Narratives of Opening Up

1201 (White man, Father = academic, St Mary’s School, Cambridge, No Clubs, Barrister)

**PARTICIPANT 1:**

I'm not good at networking, partly because I'm too busy. I was too busy. But things have changed tremendously at the bar. When I became a barrister towards the end of the 1970s – and I think here you need to make a distinction between information and contacts. Information is, you know, what you know, or don't know about different aspects of the profession. Contacts can be sources of information, but contacts can also be people who put you in touch with other people. Now, at the bar in the late 1970s, as had been the case, probably historically, there was virtually no information about what sets did what, who did what, where you might have the best chances of getting on, who was a good person to go to, who was not a good person.

[00:31:03]

**PARTICIPANT 1:** So that if you were in the situation I was in, you were completely adrift. And to some extent, that meant that contacts were indispensable because it was the contacts that enabled you to get to the right people. And it was also the case that recruitment was heavily biased by reference to contacts. And if you did not have contacts, then you really were at a disadvantage. Now my father, although he was a professor of law, he didn't actually have contacts in that sense. He knew one person and through that, that connection, I managed to get pupillage in for the first time. And after that, basically I made my own way. Now, things these days are completely different. And they've been completely different for at least the last 20 years and possibly more, because now there is much more information going around. And now, the importance of contacts is very, very diminished. I can't speak for all sets of chambers.

[00:31:49]

**PARTICIPANT 1:** But the set of chambers that I ran for about the last 15 years before I retired was one in which we made a determined and serious effort to eliminate the influence of contacts. I was the chair of the pupillage committee for donkey's years. And we moved to a completely transparent system that was based solely on merit. And we shut off all possibilities of knowing people as potential ways of getting recruited both to do the period of traineeship known as pupillage, but also as a kind of backdoor means of getting taken on as a tenant. And that was part of a wider move at the bar that was taking place in a number of other sets, I would have said most other sets but I can't speak for all sets, I suspect that there are still areas at the bar today where you need contacts. But generally speaking, and as I say, for at least the last 20, 25 years, access to the bar for people from all kinds of different walks of life is much easier than it was at the time when I was trying to get on.

[00:34:29]

**INTERVIEWER:** And that's fascinating and also so interesting that you've played a role in that as part of shaping institutions to be more open. More meritocratic. Yeah.

**PARTICIPANT 1:** Yeah, but only in my set of chambers. I wasn't the only person doing this. There was – it was quite interesting because it was just a feeling, it was almost unspoken, that this is what we wanted to do and to a great extent I think it was the result of a kind of generational change, in a change in the type, a gradual change in the type of people who were going to the bar. Even so, you could find, surprisingly, people who were still enamoured of a system based on contacts. But you did have to stamp on it. In some respects it was, it was a protection for people because it's all too easy for people to be sort of harassed by friends and neighbours who say, can you do something for my son or daughter? And then it becomes a bit embarrassing, it becomes all the more embarrassing if the organisation that you're working with, the set of chambers is actually one that is operating on a more meritocratic basis. So you just say to them, "Look, the message is: they want to, they make an application, and that will be considered fairly."

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[00:59:49]

**INTERVIEWER:** Right? Yeah. So kind of creative intellectual across the boards thing. So the last few questions now, thank you so much for your time. This has been absolutely fascinating – these are more general, kind of big questions rather than – but hopefully drawing on your lived experience. So the first one, do you think it has become harder or easier for people from disadvantaged backgrounds to succeed in British society in terms of your observation? And has that changed over your lifetime?

**PARTICIPANT 1:**

Well, in my experience, it's much easier now. But that is certainly the case, in the legal profession. Because it's much easier. If you come from a disadvantaged background, as long as you've got the ability. You have many more women, many more more non-white people, many more people from different social backgrounds at the bar than was the case. But that is a development over maybe the last 30 years.

[01:01:01]

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah, and you were part of some of that process in your own [missed]?

**PARTICIPANT 1:** Yeah.

1202 White man, Father = GP, Radley College, Cambridge, No Clubs, Academic

**INTERVIEWER:** Is there anything else you think we should consider in terms of notions of how a British elite operates, circulates or reproduces itself?

**PARTICIPANT:** Well I think, you know, obviously gender is a big part of it, and you will be talking about that, but I think that, you know, I went to a male-only school and I think that, and it’s quite interesting, you know, being considered for being Master. I mean I’m really pleased that Claire appointed a woman, and I didn’t ever apply but I was asked to apply for Jesus and they appointed a black woman, and I think, you know, that is how the [Missed] [01:16:37] establishment should go. And I think the fact that more Oxbridge colleges have got women and black folk and gay folk and diversity is really how they should go, and I’m very pleased they go. So you’ll be looking at that I’m sure, but there is a sexism about the British elite. What else? Yeah um I suppose, you know, I mean I’m disabled so I would make a big thing of disability. Now disability’s interesting because people get disabled as they grow older, so I suspect that a lot of people in Who’s Who would be disabled, but they wouldn’t have spent all their life as disabled and they wouldn’t have identified as disabled.

[01:18:48]

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah. Did you feel like that gave you an ability to kind of, I don’t know, represent in certain spaces or say things that otherwise might [Missed] [01:19:00]-

**PARTICIPANT:** Yeah. Yeah, no I think it did, I think it did, and I think it was very helpful to me. I mean this is a cynical way of saying it, and I don’t think I used it in this way, but you could argue that just as the British establishment’s trying to open up then somebody like he comes along who’s male, white, upper middle class and disabled, so it’s like a big tick. And I think, for example I’m a Fellow of the British Academy, which is great, but I’m pretty sure that they thought, ooh who around is disabled that we can have to make us feel, or do better? And they thought, oh Tom, he’s a prof, he’s disabled, he's written a lot of books, he’s very prominent. If we get him as one of our number, and I don’t think that that’s the only reason that I’m there, I hope it’s not, but I think it would’ve helped.

1206 (South Asian (ethnicity) woman, Father = GP, Forest School, London, Cambridge, No clubs, Solicitor

**P:** So you know I’ll give you an example, so for example I was on the board of the Independent Press Standards Organisation, and to begin with, I was the only woman of colour, I was the only Muslim person in the whole organisation—a small organisation but the only Muslim—and so I was able to bring that to the table, something that nobody in that organisation had experience of, and it was, in fact you know, next week I’m seeing the chief exec and they’ve set up—and we’ve been talking about it for quite a few years and it’s finally, we were talking about equality and diversity, and so we’ve so the committee’s been set up and I had been, you know, I was talking about that basically from the day I started that organisation, and it was a new organisation, it was a new setup so it was gonna take some time.

[1:28:18.9]

**P:** But it’s finally set up and I think that if I hadn't kept—well not just me but other people as well when they join new people then pursued that with me, but I think, I don’t think that necessarily would have gained traction if I hadn’t kept you know beating the drum [1:28:35.9] about it, number one.

1207 (South Asian Man, Father = business manager, Ewart School, Madras, Christian Med. Coll., Vellore, Clubs = Athenæum, MCC; Leander (Henley-on-Thames); Hawks (Hon. Mem.) (Cambridge), Consultant)

[00:47:05]

Yeah. Interesting. So, a few final questions, these are more topical, but hopefully, drawing on your lived experience, as well, and thank you so much for your time, I'm so grateful. So do you think it's become harder or easier for people from disadvantaged backgrounds to succeed in British society, in terms of what you've observed, and has this changed over your lifetime?

**PARTICIPANT 1:** Well, I think it has. I mean, it was very difficult in the early days but now look at it [missed] [00:47:42] but look at the cabinet. It's , you know, it's multicultural, isn't it? If you look at – if you look now at – in medical schools, okay. There was always the complaint, there are not sufficient number of doctors who are – but there are now. There aren't sufficient women – well, God, there are now. Not in the very senior positions, but they're beginning to grow. There's no doubt about that, and quite good. And some of them extremely able, I mean, you know.

[00:48:35]

**INTERVIEWER:**

So it feels like the – medicine and as we're looking at the government has become more open for people of colour and for women.

**PARTICIPANT 1:** Women in medicine, of course, there is the problem that they tend to drift away for a few years while they bring their families up, right? Or alternatively, try and combine both, which is difficult, but some do it very well. Certain specialties tend to be more male dominated – and that's changing, surgery, for example. I'd be perfectly happy for a woman to operate on me, and probably sew me up a lot better than some of the male colleagues. Because they do it all the time, you know!

1210 (South Asia woman, Father = Civil engineer, New Delhi Public School, City of London Polytechnic, No club, headteacher)

[00:54:22]

**INTERVIEWER 1:** In a majority white environment. In terms of the schools you worked in, and later in your senior positions, working with government.

**PARTICIPANT 1:** I've never thought about it. I suppose because I was so confident in myself, in what I believed in, I didn't see it as an issue. I wasn't scared by it, I wasn't frightened by it. I relished it, and I didn't see myself as the person with the authority. So, for example, when I was chairing the Primary Heads Reference Group, I just saw myself as being one of the group, but I had a role to play. So, I don't think I'm any better or any worse. And even when I was made, which, by the way, my husband didn't believe that I was going to be made a dame, and my husband's a republican, so he didn't actually come with me for the ceremony.

[00:55:31]

**INTERVIEWER 1:** Oh dear.

**PARTICIPANT 1:** Our son flew in from Geneva, but my husband refused to come. So, he's got his own values and principles, which is absolutely fine. Even then, if I was being really honest with you, I'd say that there were people far more deserving than I, that should have been made a dame. But I think it's about who knows you. And if I'm also honest with you and know a little bit about how the honour system works, then our daughter is in the civil service, I won't tell you which department, but she did say, but mum, unless a minister approves... damehoods and knighthoods are never given without ministers’ approval. So, the committee can make recommendations, but ultimately, the ministers need to. Now David Cameron knew me, Michael Gove knew me, Nick Gibb knew me.

[00:56:21]

**PARTICIPANT 1:** And I was brown, and I know you have to have a certain number of females, non-whites and so on. So not being cynical, being realist, that year, another year, I might have been given an OBE. I don't know, and sometimes people say, you're short selling yourself, which I might be too, but I do think it's about people who know you, which comes back to networks as well. People far senior to me in government knew of my work, had been to visit my school, knew what I was doing, knew of my reputation, knew of my track record and suppose that's how I got it. But in terms of authority, I don't see myself as an authority figure. I do see myself as someone trying to influence change. That matters more to me than being an authority.

1213 (Asian (Iranian) woman, Father = businessman, Padworth College, Univ. of Warwick, No club, Solicitor)

**INTERVIEWER 1:** And the last big question. Some people would consider reaching the Who's Who as a quintessential marker of joining the British elite. How does that word 'elite' land with you. Do you consider yourself part of that? And if not, why not? And if so, why so.

**PARTICIPANT 1:** In one sense, I know that I have a profile and a presence. By many markers. I'm the kind of person who can't go out in the street and walk about dancing without creating a certain dislocate, a cognitive dissonance in what I am, what I'm supposed to be. You know I'm a visitor of an Oxford college?

[01:14:39]

**INTERVIEWER 1:** Yes.

**PARTICIPANT 1:** Of course there are elites. One of the things that's very interesting and notable about the UK, and particularly England, is that there are [01:14:56] [Missed] elites, and actually they don't all feed into each other, and support each other, and reinforce each other. But there's a sense in which having a certain amount of power, however earned, does also bring with it a certain amount of responsibility, I think.

[01:15:19]

**PARTICIPANT 1:** So, I think, one objective level, obviously being in Who's Who, it's about some kind of elitism. The giveaway's in the title. You are a who. But there are lots of areas in which the different elites actually clash with each other, but they don't support each other necessarily. We're not a single strand society, rooting in our ancestral past, and so on. And there's quite a lot of room for movement.

[01:16:01]

**PARTICIPANT 1:** The elite from the elite side down, or elite side out, is, I think, more open and porous and welcoming than would appear at first sight to the people who don't feel themselves part of the elite. And I think one of the ways that we think about social mobility, just making society a bit more porous, is about ways in which people can slot in at different levels. And think for example about an example locally.

[01:16:34]

**PARTICIPANT 1:** You can be a [01:16:35] [Missed] over here in your work, and locally, in some local endeavour, you are really no different from another person on the allotment committee, trying to get your seeds in all at the same time. So, I think there's a sense in which it matters that we should keep it in perspective.

[01:16:55]

**INTERVIEWER 1:** Yeah, that's interesting. So, whereas you may be elites in one sphere, whether that's your profession, your sector, in another sphere you're not operating in that status. I think that's a really interesting point.

**PARTICIPANT 1:** There's that wonderful 1770s poem which goes "sceptre and crown shall tumble down, and in the dust be equal made with a lowly scythe and spade." And it's kind of a [01:17:23] [Missed] thing, but there's a sense in which... there are many spheres of life, and many different spheres in which different excel and different people take the lead, and it's quite important for that fluidity to be encouraged.

1214 (Indian (ethicity) man, father = legal advisor, Owen’s School, Herts, Oxford, Clubs = Athenæum, Royal Automobile, Barrister)

(39:02)

So, I'm conscious that I don't come from a background which makes entry to the bar difficult apart from money. So, one of the issues when I entered the profession was financing because there was very little support, so I had to be quite resourceful about financing entry to the profession, but the profession has become much better at giving scholarships and so on, so that people from less advantaged backgrounds have a chance of making it to the bar.

(39:35)

So, I’m conscious that background of having a first from Oxford, being in a really good set of chambers, which then appears at the bottom of court documents and so on, it's a slight leg up. So, when you appear in court, judges will know to be in my chambers, you'd have to be pretty bright.

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1214 cont’d

(45:47)

**PARTICIPANT:** So, it became, I think one of the downsides of more formalised, so the Blair government wanted to open up the profession, and they wanted to end any culture of secret soundings or the old boys’ network or everything like that.

(46:15)

So, in the old days to become a high court judge, it tended to be sent to the Lord Chancellor, then who was a government minister as well, taking soundings from the senior judiciary about who the top practitioners were.

(46:32)

And then, asking people to become high court judges or circuit judges who are lower down the pecking order, whatever. And if the Lord Chancellor asked to become a judge 95%, something like 90%, people would say yes. And now, to become a judge, you have to fill in a 50-page application form involving self-assessment, 20 referees, all sorts of things.

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(57:10)

So, the first one is, do you think it's become harder or easier for people from disadvantaged backgrounds to succeed in British society, in terms of your observations? And do you think this has changed over your lifetime?

(57:23)

**PARTICIPANT:** Definitely, yes. Much easier. And just focusing on my narrow part of the profession, which is the bar. The bar is very self-conscious of its reputation for being very Oxbridge, very public school. And the bar has collected together in a much more organised way to make sure that there are scholarships and funding for people from underprivileged backgrounds.

(58:00)

And we've reached out in terms of cooperation with, for example, the Sutton Trust and so on in having work placements for children from more disadvantaged backgrounds to experience the bar, and basically to regard the bar as something they could see themselves doing.

(58:21)

And so, you know, we've got members of chambers who have had support from the Sutton Trust, for example, when they were growing up. We've got a much higher quotient of state school-educated people. When I joined chambers, it was probably about 90% public school background.

(58:46)

I would say now, about, that has reduced about 40%. So, 60% of members of chambers now went to state schools, and that proportion is increasing year-on-year. What we haven't really changed is the proportion of people who come from Oxbridge.

(59:10)

I think in our defence, I would say that that's partly a result of Oxbridge having widened its horizons beyond private schools. And so, I take comfort from the fact that if you analyse our intake in terms of people who went to state schools that has increased drastically.

(59:35)

In terms of non-Oxbridge backgrounds, that hasn't changed drastically, because even people who didn't necessarily do their first degrees at Oxford have tended to go to do their second degrees at Oxford or Cambridge, whether it's, you know, a Masters’ in law, whatever. That hasn't changed drastically in Oxbridge terms, but it has in terms of state school background,

(59:58)

1217. (South Asia woman, Father = GP, Olchfa Comprehensive School, Cambridge, Cambridge, Clubs = House of St Barnabas, Barrister)

[0:51:55.4]

**P:** Taking silk, taking silk as a woman, taking silk as a woman from a state school, taking silk as a woman from a state school and being half Asian and having had children and also by then I was divorced, so all of these additional things meant that I felt it definitely is knocking down barriers and there was about 15 women who took silk in my cohort.

[0:52:22.6]

**P:** It may have been more, and I remember seeing a photograph of us, we were all together, and I think it was about 15, and that was a bumper year, and you know it still, not enough women apply but it is getting better, it’s getting nearer to 50% of applicants now are women which just reflects, you know, there’s been a delay of people applying. So definitely taking silk was a highlight, that was a sea change in my work, my status, the opportunities I get, and what I can do for others now.

1221 (South Asian Man, Father = postman, School?, Univ. of Wolverhampto, No Clubs, Judge)

(43:39)

**INTERVIEWER:** No, I think you've said that so well, and I'm aware we've got five minutes till we both have to leave, which personally I'm devastated by. So, I might ask this last question, if that's okay, and I have to be brief. So, some people consider reaching “Who's Who” as a quintessential marker of joining the British elite. How does that word, British elite, or how does that term land with you?

(44:03)

**PARTICIPANT:** I want Britishness to be wider than white, middle-class people. But therefore, if you have, what others would describe as odd-sounding Muslim names as part of that, that it widens the definition of Britishness, and that's a good thing.

(44:23)

And that's something I want to promote. Because I don't want people to ask me, where am I from; Slough is the answer. But because I'll always look different, because I'm not white, there will always be this sense of well, he's not quite one of us, maybe.

(44:40)

And so, “Who's Who”, you know, whether you call it the establishment, whether you call it the elite. The fact is, we are contributing now to the heart of British society, in doing stuff which we need, we collectively need doing, and that should be recognised. And it's not about me; it's about about a name being there. It’s about role models.

(45:10)

**INTERVIEWER:** Right. Okay, so it wasn't like a specific target for your individual achievement, but a sense of being representative of a broader inclusion.

(45:19)

**PARTICIPANT:** When I got my CBE, I refuse to put it after my name. And then I had a conversation with somebody, and he said to me, you're not doing it for yourself, you're missing the point. When you put CBE after your name, what you're showing the world is people like you and me can have CBE after my name.

(45:37)

So, it's a wider concept, isn't it? It's not about my success. It's about each of us; it doesn't matter where we come from, can be part of the influence as part of the way that we change a society. We can be part of the judiciary, we can be part of medicine, accountancy, whatever it is, and we can contribute, and we can be recognised because we are recognised by the establishment.

(46:09)

You know, I don't feel part of the establishment. I'll be really frank with you, I feel like the outsider, still having a go on the inside. But the point it makes is that we can be outsiders on the inside and still get recognised.

1222 (South Asian Man, Father = newsagent shop owner, Stanground Coll., Peterborough, Oxford, No Clubs, Barrister)

(43:22)

**INTERVIEWER:** Absolutely, yeah, that's a really important point. And I suppose my next question is kind of related to that, so I'll ask you a few more topical questions now. But I believe this will also join in with your experience. Do you think it's become harder or easier for people from disadvantaged backgrounds to succeed in British society, in terms of your observations? And do you think this has changed over your lifetime?

(43:45)

**PARTICIPANT:** I think it's become easier now, and I think it has changed over my lifetime, and that there are more opportunities now. So, let's say, let's use kind of ethnic minority applicants as an example. There are now kind of specific schemes to try to get people from ethnic minority backgrounds involved in the professions.

(44:10)

There are schemes to help socially disadvantaged people, which means you have working class people. So, there's just more awareness now. There's also a more of a belief that actually, there needs to be change. Because I think maybe 50 years ago, people thought, we can't let working class, we can't let these people in, as in a way that it's gonna get worse and it's not a good thing.

(44:32)

Whereas now, it's the opposite. Now, people they know is a good thing that others should have access to the work, it's good generally. It means that they're fulfilling their potential, it means that the profession generally is maximising the talent available to it. So, I think that is a key change in the awareness and this led to more opportunities being available. So, it's better now than I think it was, but it's by no means okay, but it's better than it was. But it still needs to be so much more done.

(45:06)

**INTERVIEWER:** Right, there's been a cultural shift.

(45:09)

**PARTICIPANT:** Yeah, exactly. But I think there are difficulties now to do with financing these things. Because now, you know, I gave you the example of when I was at university of grants, so we didn't have the problem of funding university, whereas now, there's such little kind of support for education in terms of higher education, for funding that I think that presents people with a big problem.

(45:35)

We don't have the problem at the bar so much, but lots of occupations do make people themselves pay to kind of get work experience, which is a big issue. So, I think from that perspective is a big, that's a big problem, the practical, the finance aspects, that's a big thing. That's a barrier, a real barrier to access. But I think culturally, it's changed, and it's opened up more.

(46:02)

But that, there must be the suitable kind of financial support for people to do things. But then again, I think lots of places are aware of that now, so there's no point, then, having schemes to welcome people if people can't afford to go on. So, I think that's becoming, I think as the professions become bit more representative themselves, then people involved think, yeah, we do need to change these things.

1228 (Nigerian woman, Father - doctor, Burgess Hill Girls School, West Sussex, Newcastle Univ. Law School, No clubs, lawyer)

**P:** So I remember going to the Law Society, our membership organisation, and talking to the president. My son was about three or four, he had to come with me because the au pair had a date or there was something that evening that she couldn’t look after him.

[0:19:05.1]

**P:** And I challenged the president and said, “What are you doing? I mean, there’s almost 200,000 solicitors, there’s now over 200,000. Do you not realise there’s this issue?” And they had no diversity team, nothing, no awareness. No one had spoken up, or not been taken seriously, and that’s how over the years, as a volunteer on top of my day job, on top of caring for my son, I helped the Law-and that’s where I got my MBE, you know. I helped the Law Society build up their DEI awareness, the team, all the different communities for different diversity strands over you know, the best part of 20 years, really, in the end.

[0:19:45.4]

**P:** But there was no, there was no awareness at all. And the data has changed significantly as a result of all of that.

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**PARTICIPANT:** So it serves, honours really do serve their purpose. And finding out who had supported afterwards, when the list was published, all these people came forward and told me they had nominated me, they’d written letters, you know, it was a wide range of senior partners at law firms who I never thought would be on side, and my former headmistress from school, and mentees, and things like that.

[0:30:58.2]

**P:** So that was a real pinnacle, because from that point onwards the work became even more elevated, you know, it gives you real credibility and you do need that, sadly, doing this work. You know, people do, if you say you’ve got a Queen’s honour it shuts people up who are going to be difficult.

[0:31:17.5]

**P:** It opened more doors, I was able to do a lot more government-related work, you get invited to more things that are going to drive even bigger change, and for that I’m-King Charles was amazing, I met him twice within a year, and I’ll tell you this, because it’s public knowledge now, but, you know, he gave me my MBE at Buckingham Palace. We had a very quick chat.

[0:31:42.1]

**P:** Announced my name flawlessly, flawless Yoruba accent, he was well briefed, and I said, “Would you consider having a Commonwealth reception again?”, because Brexit had just happened, and I always like to ask something in return, you know what I mean [laughs].

[0:31:56.6]

**P:** And he went “Oh, I’ll look into that”, and I just thought, “Oh whatever”, you know, and then a few months later I got an invite to the Commonwealth reception and I met him again, there’s a picture of me and him, two pictures of us at Clarence House, shaking hands, he remembered me as well, because I looked very unusual in what I was wearing and I showed him the picture.

[0:32:15.2]

**P:** And he was true to his word and we talked about the Prince’s Trust, the work we do with young people and so on. So all of that together, despite what I hear about the Royal Family, nothing’s black and white, you know, there’s always nuance, you know, there’s always grey areas.

[0:32:31.6]

**P:** But he really, that combination of those two things made a huge difference, huge difference to my work, huge difference.

[0:32:40.3]

**INTERVIEWER:** Oh that’s interesting, yeah, so not only the status attached to that, but perhaps also the networks of being in those space and meeting people, yeah, and it sounds like validation, as well?

**PARTICIPANT:** Hugely, yeah, and that’s important doing this work, you really do need that. Anyone who says otherwise really is not doing the work. It’s very important that you have some form of validation, doing it, you know, so yeah.

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**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah, that particular diaspora and how they operate, their priorities, yeah. And so the last few questions now are more topical but ideally will draw on your lived experience and your observations. So the first one will be, do you think it’s become harder or easier for people from disadvantaged backgrounds to succeed in British society? And do you think this has changed over your lifetime?

**PARTICIPANT:** Well I’d say over my lifetime it’s improved. So over my lifetime we’ve had you know, higher education has opened up, although that’s closed down a bit more now, with having to pay, but there was a period of time where you get a full grant and your local authority would pay. And I have a lot of my friends from university who benefited from that. There are many more schemes now around social mobility as well. There’s a lot more schemes around work experience, you know, all these things that we know if you’re born into poverty you will lose out on.

[0:51:13.8]

**P:** Quality work experience, for example. Having mentoring schemes. There are so many more of those now. So to that extent, there’s more awareness, there’s a lot more support. But I will say that I am constantly shocked at what I hear and say, given that the UK, I’m now a dual citizen, I have been for, you know, I’ve got both passports, I’ve been a British citizen for over 20 years now. I’m shocked that we’re a developed country and I still hear about the disparities in mortality rates in the North compared to the South. The class divide when it comes to nutrition, access to medical care, there’s so many things that come with you having privilege, you know, a friend was talking about her daughter having special needs.

[0:52:05.4]

**P:** Because she’s a solicitor, she was able to challenge the local authority, get a lawyer, you know, many people wouldn’t have that wherewithal and that meant that her daughter was able to go to a good school. There are lots of people who wouldn’t have that access, and I find the intersectionality aspect very upsetting, because it does tend to be minority ethnic communities that are poor that suffer the most. I have a lot of friends who do work around social mobility. I did a massive piece of work on it myself. And I was really shocked by the data, you know.

[0:52:36.7]

**P:** I was really shocked by the data, so yeah, it’s a bittersweet pill really, you know, there need to be more work done around that, for sure.

[0:52:49.8]

**INTERVIEWER:** A kind of mixed- mixed in terms of opening up and shutting down at the same time. And you specified within your lifetime, did you have a sense of you know, beyond that, a sense of the direction?

**PARTICIPANT:** I think technology, to be fair to my son who is militant about technology and what it can do, I do generally see that technology is the leveller. I’ve seen that, I’ve seen people build businesses online. You know, as long you have Wi-Fi access. I see so many people without formal education being able to make a living with online, you know, access to online. And if you’re good, if you can code, and lots of people can, I can’t, but, you don’t even need a degree to be a software engineer.

[0:53:37.7]

**P:** My son happens to want to go to university, but I know lots of successful programmers who don’t have a degree. So technology for me is the way forward, and I see that as democratising so much of this, providing you have the Wi-Fi access, of course, and you’ve got the laptop that you need. But that’s been a definite shift, for sure.

1230 (South Indian woman, Father = doctor, Westbourne Sch. for Girls, Glasgow, Univ. of Essex, No clubs, circuit Judge)

[1:13:10.0]

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah, that gender dynamic. So the last three questions are more topical but you know, draw on your lived experience, your observations, the first one is, do you think it’s become harder or easier for people from disadvantaged backgrounds—whatever that might mean—to succeed in British society? And do you think this has changed over your lifetime?

[1:13:37.4]

**PARTICIPANT:** I do think it’s easier, and that’s not to say it’s easy, but I think it’s easier, and I definitely think it’s changed over my lifetime. Partly because people are much more aware of it and it is considered objectively to be a good thing. Whereas I think before, nobody really thought about it, nobody was particularly interested in it.

[1:13:59.6]

**P:** And you see it, although the law in particular is still very... Is very traditional, it has lots of people from a certain background, you are beginning to see a change, I see it in the people who are around me. There are more people like me, and I don’t mean that from a gender or race point of view, but people who are from slightly more normal, what I’d call normal backgrounds, you know.