Contributors

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Tim Gill writes on childhood. His book No Fear: Growing up in a risk averse society was published in 2007

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Fiona Melville and David Skelton run Platform 10, a blog which campaigns for modern, liberal Conservatism

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Rabbi Dr Jonathan Romain MBE is Minister for Maidenhead Synagogue and chair of the Accord Coalition, which campaigns for inclusive faith schools

Lucy Stone leads UNICEF UK’s climate change work with political strategy and innovative funding

Matthew Taylor is the Chief Executive of the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA)

Matt Warman is the Consumer Technology Editor of The Daily Telegraph

David Willets is MP for Havant and Shadow Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills. His new book, The Pinch: How the baby boomers took their children’s future, was published earlier this year

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The Voiceless Need Representation
By Ryan Shorthouse

As the General Election fast approaches, the political parties mudslinging and hyperactively announcing policies to woo the so-called Motorway Man, we in politics must not forget who we should really be fighting for. It is true that - as more of us in Britain enjoy longer, healthier, wealthier lives than ever before - there remains a generation of people who are caged in miserable poverty, estranged in dire and unthinkable circumstances, unable to even taste the opportunities so many of us take for granted.

We should be angry. Very angry that so many children in our country live in poverty, entrapped in dire and unthinkable conditions, unable to even taste the rights that others take for granted. But too often rigid rules and targets driven by a desire to identify and punish failure have done well to build up the framework that provides the all-important raw materials. Yet, for the past ten years, we have seen a rise in stubborn, extreme poverty. We cannot continue to fight the all-important raw materials. Yet, for the past ten years, we have seen a rise in stubborn, extreme poverty. We cannot continue to fudge the fight to end the evil that is poverty.

But too often rigid rules and targets have thwarted the innovation and passion of people working on the ground in hospitals, schools, Sure Start centres, social services - to support our most vulnerable, Labour has done well to tackle the unacceptable levels of poverty. Politically, this is a mistake. About the Tory mission really should be about empowering people to lead more independent and flourishing lives, less dependent on the state in the long-run. But too often rigid rules and targets have thwarted the innovation and passion of people working on the ground in hospitals, schools, Sure Start centres, social services - to support our most vulnerable, Labour has done well to build up the framework that provides the all-important raw materials. Yet, for the past ten years, we have seen a rise in stubborn, extreme poverty. We cannot continue to fudge the fight to end the evil that is poverty. Cameron’s team is right to say that power over public services is too concentrated in bureaucracies such as Whitehall and Town Halls. We need a radical decentralisation of power: real power to the people. So many Tory proposals are very welcome. Allowing co-operatives to manage state services. Letting parents and philanthropic groups set up and run schools. Outcomes-based commissioning so people shape their services, rather than being dictated from above. Voluntary organisations, with the money from Government, delivering programmes. Greater flexibility in contracts for third sector organisations. This will give people the freedom, power and enthusiasm to innovate their services and make lasting impact in deprived communities.

We need a new approach to support the voiceless. With its commitment to decentralisation, the Tories provide an answer. But there will be those who argue that Cameron sceptical, calling for the same old - and failed - libertarian methods. So the Conservative Party, if in Government, will extricate its own clash of the generations. We in Bright Blue hope new, progressive thinking will prevail. In fact, the reasoning behind the Pinch was created was to fight for such thinking.

Young People
In a different way, many young people today are also voiceless. Children cannot vote - so they cannot shape the political direction of our country. Instead, they can only hope that the generations that come before them leave an environmentally and economically sustainable future. Even those who are eligible are not taking a stand - 56% of 17-25 year olds are not on the electoral roll. They need to start talking, shouting, even. The Tory’s leading thinker, David Willetts, has published a book called The Pinch, providing insightful analysis of how the actions of baby boomers - though not deliberately - have made it harder for the next generation. Indeed, younger workers have been hit the worst during this recession. Over the past few decades, a more flexible labour market has made youth employment less stable and earnings have declined relative to older workers. Getting on the property ladder remains a distant dream. Debts from education and high living costs means savings for toughly existent... are often non-existent. Assets and wealth have become increasingly concentrated higher up the age scale. Coupled with our massive public debt and ageing population, the young will be more burdened taxpayers. But if Willetts and his front bench colleagues are serious about a fairer distribution of wealth and power, then targeting the voiceless. With its commitment to decentralisation, the Tories provide an answer. But there will be those who argue that Cameron sceptical, calling for the same old - and failed - libertarian methods. So the Conservative Party, if in Government, will extricate its own clash of the generations. We in Bright Blue hope new, progressive thinking will prevail. In fact, the reasoning behind the Pinch was created was to fight for such thinking.

I do hope you enjoy the first edition of The Progressive Conscience, exploring the clash of generations. The magazine would not have been possible without all of the creative and passionate Bright Blue team - Tim, Jonny, Villi, Pete, Liam and James. And I am particularly grateful to Pete for designing what I hope you will judge a fantastic magazine.
The contract between the generations has broken. Conservatives must find a way to heal it.

By David Willetts MP

I welcome the launch of a new group devoted to fresh Conservative thinking. Some Conservatives are of course instinctively suspicious of such a dangerous activity, which they may regard as deeply unconservative. So for example Dr Johnson dismissed the Toryism of the great philosopher David Hume, saying: “Sir, Hume is a Tory by chance.”

He meant by this that Hume had reached his Toryism by a process of intellectual argument not because of a deep instinct. The danger, they may fear, of depending on evidence and rational thought is that the conclusions one reach could change - hence the suspicion that these are weak foundations on which to erect any political programme.

We can understand the point. Conservatives respect the traditions and institutions of a society and are understandably wary of the arrogance of changing all that just because of an idea. Edmund Burke resolved this problem in a masterful statement of the true conservative approach:

“We are afraid to put men to live and trade each on his own private stock of reason; because we suspect that this stock in each man is small, and that the individuals would do better to avail themselves of the general bank and capital of nations and of ages. Many of our species, instead of exploding general prejudices, employ their sagacity to discover the latent wisdom which prevails in them. If they find what they seek, and they seldom fail, they think it more wise to continue the prejudice, with the reason involved, than to cast away the coat of prejudice, and to leave nothing but the naked reason; because prejudice, with its reason, has a motive to give action to that reason, and an affection which will give it permanence.”

Especially nowadays there is no alternative to reason, evidence, and argument - and that is what Bright Blue is devoted to. But it should be respectful of popular wisdom. This is where social science and the humanities met. Indeed one of the most exciting developments at present is the maturing of relatively new disciplines such as game theory and evolutionary biology. These are transforming our understanding of for example how cooperation works, the role of institutions and traditions, and the environment in which a modern market economy functions.

“As our links with other generations have weakened, we have become more dependent on the family”

In addition the increase in the sheer volume of affordable computing power has enabled social scientists to analyse far more detailed data sets and detect deeper patterns of cause and effect than ever before. This is not just a wider trend in the Western world, it is particularly acute in Britain. Surveys across Europe ask adults if they would intervene if they saw a 14 year old vandalising a bus shelter - in Germany 65% would, in Spain 52% and in the UK just 34%.

The generation gap within the family has healed but outside it has broken down. The conclusion one reach could change - hence the suspicion that these are weak foundations on which to erect any political programme.

“I hope therefore that what will make Bright Blue really significant and persuasive will be the way in which all this evidence sometimes emerging from whole new disciplines is deployed. That can really enrich our understanding of our society and open up a far more sophisticated debate about policy than ever before.

It is particularly needed at a time like this when over 80% of people believe our country is heading in the wrong direction. They are desperate for change and that is what the Centre Right must offer. Our argument is that rather than just doing what is expedient, our society and our politics are all broken and need to be fixed. This must rest on a deep understanding of what is going wrong with our country and why. My new book tries to rise to this challenge. It goes back to deep-seated and very human concerns about the kind of world we are passing on to our kids.

I am convinced that the most powerful measure of what is broken in our society is the breakdown of the contract between the generations. It means our society is marked by a deep distrust between the generations. And this is not just a wider trend in the Western world, it is particularly acute in Britain. Surveys across Europe ask adults if they would intervene if they saw a 14 year old vandalising a bus shelter - in Germany 65% would, in Spain 52% and in the UK just 34%.

The generation gap within the family has healed but outside it has broken down. This means that, paradoxically, as our links with other generations have weakened, we have become more dependent on the family.

It is widely understood that what has broken our economy is our dependence on debt and borrowing. This is revealed in extraordinarily low levels of saving over the past decade. In fact, OECD figures show that British households were running negative savings in each year from 2005 to 2008. This is virtually unprecedented in the modern western economy. Even in the US their net saving rate did not go negative like ours. This is a catastrophic failure to value the future. It means that even if there is physical investment in our country, it does not belong to us as others provided the capital. This in turn threatens the standard of living of future generations who will not be endowed with the capital they need to enjoy rising prosperity.

It is not that the baby boomers are bad people. But by virtue of their sheer size and power the boomers have ended up shaping a society and an economy which works for them but not for the younger generations.

“All too often the media caricature them as a problem when they are our future”

We can appeal to their better natures and offer. Our argument is that our economy and polity will be repaired when mass young people are no longer the generation gap and our economy and polity will be repaired when mass young people are no longer the generation gap and are caught in a vicious cycle in which inter-generational exchange fails - a third failure - a broken polity. It is one in which inter-generational exchange and communication has reduced. All too often the media caricature them as a problem when they are our future.

Young people are not likely to vote so they are caught in a vicious cycle in which their voice is not heard as clearly as it ought to be and that leaves them even more disengaged from politics.

This suggests that one of the central tasks for the next Conservative Government as we try to repair our broken society will be to repair the broken contract between the generations. I hope Bright Blue will play a leading role in thinking about how we tackle that and other such challenges.
Ryan Shorthouse: So, it’s been nearly four years since you wrote the “hug a hoodie” speech for David Cameron.

Danny Kruger: As you know no-one ever said anything about hugging anyone.

RS: But it was quite a surprising, significant speech for the Tories - a real shift in tone from just sounding tough on criminals - to understanding, empathising even, with the turbulent history of people who turn to crime. Is that still the right approach?

DK: I think we need to show young people that they matter, that they are significant and valued - the reason they go wild is often because they haven’t heard that message loud enough in the families and communities they grew up in. But as we also said in the speech, young people need firm boundaries and clear penalties for crossing them, which is why this wasn’t a ‘soft on crime’ message.

RS: I just want to pick up on what you say about families. Because there’s a strong narrative out there at the moment which says family breakdown can lead to really serious problems like increased criminality. But is it really the case that if a child’s parents split up they are going to end up in some gang? What do you really mean when a family has broken down?

DK: It depends on the context. When families split up partly in consequence of other negative stuff going on - poverty, unemployment, addiction - then the child is already in trouble, and the breakup of the family is just another, really serious, problem that is added. Of course when middle class parents split up there’s not much added chance of criminality in the children. But the lack of a dad is directly linked to other social problems, for boys and girls. It’s common sense but it’s also empirically proved.

RS: You left David Cameron’s office in 2008. When the Tories were high in the polls. Power was in touching distance. There wasn’t family breakdown in Team Cameron, was there? I mean: why did you turn your back on it?

DK: I was trying to do two jobs at the same time and it wasn’t fair to my employer - the Conservative Party. I simply found I was more excited and passionate about growing our little charity than about the eighth draft of a speech about helping the voluntary sector - honoured as I was to be writing those speeches the excitement of actually churning them out tends to pall after a while.

RS: You left just before the economic crisis. Before some say sunny, optimistic Cameronism was replaced by talk of an age of austerity. Has he taken a wrong turn?

DK: I think we still need a positive, can-do alternative to the grim gloominess of late-stage New Labour. The topic of politics has shifted from social to eco-
The Interview

When David Cameron opened YouGov’s conference on The Post-Bureaucratic Age, he spoke of the practical consequences of using technology to cut through red tape. Fewer stories of people feeling like they make a real difference and to move away from big government.

That’s certainly the most interesting for a Conservative audience - no government has ever, after all, stated its desire to bureaucratisate and disillusioned young people, and therefore the most inspiring thing is seeing some other parish council up the road. The hope, of course, is that the people of Maidenhead: simply publishing minutes of parish council meetings. But if enough residents don’t like the parish magazine’s partisan line, or barometric data, they can lobby against that grant and argue that they should pay less tax to the parish council. And if there’s a second dimension to the public availability of data on things such as this, however: not only will it make how much the politician’s prerogative to lead can be profoundly changed, especially if confront the ballot box by pure economics.

The politics, of course, is that the people of Much Binding will realise that it’s worth taking control of their politicians, at every level, has never been more stark. Or take a larger scale model: many councils offer a service that will remove large waste items such as fridges, for example, and it is the main vehicle for publishing minutes of parish council meetings. But if enough residents don’t like the parish magazine’s partisan line, or barometric data, they can lobby against that grant and argue that they should pay less tax to the parish council. And if there’s a second dimension to the public availability of data on things such as this, however: not only will it make how much the politician’s prerogative to lead can be profoundly changed, especially if confront the ballot box by pure economics.

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An increasingly pluralistic society needs collective identity. Brown’s Britishness
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That doesn’t mean Brown was wrong to
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- changes in family structures.
The national identity question is in that
- sense, also an expression of inter-genera-
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formation of their identities that their
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also subject to powerful supra-national forces wanting to influence their
- loyalty, from commercial brands to radical
religious sermons on YouTube.
That has radical consequences for the
way society confers its loyalty on public
bodies. In the past, they would have had
some intrinsic authority simply by virtue of
being part of the institutional fabric of
the nation. In essence, the national identity
automatically included deference to his-
toric institutions, including government and
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But increasingly, the relationship be-
- tween citizens and public authorities is
purely transactional. What, the citizen-
consumer asks, is in it for me?
In policy terms that has important fiscal
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mand-and-control? None of this is to say that Conservative
plans are bad. The implicit faith in the
good sense and moderation of the UK
public is refreshing, especially when
compared to the homogenising bludgeon
of New Labour’s regulatory approach.
The traditional Left often conflates the
values of the nation with the functions
of government. That is a mistake. It
leads to the assumption that, for ex-
- ample, insufficient national loyalty can
- simply be remedied by teaching “citi-
- zenship” in schools and confecting na-
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The Right, meanwhile, is deeply suspi-
cious of state involvement in fostering
identity, believing nationhood is trans-
mittted through cultural and civic, insti-
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But, if those institutions constitute a tra-
ditional Establishment whose authori-
- ty is not such a factor when power is
- devolved in a society characterised by
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the largely unchallenged power of
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- tween the ambition to trust people
with power at a local level and the need for
national government to command moral
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It is, of course, possible that Britain can
muddle along without a clear sense of
identity indefinitely. Britishness has al-
ways been fluid, defined, to some ex-
tent, by its unwillingness to submit to
definition. But it is possible that, in aus-
tere economic times, these questions
will cease to be abstract. A government
that inflicts painful cuts will need some
authority. It must be felt to be acting on
behalf of the nation as a whole, or risk
being overwhelmed by public anger.
Gordon Brown showed that a weak prime
minister, wedded to central state solu-
tions, cannot lead a debate on what it
means to be British. That doesn’t prove
the debate is unnecessary. It just means
another generation will have to look for
the answers.

“Although the ambition might be
to empower the sensible
majority, the current climate of
political apathy favours a well-
mobilised fanatical minority”

“A group of people that has no
profound sense of collective identity is
dischorded to pool its capital”

OPINION
12

13

Plural Problems

The corridors of Whitehall are haunted by the
ghosts of New Labour initiatives, conceived
of the need to grab a day’s headlines, delivered in poorly attended
speeches that have long been abandoned. These starve-
ing policies are soon forgotten by all but
the unfortunate civil servants whose pro-
fessional obligation it is to take what
ministers say seriously.

That is how most people would judge Gor-
don Brown’s various calls for a renewed
concept of “nationalism”. Remember a
few years ago, in Brit-
ish society. This is not some social hernia
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the answers.
In 2005, the Conservative Party suffered its third landslide election defeat in a row. This was unprecedented - it had been the governing party for two-thirds of the twentieth century, never losing power for more than a few years at a time, and generally seen as a moderate centre-right party - a party for "people like us", who wanted to do well and who wanted to do the right thing, but who understood that you can't do it alone. The "natural party of government" had been contaminated with the British public - sometimes leading them, sometimes being led by them, but never far away from them.

Crushing electoral defeats in 1997, 2001 and 2005 meant that sluggish turnover of MPs and members artificially skewed the Party in favour of those who were more extreme. The Parliamentary Party was not returning in the numbers it would have done had the Party been in Government. Membership was dwindling - being on the losing side is never fun. In Parliament and in the country, the Party was increasingly narrow, increasingly right-wing and increasingly out of touch. The Party in Parliament and in the country looked and sounded increasingly unlike modern Britain, and was faced with Labour's most electorally successful leader ever.

Despite initially encouraging attempts to modernise by William Hague, Iain Duncan Smith and Michael Howard, bad narrow interests. Most Conservative members realised that the best chance of winning again was to vote for David Cameron as leader.

The challenge was this: how to re-frame the electoral conversation when for so long the brand had been so damaged in such mistrust, even contempt? The Party had to move back into the centre-ground - where the voters are and elections are won - and focused on what voters actually care about. And it had to fundamentally alter its outlook on the world it seeks to govern. There are too many observers, commentators and political participants who want to continue to carry out old politics rather than the new approach that is required. Perhaps most significantly for a potential Cameron government, there are too few people who really understand the extent to which and the premise on which he has led the modernisation of the Party.

There is little doubt that this will be tested further by the pressures of government. Modernisation has meant broadening the Conservative coalition. It has never been about abandoning the voters we already have, but appealing to those we need to win an election. They are people who have never voted Tory before or abandoned the Party fifteen years ago. This means that the Party must continue to emphasise how perennial Conservative values apply to the things that those voters care about.
Our children. For anyone wanting to ensure children have a fair chance in life, support for a green economy is essential.

Shifting from non-renewable to renewable sources of energy, technological innovations and novelties can stimulate global recovery in a manner that is sustainable and equitable. From a micro level, or personal perspective, preparing for weather related disasters can have a powerful impact. Research shows that children involved in these programs not only become more informed about climate change, but they themselves can create change within their community in addressing risk. Children can be particularly valuable, as a child who is exposed to a specific environment, for example, should be considered equal over time. This argument has since been strengthened as the estimated cost of climate change continues to increase. Using this low discount rate in policy and decision making would lead to more commitments like the recent UK law to reduce national emissions by 30% by 2020 and 80% to 2050. This commitment was supported across the political spectrum, showing a common support for long term action.

While in their rhetorical political leaders recognise the importance of intergenerational justice and that the future generation has an inherent right to the benefits of making an early transition to a thriving low-carbon economy, greater energy security and independence, innovation and enterprise, and can be exciting and attractive to investors and consumers. Inversion of social norms and values, in a radical shift towards a low carbon economy and in climate resilience in the most vulnerable countries would ensure a fair, just and sustainable world. Shifting from non-renewable to renewable energy resources, technological innovations and novelties can stimulate global recovery in a manner that is sustainable and equitable. Because of this, children are more likely to engage in lifestyle changes that place a higher priority on the long-term well-being of the planet.

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One of the astonishing developments over the last decade is faith schools being a subject rarely mentioned in public to be a contentious part of the political landscape. They have been around a considerable time in Britain, with Christian schools established for centuries and the first Jewish school in London in 1732.

The public’s view

It seems that there are four reasons why faith schools have become much more controversial. One is that whereas they started off as private endowments, they are now publicly funded, and so much more answerable to the taxpayer. Of course, that has been the case for at least a hundred years, but public scrutiny is so much higher today than it was a century ago, with demands for transparency and accountability placing not just faith schools but all institutions - the NHS, police force - under a much more rigorous spotlight than ever before.

Secondly, the tax-paying society of today is very different from that of 1870 when the great transition occurred in the Education Act of that year. It was a century ago, with demands for transparency and accountability placing not just faith schools but all institutions - the NHS, police force - under a much more rigorous spotlight than ever before.

secure, want to send their children to them to obtain what they themselves cannot give their offspring.

"If you colour-coded Britain according to each religion in the 1930s and again in the 2000s, then the map of the UK will have changed from virtually monochrome to a kaleidoscope of colour."

Thirdly, society has also changed in another way, no longer being predomi-
nantly Christian with a small Jewish minority, but now consisting of a plethora of faiths. If you colour-coded Britain according to each religion in the 1930s and again in the 2000s, then the map of the UK will have changed from virtu-
ally monochrome to a kaleidoscope of colour.

That is wonderful in many ways and enormously enriching, but has led to is-
sues being raised that rarely surfaced before - particularly over integration, the separation of different faiths, which can also often mean different ethnic backgrounds, into the education system. How do schools encourage integration or inhibit it? The fourth reason for why faith schools is now such an issue is partly due to con-
cerns about the increasing number of faith schools and whether separating children of different faiths - but, unfairly

Rabbi Dr Jonathan Romain says we need our faith schools to encourage a new era of unity.

Faithful Education

one-way to educate the next generation for the better

Moreover, although each area taught, there is no National Curriculum for RE. Another pressing issue is that although faith schools can opt out of them.

In-putting

We have to take account of individual students about other religious and non-religious identities swirling around them? And from society’s point of view, produces a generation that is diverse yet coherent, that values social cohesion and is able to function effectively? We have to take account of individual faiths, whether religious or not, they also have to inform their students about other religious and non-religious beliefs - simply as a matter of minimum standards and basic general knowledge.

Research

An indicator of the importance of our topic is the leap in the amount of re-
search that has been undertaken on faith schools in recent years. The organization I chair - the Accord Coalition - seeks to promote inclusive schooling and urging the Con-
servative Party to tread the fine line of promoting religious freedom without sacri-
fices the very first Sikh and Hindu ones.

They worry such schools might produce a climate in which those like the bomb-

enormously enriching, but has led to is-

ntly small number of young people at the lowest end of the socio-economic scale.

at the price of social division.

family and friends and its impact on the next generation.

liberalism and a report published late in 2009 by Elizabeth Green for Theos on the impact of schools with a Christian ethos argues that students at many schools with a Christian ethos generally display a more positive attitude towards religion and a sense of community.

In addition, it says that there is some evidence that students at maintained schools are more likely to be concerned about the increasing number of faith schools - but, unfairly

of the landscape - there are some big

"Who would have thought that when the great transition occurred in the Education Act of that year, it was a century ago, with demands for transparency and accountability placing not just faith schools but all institutions - the NHS, police force - under a much more rigorous spotlight than ever before."

In the UK will have changed from virtu-

unity Controlled and Voluntary Aided schools, with VCs answerable to the lo-
cal education authority over admissions, employment and curriculum, whereas Ws have considerable independence - including wide powers of discrimination in all three areas - yet both almost totally ignored.

"It really is time we had a National Curriculum for RE."

Another pressing issue is that although RE is a statutory subject and has to be taught, there is no National Curriculum for faith schools - so that although faith schools may teach more about their own faith, they also have to inform their pupils about other religious and non-religious beliefs - simply as a matter of minimum standards and basic general knowledge.

Reforms for the better

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OPINION

The Rise of The Modern Man

Men want to spend more time with their children, says Anushka Asthana. For their sake - and their relationships - we have to find ways to let them.

The dramatic decline in the male-breadwinner model is a reality that is sure to accelerate. Speak to a handful of female graduates and you’ll soon realise they have ambitions just as lofty as their male counterparts.

But to a woman who works full-time and brings up a substantial - perhaps the majority - slice of a couple’s income, life at home has to change as well. For too long the expectation and welcome encouragement of women to succeed in work has not been matched by a commensurate shift in cultural and political attitudes about their role at home.

Survey after survey has concluded that while men may be doing more on the domestic front than ever before, women still carry the bulk of the burden. Some say it is just the way men and women are made. Like the journalist James Delingpole who argues that for men “self-esteem and happiness depends far less on how good we feel as parents than on how well we feel we’re doing out there in the big, nasty, competitive, portfolioفرة world of money-making. It’s the way we’re designed”. His sex, he concluded, was not even designed to help out the other half.

It is not a reality I recognize among my peers. But if even a sizeable minority share Delingpole’s attitude, it is an enormous change in attitude. After all, we hear again and again that in Sweden things are different.

So where do we start? Can changing policy lay the foundations for such an enormous change in attitude? After all, we hear again and again that in Sweden things are different. That there, where men and women are given similar, if not superior, leave following birth nine out of ten men take up at least some of the benefits.

It is not because they are designed differently, but rather because the truth is it took a huge effort to achieve that shift in Sweden.

One academic I spoke to said: “they almost weren’t able to force men to take it. So it needed policy and then somehow more than that - but eventually it did appear to work.”

That raises the question, could the same happen here? Because policy change is the air in the air in both parties chase after the vote of 30-something, career women. As a poll released earlier this month found, 47% of professional women in London had not had up their mind about how they would vote in the general election. But one thing is clear: any attempts to move society in this direction could lead to enormous benefits for families themselves. A study published in December from the University of Western Ontario revealed that couples that shared responsibility for domestic work had higher levels of happiness and life satisfaction than those in other family models.

The researchers found that when the traditional breadwinner role was still dominant, in more than one in four cases, families were organized in such a way that the women participated between 40 and 60% of unpaid work. This arrangement was most likely where women were less resourced and the couple less religious.

Shared roles, the study concluded, were advantageous to society in terms of gender equity and maximizing wealth. It meant women were less vulnerable in the case of separation, divorce or the death of a spouse.

To promote the family-model, researchers said policies should support equal opportunities for men and women, ensuring access to education and work, create the conditions that help work-life balance and – importantly – promote greater involvement of men in housework. The researchers found, government needed to create a society with adequate childcare facilities and equal opportunity to parental leave.

So policy change is heading in the right direction. But it is for government and employers to encourage that the offer of parental leave is something that men feel able and encouraged to take up. That might require a few more men to admit that it doesn’t matter how you are designed: looking after your child or participating in the home is part of being a good father.

The Progrometer

Ryan Shorthouse checks the progressive pulse of Conservative Party policy

Introduce a pupil premium

Michael Gove MP and Nick Gibb MP have promised to extra school funding for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. This will give schools with Academy status – which Gove wants to give a pay expand - the opportunity to attract the best teachers by paying them more. And evidence points to the quality of teaching being the biggest determinant of the quality of education

Full funding for apprentices aged over 18

Not everyone aged above 18 can get full funding for a work-based apprenticeship. David Willets MP and John Hayes MP have promised full funding direct to employers - for 77,000 work-based apprenticeships so older students have a second chance in life at a high-quality vocational education.

A ‘Right to Move’ for social tenants

A government manifesto promises the same sink-estate. Grant Shapps MP wants to introduce a comprehensive national mobility scheme which will allow good social tenants to demand that their social landlord sell their current property and use the proceeds, minus transaction costs, to buy another property of their choice – wherever in England this will allow responsible citizens - trapped by poverty - to escape hardship.

Flexible parental leave

Women still face a motherhood penalty, leaving a gender pay gap in the UK which is a third higher than the European average. Meanwhile, men want to spend more time with their children. Theresa May MP will change maternity leave so parents can decide how they divide 39 weeks of parental leave between them, giving parents power over how they juggle their work and family commitments.

4,200 Sure Start Health Visitors

The number of Health Visitors has declined and these professionals report that their caseloads are too high to protect the most vulnerable children. Maria Miller MP has promised to reinstate a universal Health Visitors service, providing non-stigmatising support to all parents and increasing the chances of safeguarding children from the most challenging backgrounds a healthier start in life.
**Changing Childhood**

Today’s children do not enjoy the freedoms of the past. Tim Gill calls on authorities to create child-friendly spaces. We now know that family-friendliness will be a key theme in the Conservative manifesto. But what does this imply for the way we shape the spaces our children grow up in?

The beginnings of an answer to this question can be found in a 2008 report on childhood written by David Willetts. The report’s provocative title - More Ball Games - flags up its equally provocative message: getting children out and about playing and socialising, is an aim worthy of serious political attention.

Such a vision should be uncontroversial. After all, it fits perfectly with the memories of almost anyone over the age of 30, of a childhood unfolding in local parks, fields and - yes - bullies’ haunts. David Cameron himself has noted that “just one in five children regularly play outside in their neighbourhood. The rest are denied the chance to get out of the house and have the everyday adventures that - to people of my generation - are what childhood is all about.!

Children today value freedom just as much as their parents and grandparents. Cameron’s generation of children happily spend less time in front of screens if they had a real choice. Likewise most parents would like to...

**Fluid Families**

Families have changed tremendously over the past thirty years. Our attitudes towards family life have too. Penny Mansfield thinks we need 21st century support for 21st century families.

Marriage rates began to decline from the high levels of the 1960’s. Yes, that decade, the Swinging Sixties, was in fact the golden age of marriage. Marriage research shows that the new facilities are enormously popular with children and families. The wider community, far from being hostile, often welcomes and values the improvements, and some of the best designs have created places that people of all ages can enjoy. We know that, no matter which party holds the purse strings, budget cuts will be the order of the day. Yet there are still levers of power that too began to change.

This loss of freedom has serious consequences. Robust studies show rising levels of emotional problems amongst teenagers. Experts say this may be the battery chicken but the salmon. We know that, no matter which party holds the purse strings, budget cuts will be the order of the day. Yet there are still levers of power that too began to change.

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Some question the premise, insisting that children have more freedom today. However, they are confusing appearance with reality. For the past thirty years or more, childhood prior to adolescence has been characterised by shrinking freedom of action for children, and growing adult control and oversight. For instance, in 1971, nearly all 8-year-olds went to school unaccompanied. Today few of that age are allowed outside their front doors on their own.

**Changing attitudes**

When I began researching family formation in the 1980s, the two equally favourite options for a pregnant teenager were legal termination or being born without marrying the father - at least before the birth. Women began to marry at later ages as the number of free-loving car parks and the pacity relative to men’s reduced the benefits of marriage. For young men hit the new pop music idols said and did, the beginning of a sequence lead-...
were born to married parents and one in four to cohabiting parents, 15% of babies born to mothers not living with a partner. Of this 15%, about half described themselves as “closely involved” with their baby’s father and nine months later a quarter of the babies were born to mothers not living in four to cohabiting parents, 15% of were born to married parents and one in twenty of those who say that those who believe. According to the British Social Household Panel Study (BHPS), over the last quarter of a century we have as a nation become more tolerant of a range of family interdependence was based on the wider family network.”

Different roles for men and women

Another major change in attitudes is towards homosexuality. The proportion of people who say that sexual relations between two adults of the same sex are always or mostly wrong has declined from 62% in 1983 to 36% in 2007. There was a slight increase in prejudice in the late 80s when we became less tolerant of homosexual relationships following the 1988 Legalisation of Sex Act. These changes have been put in place to make it unlawful to discriminate against workers because of sexual orientation and by 2005 the Civil Partnership Act came into force enabling same sex couples to obtain legal recognition of their relationship. In proposing the legislation government said it would be an important equality measure and stabilise family life. Meanwhile inside marriage men and women no longer have fixed attitudes to what He does and She does. Studies show that over the last fifty years, there is less gender specific roles of husband and wife, and more emphasis upon mutuality and equality. The most recent BHPS from 2009 shows that 2% of couples have experienced the breakdown of their own parents’ relationships. Would their children enjoy the benefits of continuing close supportive relationships at home? Unmarried parents are mostly, younger parents, in more socially disadvantaged groups, men and women who have partners and children from previous relationships and the authority of older generations in the family and deference to it. Couple relationships are more flexible but more expedient. Their essential purpose has shifted from the social to the personal. Self fulfilment of the individual partners is increasingly the reason for getting togetherness and staying together, with huge implications for children and the wider family network. Yet as the importance of formal marriage has declined its symbolic significance as a confirmation of commitment may have increased.

The very informality of contemporary relationships creates challenging issues both for public policy and the families themselves. A substantial body of evidence indicates distinct advantages in getting married for men, women and for their children. On average married men and women enjoy better physical and mental health, do better socially and economically than men and women who are not married, and, their children do better too. Is it simply the status of marriage that creates these advantages or is the quality and durability of the relationship between the two individuals? Clearly there is an association between the two.

The explanation may be that this age group is at that point in their lives at which they or their peers are divorcing. 

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The Punked Generation

Just guaranteeing young people any old job does not solve the NEET problem. We need to invest early and give the vulner-

The Junked Generation

60% of those on IB have been claiming Incapacity Benefit in 2009 - for instance, 15,000 young people were
their jobs. In the West Midlands region,
and are also more likely to lose or leave
lems have less success in finding jobs
action: young people with health prob-

The young unemployed tend to drink
lengthy period will pay a financial for

The Tories also made changes to benefit claims in 2007 - people already had jobs that had

After six months without a job, deliv-

Get Britain Working will replace La-

bare's Flexible New Deal programme.

Getting profound challenges, also have resil-

in the summer of 2008 out of work in

To   increasing the size of the sticking

A recent study of worklessness shows
half of those given help were back on

tire community. All these are measures

However, even greater attention needs
do does make a difference - became

In parts of the UK, that scenario has al-

work and aims to create 150,000 new

- support that does not lend itself

offer training opportunities?

Labour introduced the Future Jobs Fund

Heads of LEAP, a charity based in North West

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Cameron’s vision of active citizenry needs state support and sophisticated thinking about strengthening community networks. Power to the Networked People

The big question for Cameron Conserva-
tives is how to reconcile a commitment to social justice with a determination to increase state support and the need to foster community networks. The evidence for the power of these networks is strong. The Royal Society of Arts (RSA) is not alone in recognizing the potential of communities; what is it that contributes to our collective capacity for what can inegligently be called “pro-social” behaviour?

The Royal Society of Arts (RSA) is not alone in offering social networking as the answer. The evidence for the power of the connections between people has been building for many years. Robert Putnam’s social capital theory argues that nature of social bonds is an impor-
tant factor in understanding human and life chances of members of a particular community. More recently Connected by Nicholas Christakis and James Fowler has generated much interest. If connected, people know the functions of government rather than by subtracting from them”.

Our own behaviours are shaped not just by the people we know, but by the people they know. Looking at social networks themselves there are some simple rules to distin-
guish those most likely to provide em-
powerment and resilience. They contain many hubs, that is, people and places to which many people connect. There are many peripheral links, so that people in one network are connected to people in other networks. And there are many links out from the community to the ex-
ternal world, providing what Putnam re-
fers to as “bridging social capital”. Current RSA research among the resi-
dents of New Cross Gate in South East London demonstrates this. There are many “social isolates” with no connections and many others who have very few connections. People who exist tend to be public service institutions - like the school - or public employees - like the dustman or local employee - like the school – or public institutions – like the school – or public

A few days ago I went to an impressive event on gangs hosted by The Centre for Social Justice. Although there was much emphasis on the role of the charitable sector, I couldn’t help noticing that the CSJ recommendations on gangs included national pro-
grammes and targets. Even if the third sector could deliver, a bigger role it will inevitably rely heavily on being commissioned and funded by the state. The Tory answer to this conundrum is to tap into the latent capital that exists in our communities; what is it that contributes to our collective capacity for what can inegligently be called “pro-social” behaviour?

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*The THINKERS*
need to end the perverse disincentives within Labour’s welfare system that actually encourage two parent families to live apart.

Iain Duncan Smith’s Centre for Social Justice has formulated a variety of other policy measures that will underpin the most reliable pathways away from pov-

erity. The CSJ’s Dynamic Benefits report offers the most important of these—rec-

ommending a simplification of the welfare system that will ensure that work always pays more than benefits.

The second key feature of compassion-

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new Creative Quarter and Foundation in Folkestone. The decline of businesses at the heart of our communities requires a bigger solution than the manipulation of tax rates and relief from heavy handed regulation alone. It requires creative thinking to develop an effective local plan to regenerate businesses. It means involving councils, landlords and businesses in that area. But for these plans to succeed, policy makers need to consider a number of reforms.

Supporting localism

Local authorities have had no direct incentive to invest in reviving high streets and local business centres. This is because they do not keep the business rates they collect for the Government. Therefore the level of business activity in their area has little direct financial impact upon them. With council budgets under pressure any money spent on business support initiatives must come from other services or from additional increases in council tax. Conservative policies to allow councils to keep part of an increase in business rates if new businesses are encouraged into an area of an increase in business rates if new businesses are encouraged into an area with local authorities an incentive to support business development.

In Folkestone in the week before Christmas, Shepway District Council paid for three days worth of free parking in the town. This led of an increase in the number of shoppers in the town centre of 11% against the same period in the previous year, and when the national trend over was actually a fall in numbers. The local traders regarded this as a great success; an effective measure to stimulate trade in a recession. But other than gratitude, the council gets nothing back from this. The policy has cost it lost parking revenue. Business groups have long criticised parking charges as something that depresses trade, but councils have an incentive to charge as much as they think they can to subsidise other areas of their work.

In a similar way, developers of new retail parks pay councils following a planning approval, known as Section 106 agreements, which creates incentives to approve more business development away from a struggling town centre. In a recession, budgets for local marketing, promotion and events to encourage visitors may also be one of the first areas of spending to be cut. Regional Development Agencies can support regeneration projects in town centres, but the decision makers in this process of allocating funds can be distant from the local economies they could support. Their support, whilst welcome, can be relatively short term when an area might need more consistent help over a number of years and across a business cycle. It could be more effective instead to use resources at a local level, so that authorities are given an incentive to take the lead in supporting local business growth. So if the council want to support the renovation some run down shops, it could recover that investment when tenants had moved in and were paying business rates.

If the council decided to invest in reducing parking charges, or funding a marketing campaign, this cost could be recouped from increased business rates across the area if activity was a success. It may be possible that this work would not have to be underwritten by the local authorities, but perhaps by a not for profit company comprising of a variety of local business interests, working with the support of the local authority. The ability to create new local business regeneration bodies should also be partnered with greater independence of operation and their ability to seek and give advice and support from a wider range of sources.

Creative ideas

There are a number of large companies and not-for-profit organisations pioneering new ways to support business development. However, there is often the complaint that Government-run services like Business Link are reluctant to refer people to a service that is only offered by one or two private companies, even if it could be of benefit. For example, Microsoft runs schemes to support new high tech business start ups, but this is not offered by all technology companies. We could also help promote local awareness of organisations like ‘Pub is the Hub’ which is supported by the Prince of Wales and works with companies, agencies and in some areas local government to help keep local pubs open by increasing the diversity of the service they provide - for example, encouraging a local food shop or post office under threat to trade from part of the premises of a pub.

The regeneration of businesses in the community requires urgent and creative thinking. It is not a matter of returning to a way of doing business that is past, but instead embracing new ideas and new ideas. It is not a matter of returning to a way of doing business that is past, but instead embracing new ideas and new ideas. It is not a matter of returning to a way of doing business that is past, but instead embracing new ideas and new ideas. It is not a matter of returning to a way of doing business that is past, but instead embracing new ideas and new ideas.
The Young Ones

Yes, young people have got a raw deal. But what are we going to do about it? Nick Hillman offers his suggestions. Perhaps the hardest question I have been asked since becoming the Conservatives’ Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Cambridge was from a 17-year old sixth-former. He asked me, and the other parties’ candidates: “why should anyone from my generation vote for you, when your generation have mucked up the country and left us in so much debt?”

The implication behind the question was a bit harsh given that, in my case at least, I have never (yet) voted for the winning party at a general election. However, there is a powerful truism at its heart: today’s politicians have left a gigantic mess for the next generation to pick up. The intergenerational contract has been stretched to breaking point.

At the election, the biggest single issue is likely to be the eye-watering levels of debt the Government have built up which - one way or another - will have to be dealt with by the taxpayers of the future.

This problem was captured well in those Conservative posters saying “Dad’s Nose. Mum’s Eyes. Gordon Brown’s Debt.” But, to date, much of the focus on intergenerational equity has been on assessing the problem. That is the right starting point, as the issue must be understood before it can be tackled. But we need to start thinking about the policy prescriptions that will help that 17-year old too.

Here are three possible ones.

First, we should think about where the training budget is best directed. In particular, it would make sense to shift some of the £1 billion Train to Gain budget that is currently spent on those in work to the provision of more apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeship training and further education college places for those yet to enter the labour market. In practice, that means a shift of resources down the age range.

Second, savings and pensions. While the current fiscal crisis may necessitate some reforms to the Child Trust Fund, we should not lose sight of its key strength: that it promotes the building up of assets among younger people in poorer families in a way that has not occurred since Margaret Thatcher sold off council houses in their thousands. We should also do more to promote good pensions. Currently, older workers - and public sector workers - tend to have access to gold-plated pensions, while younger workers tend to have access only to inferior ones with very low or no employer contributions. In those schemes open to older employees, the companies take on all the risks by promising a certain level of pension at the end. In the schemes open to younger employees, the individual takes all the risks and may face penury in retirement depending on the future state of the annuity market. This has to be changed if pensions are not to be grossly unfair to younger workers.

Thirdly, in my view, we should give 16-year olds the vote. If people are fearful that the baby boomers might unfairly outvote other age groups in the battle for public resources, then extending full democratic rights lower down the age range is a good idea. Indeed, giving the vote to 16 and 17-year olds should be a higher priority than giving it to prisoners, as has been suggested in recent months.

Whether or not these specific policies are implemented, one thing is certain: for the sake of our future social cohesion, politicians should be looking at bold policies that are designed to give younger people a fairer deal.