63: 290–320.

Watson, Kevin, and Lynn Clark. 2013. How Salient Is the NURSE~SQUARE Merger? *English Language and Linguistics* 17: 297–323.

Wilkinson, Andrew. 1965. Spoken English. *Educational Review* Supplement to 17 (2).