

CHANGING ELITES

**How social and institutional change has
altered the processes of elite formation
over time?**

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ELITES ARE A LENS



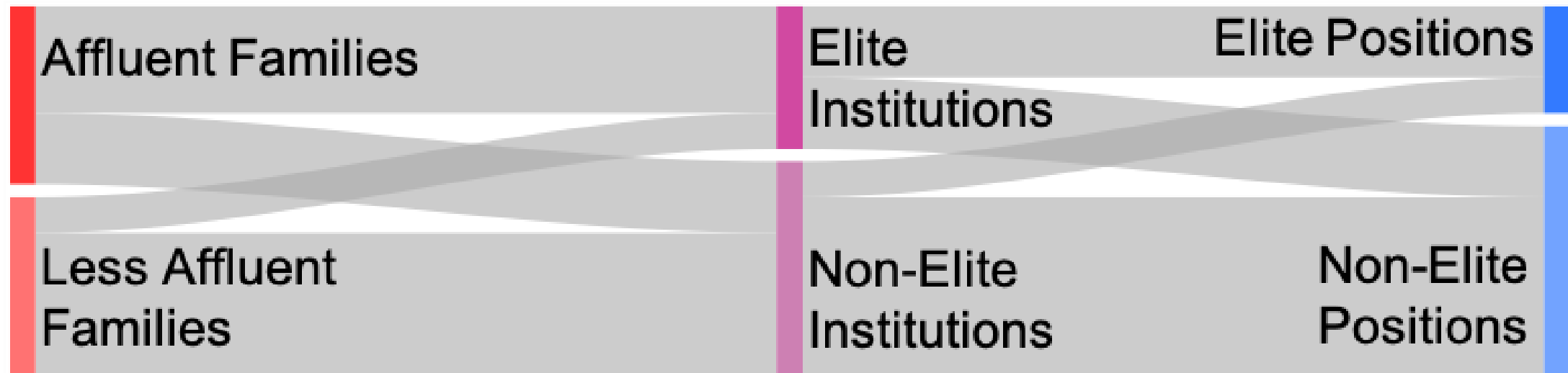
ELITES HAVE CHANGED



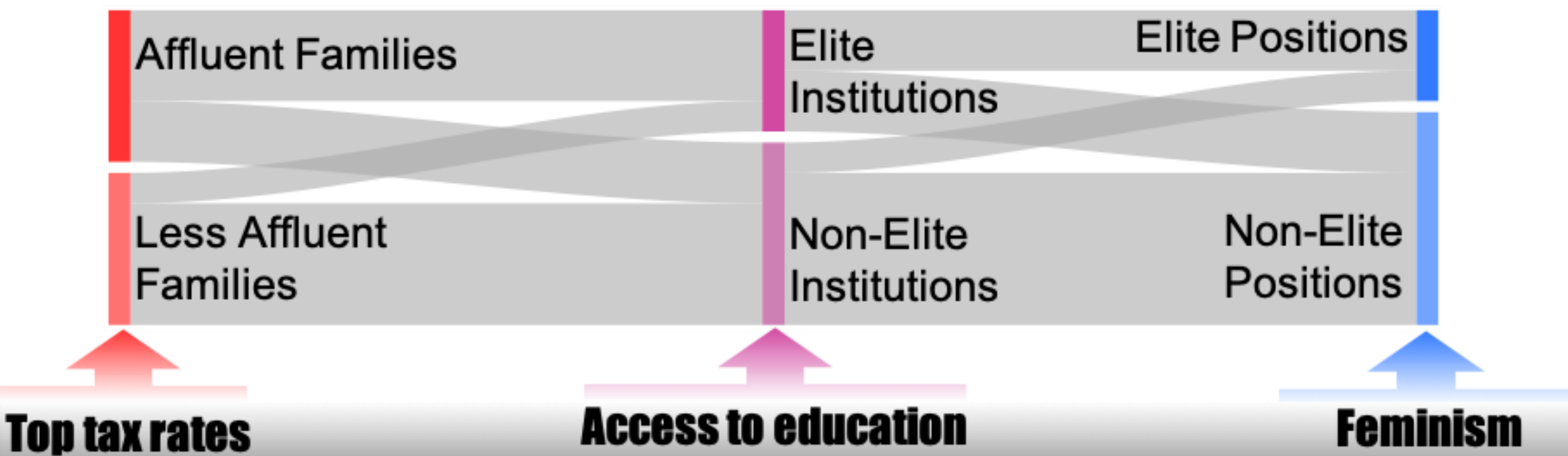


BUT HOW MUCH?

Part A: How has the composition of elites changed over time ?



Part A: How has the composition of elites changed over time ?



Part B: Has social change altered processes of elite formation?

The wider project

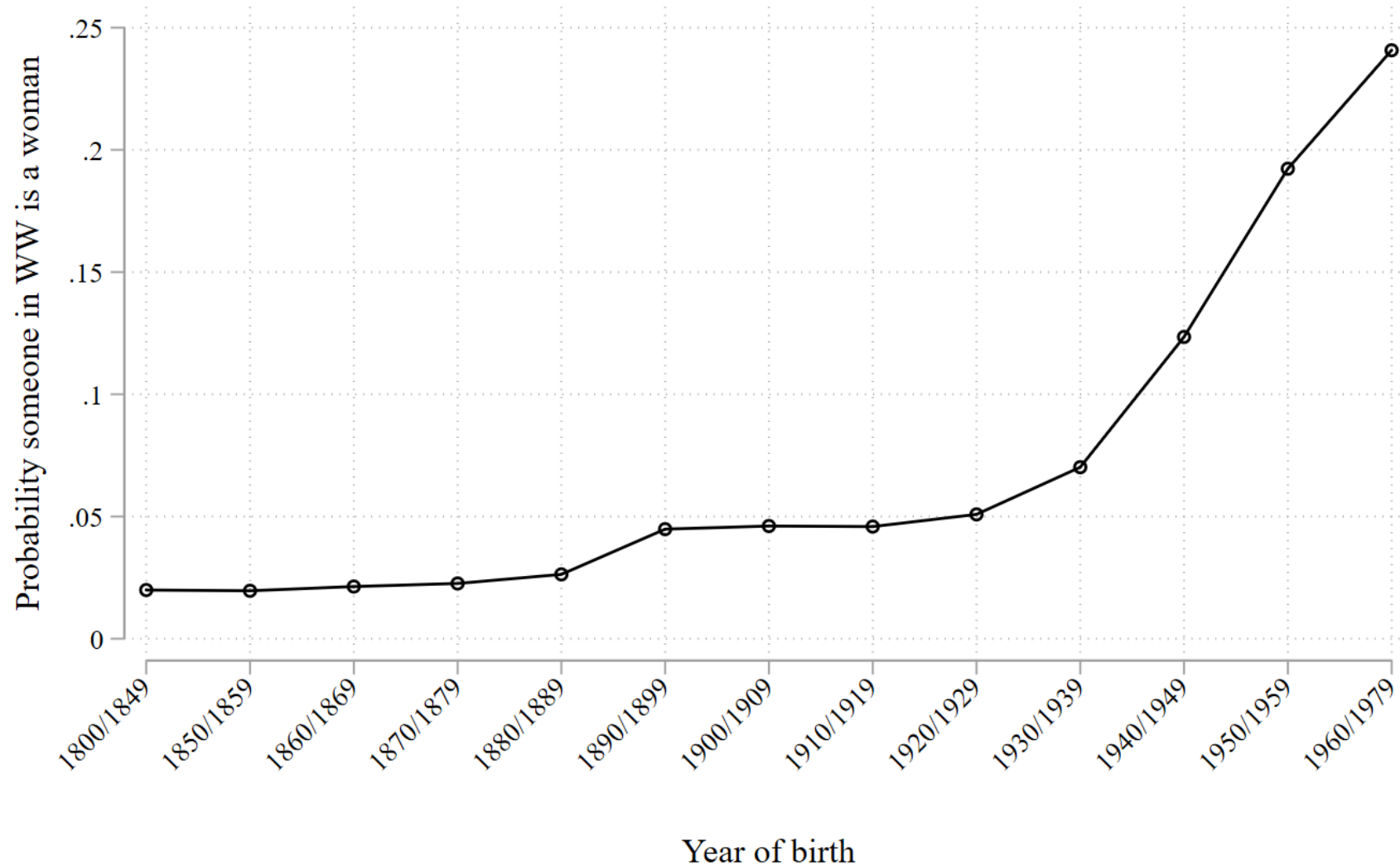
- Funded by an ERC Starting Grant (£1.2m) over 5 years
- Eve Worth (Social Historian)
- Naomi Muggleton (Social Psychology and Computer Science)
- Advertising for a new postdoc right now!
- Two main parts to the project
 - Creation of a historical dataset of the British elite
 - Interviews and life histories



Is there an Old Girls network? Girls Schools and Recruitment to the British Elite



The rise of elite (public) women



The Old Boys' *and* Old Girls' Network?

- Elite boys schools were central to processes of elite formation ('Clarendon' schools)
- But, what role have schools played in women's elite formation?
- Is there a comparable set of elite girls' schools?



Until Mid-Nineteenth Century upper-class girls were primarily educated at home by governesses or in small *private* schools



Their education focused on
'feminine' accomplishments



Concerns that a rigorous academic education would make women boring to prospective husbands, less womanly and was even bad for their health



Rapid Changes in Girls' Schooling

- Rising movement for a better education for girls in c19th which gained momentum from 1850 onwards
- This movement argued for women's education in a manner which refined but did not fundamentally challenge Victorian conceptions of femininity
- An explosion of new private schools founded to educate girls between 1870s and c.1900

WHO'S WHO 2016



168th annual edition

Dictionary of British Elite

Compiled annually for 120 years

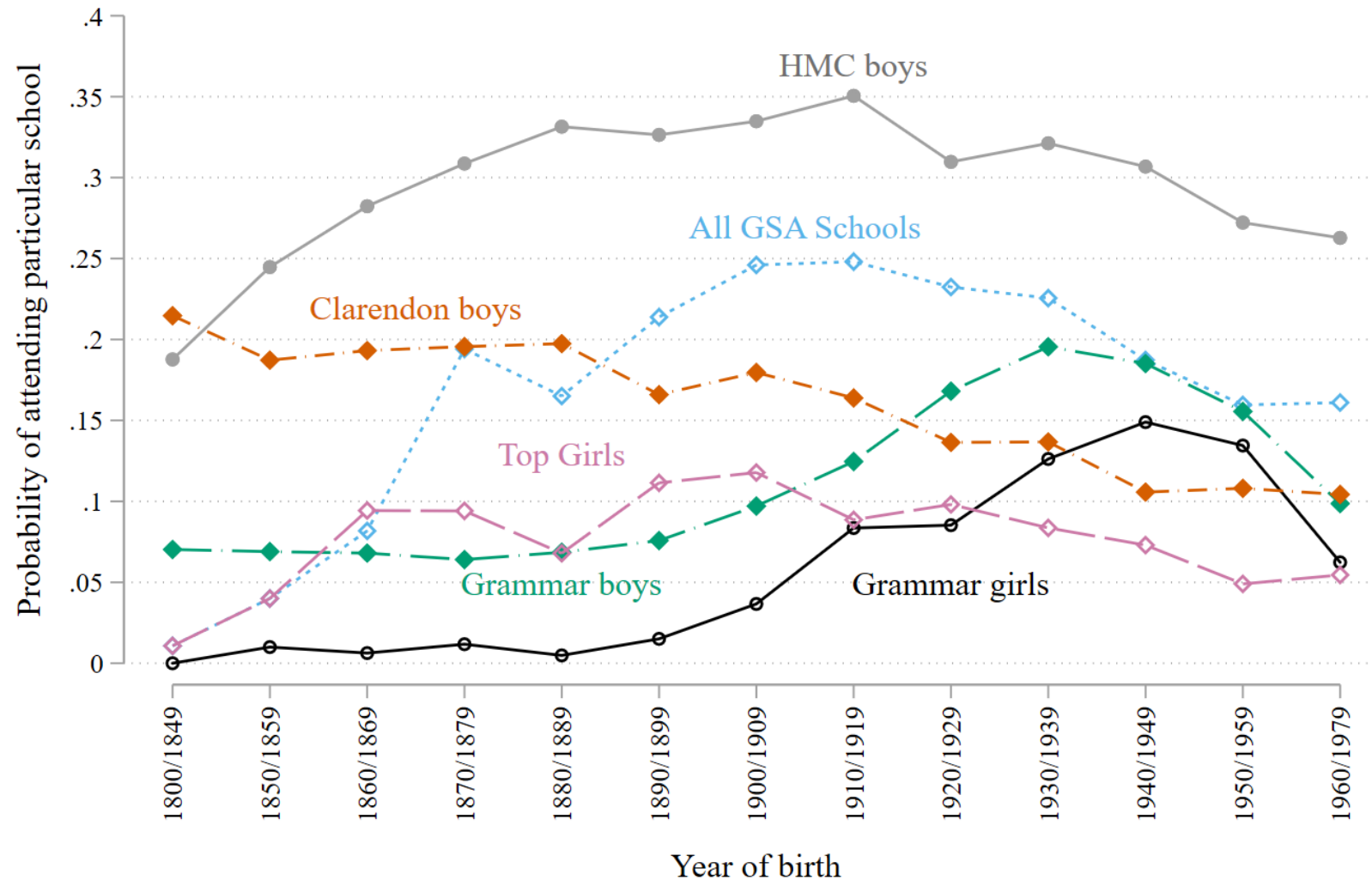
0.05% of UK pop.

50% included based on position; 50% on reputation.

Categorising elite girl's schools

Name of school	Founded	Oxbridge students, 1891-3 ¹	Top tier or 2nd tier ²	Oxbridge students, 1911-3 ¹	Top tier or 2nd tier ²	Oxford students, 1901-79	Top 20 Schools ³	Number of pupils in 1950	Top 5% A Level performance
Benenden	1923					27	Yes	500 ⁵	Yes
Cheltenham Ladies College	1853	10	Top	24	Top	61	Yes	900	Yes
Clifton High School for Girls	1877	4	2nd	8	Top	23	Yes	200	Yes
King Edward VI High School for Girls	1883	5	2nd	11	Top	50	Yes	500 ⁵	Yes
North London Collegiate School	1850	18	Top	10	Top	36	Yes	700	Yes
Oxford High School for Girls	1875	7	Top	11	Top	32	Yes	400	Yes
Perse School for Girls	1881			8	Top	26	Yes	500 ⁵	Yes
Queen's College, Harley St	1848	6	Top	7	Top	23	Yes	500 ⁵	Yes
Roedean	1885	5	2nd	9	Top	33	Yes	300	Yes
St Leonard's, St Andrews	1877	11	Top	12	Top	30	Yes	480	
St Paul's for Girls	1904			17	Top	51	Yes	620	Yes
Wycombe Abbey	1896			12	Top	44	Yes	340	Yes

Elite girls schools are not as successful at getting their alumni into the elite as boys schools

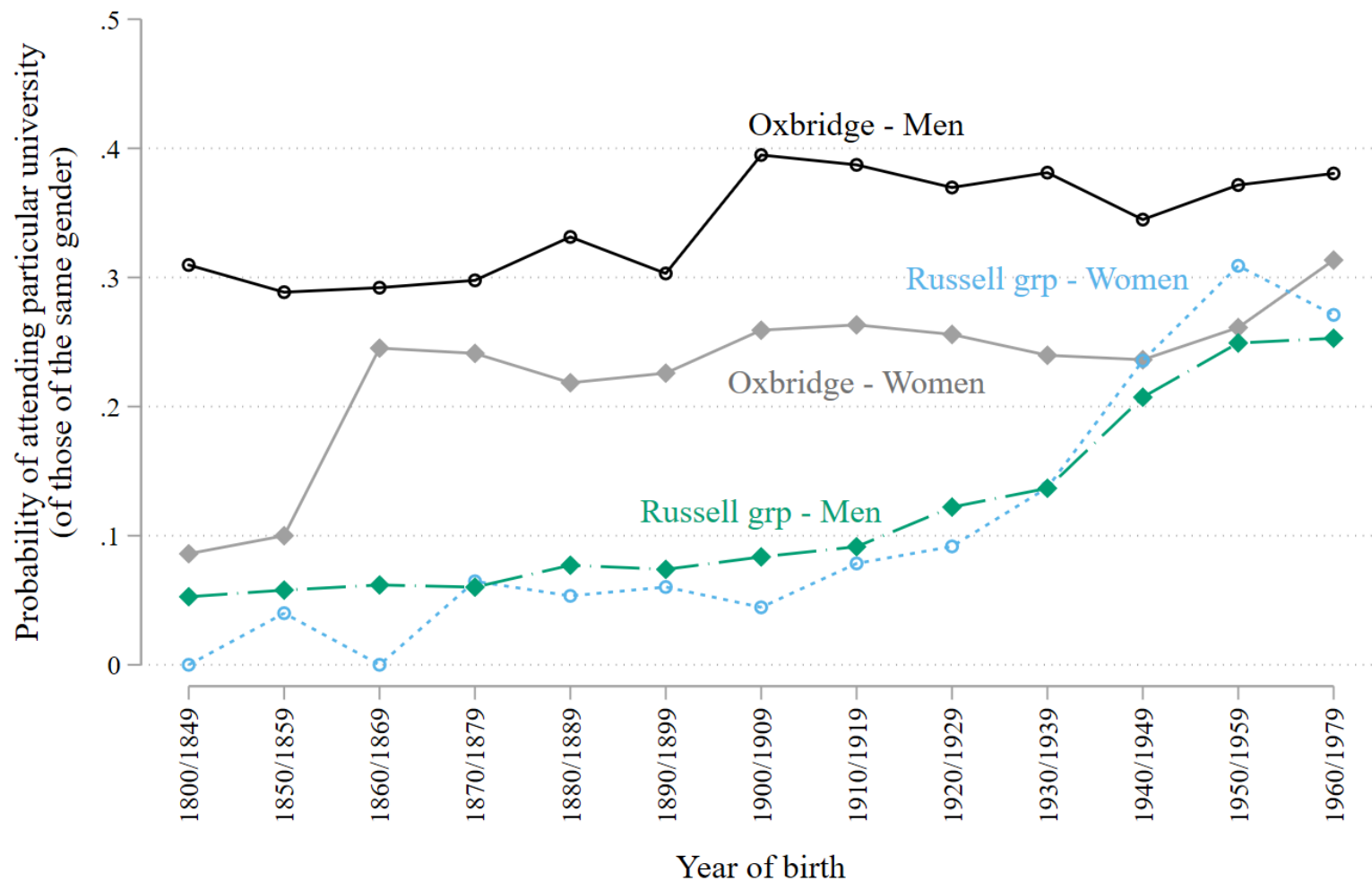


**Chances of reaching Who's Who
(compared to other members of
your gender)?**

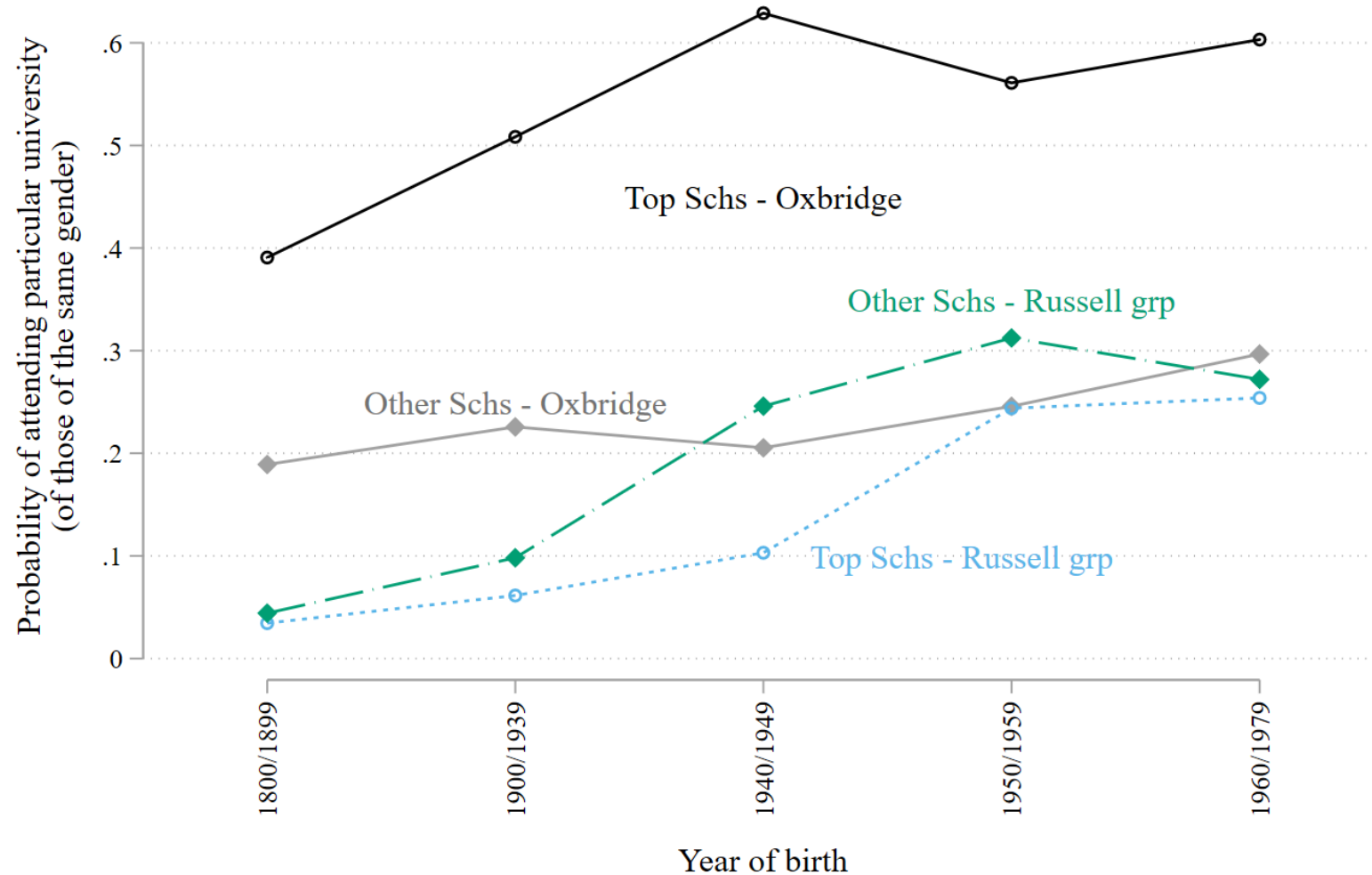
Clarendon alumni = 35 times

Elite girls = 20 times

Women in the elite have also relied less on Oxbridge than men (not true for Russell Group)



But, elite girls' schools did have a strong connection with Oxbridge



Oxbridge or nothing

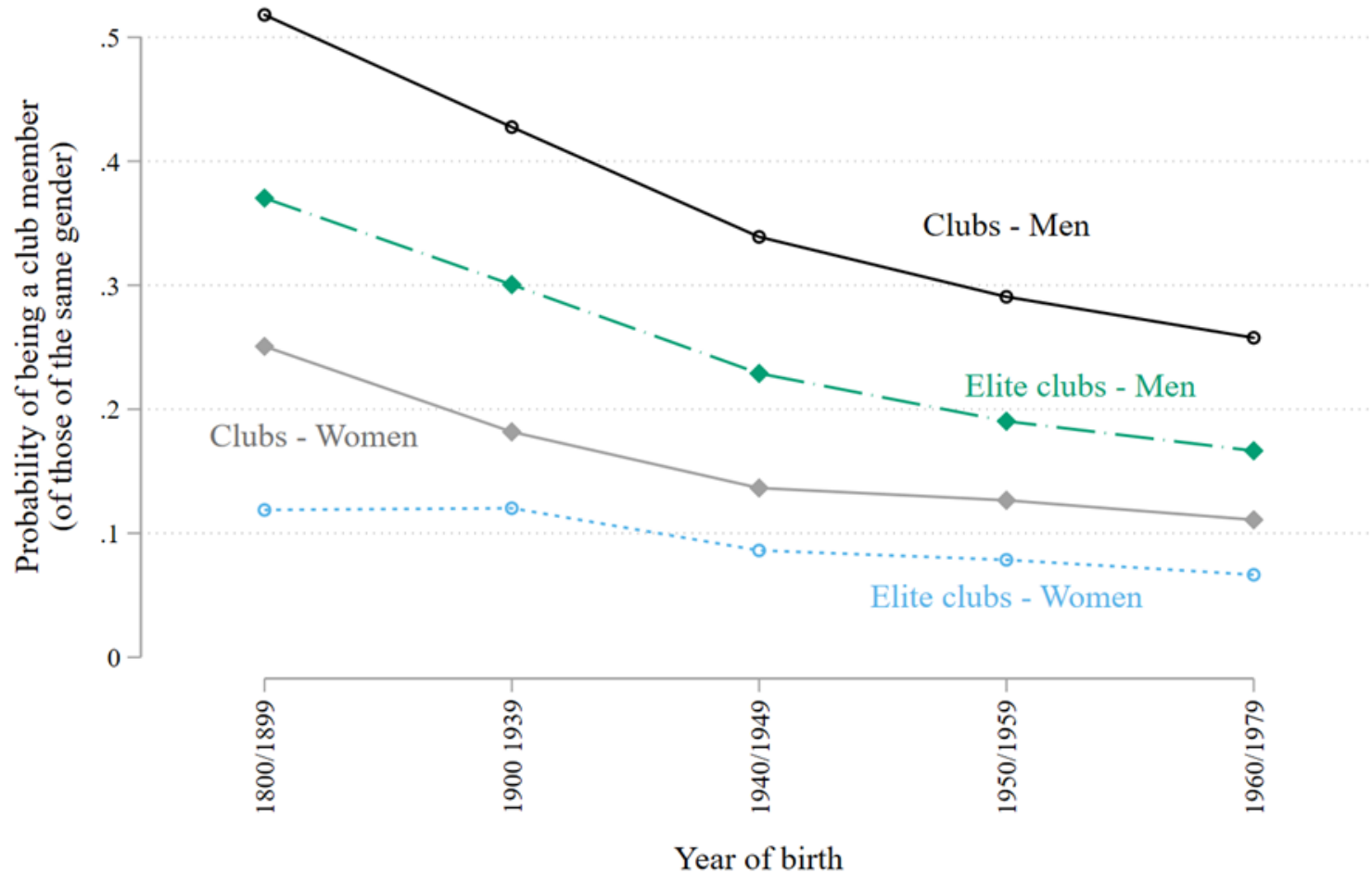
‘My father believed there was “the University”, meaning Oxford and Cambridge’ (Virginia Coates)

‘My parents told me that if I went to university I could only go to Oxford or Cambridge’ (Georgina MacPherson)

Patricia Bergqvist ‘won a major county scholarship and was offered a place at Bristol, but her father refused to allow her to go to any university other than Oxford or Cambridge’

(cited in Maxtone Graham, 2016)

Clubs were surprisingly important for women

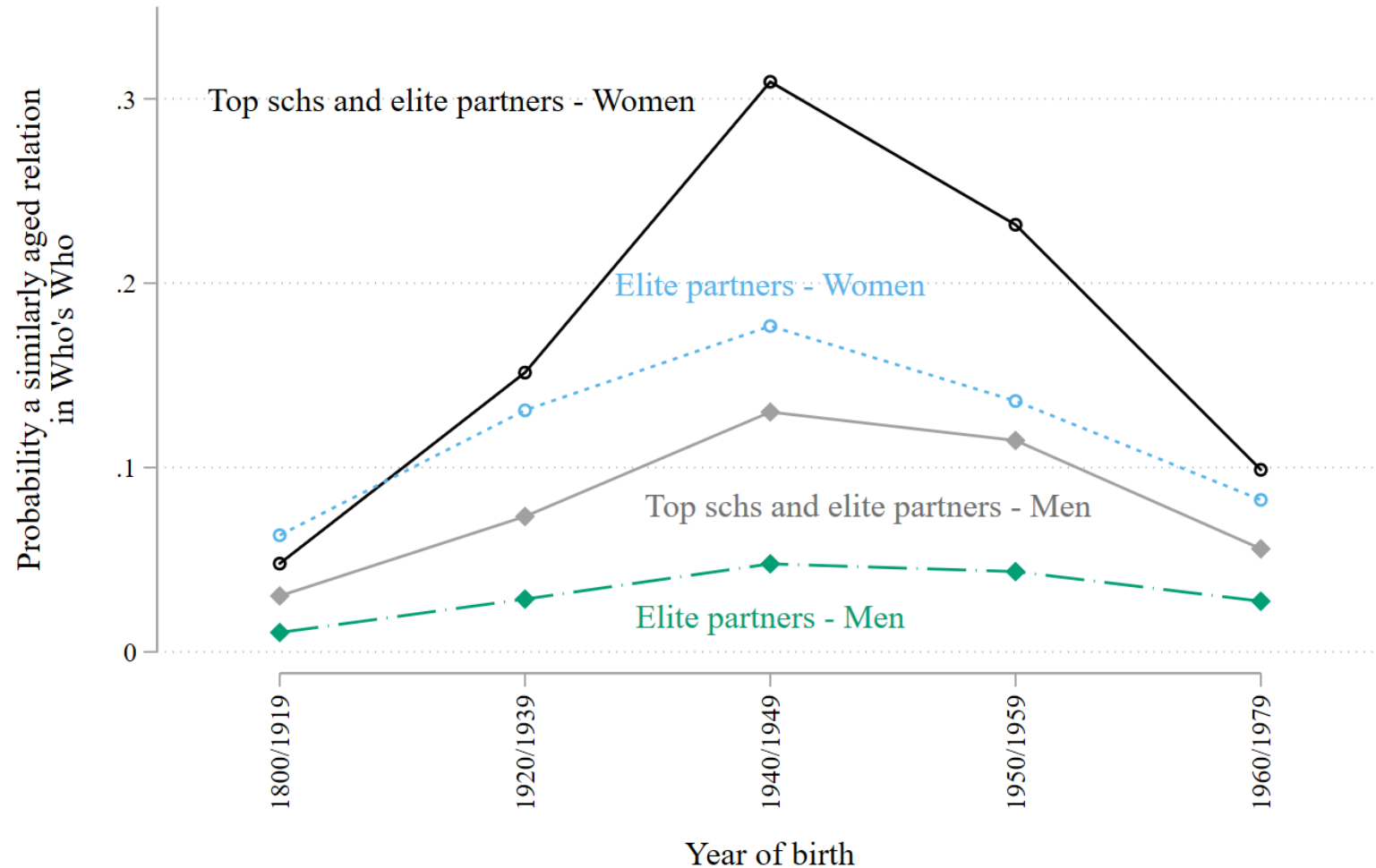




University Women's Club

Founded in 1883 by a member of Girton College, Cambridge University, for "graduate and professional women of varied backgrounds and interests".

Elite women from elite schools were especially likely to have an elite partner





CONCLUSION

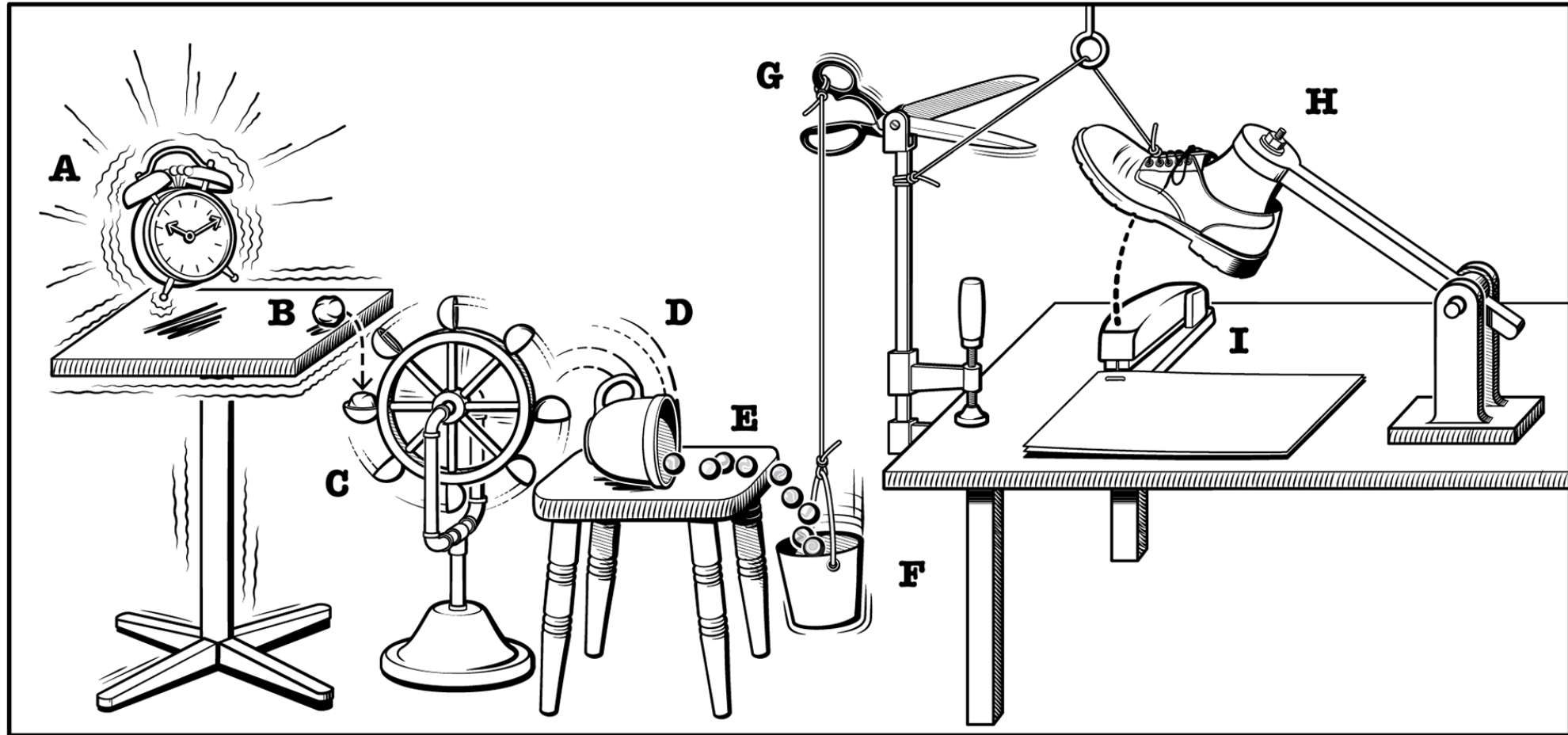


There is a set of girls' schools that we can tentatively identify as 'elite'

**These schools are less powerful than their
male counterparts**



What needs to go wrong (for boys) vs what else needs to go right (for girls)



Life histories of elite women





Methodology

- Women in *Who's Who*, starting with those we identified as attended most elite schools
- Cohorts of women born from c.mid c20th onwards, so far conducted 10 interviews with women born early 1940s to early 1950
- Conducting open-ended life history interviews, and intend to make use of the concepts of trajectories & transitions

Discouragement to attend University in the 1960s

‘What was surprising was a relatively small number of us going onto the sixth form. And a relatively small number of those were going on to university...you take it for granted that the students of an academically oriented school everybody's going to university. Not at all.’

**A High School
b.1946**

‘And it was at the time when there are a lot of new universities. So I thought I'd like to go to one of the more new ones like Essex or somewhere, but my headmistress and my head of house just decided I wasn't University material and so they just wrote that across the form.’

**Public School Type
b.1945**

Oxbridge: GENDER

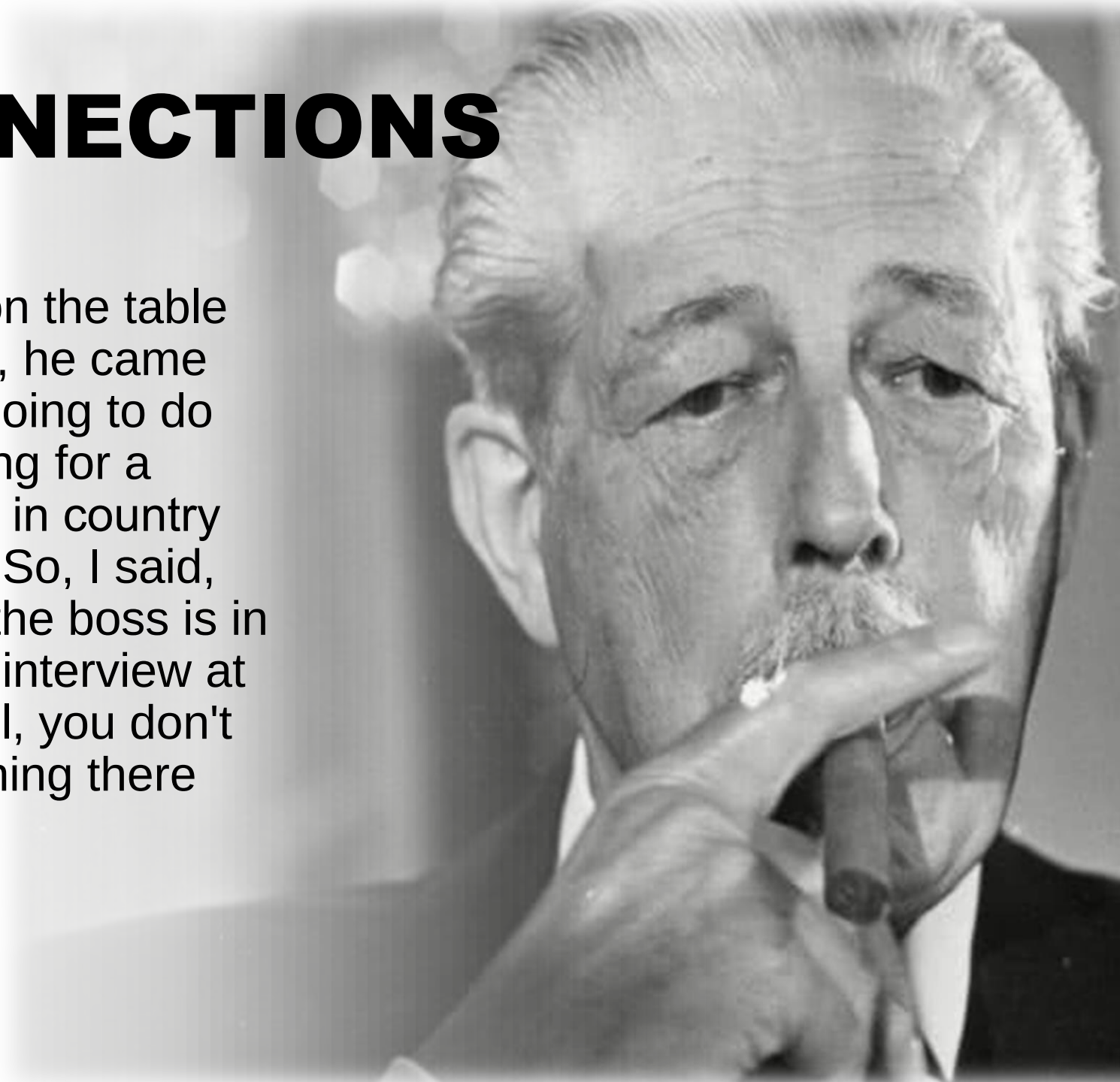
'I remember spending an afternoon sitting in the professor's room talking about Plato. And I was a graduate student, I was, you know, 23... And it was a terrific conversation and I thought, oh, he's hearing me. I was there for a couple of hours and then I said I've gotta go now, got up to leave the room, **and he went the other way round the sofa and grabbed me on the way out.** And I said, I said, ger off! And he said, that's no way to talk to [a] professor. ...I thought what?! In retrospect, I don't think I ever really realized, for ages, how harmful that was. **'Cause I just thought, oh God, oh, I thought I thought I was interesting?** Oh shit, I wasn't interesting at all. It's, you know, it's just that I wear a short skirt or whatever. That stayed with me for a long, long time'

Interview 1, b.1948

Oxbridge: CONNECTIONS

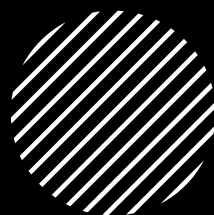
‘...and after I'd finished standing on the table and wishing farewell to everybody, he came up to me and said, what are you going to do with your life? He said we're looking for a geography editor who's interested in country topics and one thing and another. So, I said, oh yes, so he said, well, actually, the boss is in town now, would you come for an interview at the university in the morning? Well, you don't say no do you. The following morning there and then I was offered the job’.

Interview 2 b.1943





Husbands: Direct Mentors



‘The embarrassing truth is that my greatest influence was H who is my husband. Right, so I met him while I was at Oxbridge and he did once a week teaching...He was the absolutely the best tutor. Just really brilliant teacher. I happened to go off with him as well. And we're together now so I can't answer that question in another way, I have to admit the truth, still with the person who was a great influence. He wasn't the only influence but there was some great lessons from him’

Interview 9, b.1945
Husband also in *Who's Who*



Husbands: Staying in the orbit of the elite

‘It was a big decision I gave up [my job], I moved in with my husband and we bought a little house in Cambridge, and he was living in Cambridge, and he later became a Professor in Cambridge. But that was a bit strange too because having had a job I was suddenly a don's wife’.

**Interview 5 b.1946 Husband
in *Who's Who***



Finding New Careers

‘...I took my children who were 1 in a pushchair and 6 rising 7, was taking then down Cork St, it's got loads of gallery's in it, and I just happened to be pushing the pram along. And in the window was an exhibition of contemporary engraved glass. And most of it was shockingly awful. But two pieces in the window just blew my mind, and I thought, bloody hell, isn't this amazing. I just had never imagined you could do something like that with glass’.

Interview 7 b.1949

Lack of Security... and Recognition?

‘I had a very peculiar trajectory...don’t think I have really felt sexism, but this working part time, not getting a proper job, **it’s just going on from grant to grant to grant, I mean it’s insecure.** So I mean I always did it and we always did get another grant, but otherwise you know I never had a period, actually, when I didn’t have an income, until I was forced to retire at 65. But, I’m still working, but the university stopped paying me at 65. It was a relatively brief period I did have a permanent job there’

Interview 4 b.1942

Eliteness Later in Life



Conclusions

- So important to interview elite women and look under the hood of their trajectories into *Who's Who*
 - *Early confirmatory evidence for some of our quantitative work, e.g., partners*
- Their careers (often a term they do not identify with) are far less smooth than we might anticipate and the claim to public eliteness comes later in life

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