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Chapter 2: Psychology and social class: The working class as 'Other'

Bridgette Rickett

Introduction

This chapter aims, first, to focus on the themes central to contemporary research and theory within mainstream psychology around social class and, second, analyse the interrelationship with this present psychology and the history of the psychology of social class. By doing this we will tease out a selection of ways in which the discipline of psychology has researched, theorised and practiced social class and how these ways have accounted for where we are now. Using this approach, we will consider arguments presented by those such as Blackman (1996) that the 'psy' disciplines have a history of individualism which shores up governmentality, regulation and pathologisation where the working-class are concerned and we will provide examples to illustrate this. We will also argue that these psychological accounts have enabled notions of class oppression, poverty and inequality to be an 'absent present' within this murky history. Last, despite this, we are able to review and highlight some examples of mainstream psychological work examining social class which have offered us an opportunity to; first question social conditions and practices and, second, explore how these may contribute to class-related psychologies.

Social Class and the 'Psy' Disciplines: A troubled history

Mainstream psychology and associated disciplines have historically pursued a scientific study of the human mind following a paradigm of positivism. This has been guided by the principles of objectivity, knowability, and deductive logic which have mainly operated from the assumption that our minds and our practices can and should be studied scientifically, in a value-free manner, to pursue an objective, empirical, and knowable truth (see Teo, 2018). Through this individualist philosophical lens, our practices are considered to result from the materiality or 'workings' of the human mind. However, rather than an objective value-free science, the discipline of Psychology has been guilty of assuming, reproducing, and arguably, constructing particular standards of personhood that serve to give value to one category of personhood while positioning others as left wanting. This produces disciplinary benefit for certain, standardised groups in our society. For example, feminists have long argued that psychology has assumed a male standard which locates men as a reference point which women are regarded unfavourably against or simply ignored (Gilligan, 1982). While Black psychologists and critical race theorists have similarly argued that White has historically been constructed and thereby treated as the standard and a 'default' (Richards, 2012) while people of

colour are silenced as 'non-white' or derogated 'other' and in the process raced. Unsurprisingly perhaps, given this history, 'class' has often been a euphemism for 'working-class', therefore the 'other' to the middle-class (Blackman, 1996). In turn, working class people have had their selfhood, lives, relationships and day-to-day practices either habitually neglected in a manner that suggests voluntary inattention, or othered to signify pathology. Taking Foucault's notions of genealogy (Foucault, 1971) or as Blackman argues as 'history of the present' (pg., 364, 1996 – see Chapter three), the rest of this chapter aims to demonstrate that this present pathological other has been often constructed as naturally occurring, biologically determined and outside of normative selfhood. We will argue that this classed production of normal and abnormal personhood has been sustained through dominant discourse in regimes of truth within Psychology that shape the way certain groups have been and continue to be treated. For example, Walkerdine (1990) argues that while a concept of freedom and full autonomy may be central to the normative modern bourgeoisie, 'abnormal', and inferior others are argued to require restrictions on such freedoms as a result of such 'abnormalities'. Therefore, it follows that for those that deviate from the normal and 'natural' middle-class subject, state level interventions are required to regularise (Foucault, 1976) and massify so as to target them for: enforced medical procedures (e.g. forced sterilisation, Stern, 2015); regular quantification (e.g. IQ testing), behaviour modification (e.g. to make 'healthier choices'); and social exclusion and containment (e.g. from asylums to modern penal spaces).

Much of the justification of these ideas in Psychology derive from early 'Psy' disciplines in the late 19th and early 20th century where scholars of 'old' Social Darwinism heavily relied on individualism, essentialism and biological determinism (inordinate attention on the biological, particularly genetic, factors) to argue that the poor were genetically determined to have reduced mental capacities leading to 'abnormal' minds (e.g. Morton, 1849) which drove 'abnormal' practices. Later 'new' theory revised old theory to add on additional biological components to Social Darwinism to posit the necessary existence of social class division. For the recently discredited (see Marks, 2019), yet ever prominent, theorist Eysenck (1973) a pursuit of a social egalitarian society would be unable to override this predetermined association between genetics and social class. Indeed, authors such as Belkhir (1994) have strongly asserted that a late 20th century revival of Social Darwinism in Psychology has produced a discursive device to convince us there is no hope for a classless society since classed differences are natural, biologically determined and evolutionary strategic to the success of humans.

Drawing on these discourses of inevitable and 'natural' class division, modern social psychologists have also argued that similarity with hierarchical systems in animals means social hierarchies in humans formed around class difference are "an inevitable feature of human society" (Argyle, 1994, pg. 63). In the only previous attempt to produce an analysis of Psychology of Class research across the history of the discipline, Argyle presents 'fact' based chapters that present evidence for class differences in our relationships, work and leisure, intelligence, sex, crime, religion, health and happiness. Here we are delivered a relentless narrative of a deficient working class and a psychologically superior middle class. While, on one hand, these differences are repeatedly presented as inevitable, Argyle does suggest that problematic social segregation resulting from such hierarchies, euphemised into a social cognitive construct of 'social distance', could be reduced via class modification. In sum, if 'subordinate' working-class people could be educated into the correct ways of the world, this would improve "relations between the classes" (pg. 63). As Ussher sagely argues in her incisive review of the text: "it implicitly rejects as inadequate or second rate everything that stands as 'working-class' culture" (pg. 465).

Later developments of social cognitive models have also reproduced such discourse. Here, as Argyle argued, working-class people's thinking is characterized as problematic and therefore in need of attitude change intervention to change behaviour, with the failure of such interventions being blamed on the targets who, it has been claimed, are more resistant (presumably than middle-class people) to behaviour change (Lynch et al., 2007), therefore in need of more effortful and focussed attention by researchers. For example, this area of research draws on cognitive processes to understand how people construct their own social world (Bless et al, 2004; Fisk & Taylor, 1991) and applies theories and methods from cognitive psychology (e.g. memory, attention, inference and concept formation) to understand how we form perceptions of others to draw differences between working-class (in this case represented by low SES) and middle-class thinking and practice. As Hepburn and Jackson (2009) have noted, "this internalized or 'cognitivist' focus has become one of the unquestioned premises for most forms of psychology" (p. 176) where a focus on people's inner features and processes reduces social class to individualized personhood, and therefore causes of problematic behaviour are inside people. This model of thinking can be considered a discourse that shapes and constructs who groups of people are. For example, according to Day (2012) it positions working-class thinking and therefore behaviour as problematic (e.g. 'Why do poor people behave poorly?'; Lynch et al. 1997) and as with Social-Darwinist derived research, under theorises the social/cultural aspects of life outcomes, shores up the notion of a middle-class standard of thinking and practice and justifies interventions and governance of working-class communities.

Last, much of this research suffers from the fundamental problem that rather than enlightening us about social class and psychology, it relies on data from mostly men as participants, either as fathers (e.g. through measures of fathers' education level, occupations, mean income etc.) or as young men (e.g. the predominance of using boys/ young men in school as participants), thereby invisiblising working-class women and implicitly assuming a male standard, and arguably a White standard.

We will now review the three main themes in the psychology of social class; inherent deficiencies, the (ir)rational mind(set) and 'poor' practices.

Inherent deficiencies: Essentialising social class

We will now review some examples of the traditional 'mainstream' psychological accounts which view social class in terms of inherent deficiencies or sufficiencies. In doing so we aim to convince the reader that, despite the value free and objective science this research derives from, this literature deviates from positivist science in four main ways. First, there is an implicit and uncritical deployment of ideology such as 'meritocracy' and the 'rational mind' used to reason for inherent deficit in working-class personhood. Second, these assumptions failing to be reproduced in later research and/or found to be established by unrepresentative sampling. Third, some assumptions have been highly contested and, in some extreme examples, found to arise from fraudulent research practices. Last, despite these three problems clearly flouting strict adherence to empirical methods of verification associated with positivist science, this knowledge has not been the death knell we should expect. Instead this research theme within mainstream psychology is having somewhat of a heyday. In addition, we argue that this unrelenting, ideologically driven research programme has had a clear, damaging impact on how societies see and treat working-class people, their families and their communities.

A first theme from this body of research is around the notion of a genetically conferred link between intelligence and social class. Early Social Darwinists within Psy disciplines were very much influenced by Paul Broca (1824-1880), the renowned French neurologist who made major contributions to refining early techniques for estimating brain size. He concluded that variation in brain size was related to intellectual achievement, understood to be underpinned by an ability to think and behave 'rationally'. Indeed, findings were said to evidence the fact that very eminent individuals had larger brains than those less eminent; men had larger brains than did women; Europeans had larger brains than Africans and working-class (here measured through those categorised as being unskilled

workers) had smaller brains than skilled workers. Such conclusions were widely accepted in the nineteenth century (e.g. Broca, 1861; Darwin, 1871; Morton, 1849; Topinard, 1878). Following World War II (1939-1945) and the revulsion toward Hitler's racial policies, craniometry became associated with extreme racist atrocities and virtually ceased while the early research was scrutinised, critiqued and went into disrepute. For example, Gould reanalysed Morton's (1849) work and alleged "unconscious ... finagling" and "juggling" (1978, p. 503) suggesting biases influenced the data.

However, in the last three decades, as argued earlier, the purported link between brain size and intellectual capacity has been having somewhat of a renaissance in the guise of a new Social-Darwinism within cognitive neuroscience. Current researchers, such as Platek, Jeenan and Shackelford (2007) have called for a renewed respect for this early 19th century research. In addition, Rushton (2005) has argued that Morton (1849) may not have doctored his results to show class and racial superiority while Michael (1988, p. 353) concluded that Morton's research "was conducted with integrity" and that it is down to "politically correct" and "egalitarian" conclusions to state otherwise.

Along with craniometry, an additional tool to test social class differences in intellectual capacity has been via the devising and implementing of intelligence measures in formalised tests. Intelligence tests have been under attack since their inception with critics (see Eckberg, 1979) claiming that, first, they measure nothing more than test-taking skills, second, are devised and conceptualised around white middle-class norms and therefore biased against certain raced and classed groups, and finally, are used as tools to other low scorers and justify class (and race) division.

Despite these criticisms, shored up by the resurgence in the brain size and intelligence theoretical work, other researchers have focused on socioeconomic hierarchies of modern societies in Europe, North America, and Japan. They have argued that social class (measured via SES) is significantly correlated with scores on standard IQ tests (Gottfredson, 1986; Herrnstein & Murray, 1994; Jensen, 1998) such as the Wechsler-Bellevue Intelligence Scale (Wechsler, 1958) which encompassed "the global capacity of a person to act purposefully, to think rationally, and to deal effectively with his environment" (Wechsler, 1958, p. 7). The often-repeated finding is that there is a difference of nearly three standard deviations between average members of professional and unskilled social classes.

Researchers argue that differences in cognitive abilities are also correlated with differences in brain size, and both brain size and intellectual ability are correlated with age, gender, race and social class. Despite no such supporting empirical evidence, it is contended that, "the brain-size/cognitive-ability correlations that we have reported are, in fact, due to cause and effect. This is because we are unaware of any variable, other than the brain, that can directly mediate cognitive ability" (Rushton & Davidson Ankey, pg. 151, 2009).

Belkhir (1993) considered at length why such ideas, which she considers illogical, not only persist but are having a renaissance. She argues that what is troubling in this research is that class differences are said to remain fixed. But, this is impossible under laws of genetics; indeed for anyone intending to reproduce social class hierarchies in intelligence capacities, genetics would be "a real foe" (pg. 76) and only social, economic and political policy practices which define a child as intelligent or not as a result of their class could preserve the status quo of social class. Belkhir maintains that current mainstream work on the intelligence and social class correlation by psychologists is best understood as a rise of scientific classism, akin to scientific racism with obvious intersections with race and class subjects. That psychological work on intelligence, is value free, is a "grandiloquent claim" (pg. 53), because it originates in a society that continues to have problems with social equality between the classes, and in an incapacity to distance itself from dominant discourse and classist bound ideology of our history. It is critiques such as Belkhir's from mainstream psychology that strengthen the argument that it is crucial that any account of class and IQ avoids this kind of reductionism that ensures such social equalities are screened out and instead located within individuals.

This renewed focus, critiqued by Bekhir, has had implications for research practice beyond cognitive neuroscience and behavioural genetics. For example, Claiborne (2014) draws our attention to applied sub-disciplines such as educational psychology which still very much carries baggage from the hierarchies of class in the work such as that of Cyril Burt (e.g. 1937) in the UK and Herrnstein and Murray's (1994) The Bell Curve in the US. She notes that when she recently proposed a critical educational psychology group, the most enthusiastic responses were from those who wanted to reinstate such 'old school' views, despite the damage they caused. In Burt's case generations of working-class young people were excluded from adequate education as a result of fraudulent research presented as truth in advice to policymakers who supposed that working-class people were less intelligent and therefore needed less education. One explanation for this renewed interest, in the face of such a murky history is, she argues, as a result of meritocratic discourses underpinning the earlier version of educational psychology that still dominate in mainstream psychology.

Meritocracy, while formally considered to be a social system, is also strongly conveyed via rhetoric, discourse and ideals around the existence of a social system whereby people's success in life depends primarily on their talents, abilities, and effort. The idea of a meritocracy has served the argument that social inequality results from unequal merit rather than discrimination, social injustice and poverty (Littler, 2013). When this is applied to social class, a body of literature seeks to pose questions that either assume the existence of a meritocracy or rest on the theory that being working class is as aa result of a lack of talent, abilities and effort rather than as a result of structural and political inequality.

This body of research seeks to examine, first, whether persons of a working-class (or lower class) background have lower levels of intelligence than their middle (or upper class) counterparts, and second, whether these lower levels can, in part, explain their social, and economic hierarchical positioning in work and life.

A case in point is the highly cited work 'Intelligence: Is It the Epidemiologists' Elusive "Fundamental Cause" of Social Class Inequalities in Health?' published in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology in 2004 by Gottfredson. This work utilises evidence that many measures of health and intellectual ability favour people located in higher class structures in that the scores adults achieve on intelligence tests are correlated with both their socio-economic and health status (e.g. Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). However, while critics (e.g. Croizet & Millet, 2011) argue that this is as a result of social inequalities, it is strongly suggested that these ideas do not hold up since multiple findings indicate an intelligence level grading through the entire class system and that these findings are constant across time and place. The paper goes on to argue that, for example, the relationship between SES and health outcomes are as a result of differences in intelligence which themselves predict achievements and social and economic positioning. By explicitly replacing the notion of unequal social class hierarchies with the notion of an IQ continuum – the 'g' factor – social class is dissolved into graded, intellectual capabilities to achieve and succeed in life. In addition, it is argued that these 'differences' are largely attributed to heritability to succeed and survive through the conferment of intelligence which, in turn, positions people and their families in hierarchical class structures through inheritance of these 'capacities'. In addition, despite the author reporting that much of the research reviewed is based on father's occupation as a social class measure and boys' IQ as a measure of intelligence, while other research is based on young, White male participants, this

issue with such unrepresentative sampling in the research is not only not discussed but the author generalises these findings to people in all class categories.

While a second highly cited study by Nettle (2003) focuses instead on the mechanisms for social mobility (the core goal of 'meritocracy'). This research draws on ideas and findings that performance on intelligence tests is known to be associated with class mobility, with high scorers tending to move up the socio-economic hierarchy, and low scorers tending to move down, so called the 'social slide'. Drawing on much earlier social sciences research, it is argued that intelligence is causal in processes of social mobility by linking occupational attainment with intellectual ability. Rather than resting these ideas on the heritability of intelligence, it is acknowledged here that this process could be argued to be mediated through educational attainment. However, this is somewhat conflated with a reiteration of the findings that IQ scores are the best predictor of educational performance (McCall, 1977) and that there is evidence for a separate effect due, presumably, to the influence of intelligence on performance in the workplace itself (e.g. Waller, 1973). Lastly, the research seeks to question whether, as previous research has found (e.g. Robbins, 1963), a working-class person would have to have higher levels of intelligence in order to reach a given position than someone from higher class positioning.

To investigate these ideas, this research looked at longitudinal data from the British National Child Development Study (NCDS), an ongoing longitudinal study that started following a cohort of children born in 1958 and has conducted six points of data collection since on medical, educational and social and economic information. At the last sample point (in 2000) the sample size was 11.419– some 5000 smaller than its initial sample. It is important to note that this loss of sample was represented by participants fitting a working-class category and the analysis published on this data only presents results on the men in the sample. In sum, without acknowledgement, it tells us about the relationship between a middle-class man's 'intelligence' and social mobility.

The precise analysis looks at intelligence scores at 11 years old (General Ability Test - GAT) with attained social class (through fathers' occupation) at the age of 42 years and 'parent's' SES coded from father's occupation at the age of birth and at the age of 11 for the participant. By subtracting the 'parent's' (fathers) class scores from the attained social class gives a score of 'social mobility'. Results indicated a strong correlation between a father's 'social class' (SES) and the child's (male) attained 'social class' (SES). In addition, there was a correlation found between fathers 'social class' score and his son's GAT score at 11. However, the author argues that the results show that

intelligence test scores for all 11-year olds are associated with class mobility in adulthood uniformly across all social classes. The research also concludes that there is no evidence that (despite the lack of representative data) those from working-class backgrounds have to be disproportionately able in order to reach the professional classes, and they go on to conclude there is apparently a high level of social mobility and meritocracy in contemporary Britain.

Another troubling feature of this body of research is that the location of the problem of a lack of social mobility is placed firmly within working-class/lower-class peoples rather than institutions that we see (or should see) to be responsible for provision of access to good education that are a requisite for educational success and positive health outcomes (Cob and Ruiseel, 2014). This is achieved by an uncritical reproduction of the meritocratic premise that assumes all people are exposed to the same level, quality and context of educational environment, therefore an (in) ability to achieve success within this 'level playground' is and must be due to something inside the working-class person, a 'lack of', and to some authors (see above) an inherent deficiency. However, we know that this illusion of the 'level playground' is just that, and that working-class/lower-class children are repeatedly exposed to lower quality education and socio-economic disadvantage (e.g. Stansfield, Clark, Rodgers & Cardwell, 2011). As Lotte (2012) persuasively argues, even when working-class children do access well-resourced education, they are routinely short-changed, expectations from educators are much lower for them and social class can be a dominant force in the classroom whereby the working-class are 'othered' from the 'ideal' student (who is seen to be middle-class). This may leave working-class children less likely to learn, engage in education and profit from it than their middle-class counterparts (Lott, 2012). When we consider 'intelligence', rather than it being primarily genetically conferred, we know that successful engagement in quality schooling raises IQ scores (Brinch & Galloway, 2012) by cultivating intelligence (Martinez, 2014).

As key authors have pointed out (e.g. Littler, 2013) these highly cited examples of research lead to an elitist "Myth of difference" (pg. 54) which continues to lead to that what Dorling terms to be "apartheid education" where disproportionate amounts of resources are spent on children measured or simply seen to be inherently 'clever', thus reiterating difference and attainment. In this model, people must be left behind, which legitimises social inequality and hierarchy while making the discourse of inequality almost impossible to raise. Lastly, uncritically reproducing the discourse of meritocracy obscures economic or/and social inequities, dissolving them into gradients of talent and inherent abilities and effort leaving it both harmful through legitimatising power and privilege and obscuring social and economic inequality as an explanation.

The (Ir)rational Mind: Troubling Working-Class Minds

Within this second research theme, the implicit and uncritical deployment of ideology such as notions of the 'rational mind' and 'self-control' are used to reason for a deficit in working-class people's minds or 'mindsets'. Within the positivist tradition of scientific inquiry, as argued previously, the construct of the 'rational' human mind is core. While critics in the deconstructionist, poststructuralist, and social constructionist movements have exposed the problematic nature of traditional, modernist psychology's claims to be founded upon a universal rationality (e.g., Burr, 1995; Ferrara & Evans, 1993; 1980; Gergen, 1999), it has traditionally been assumed that human minds possess the rational capacity to deduce, induce, or otherwise grasp objects external to themselves, whereupon they can then determine the significance and meaning of those objects. As we will argue, standing back from one's "self" or situation to gain control is often cited as a defining quality of higher order psychological activities where the self is constructed as battling between rational thought versus (irrational) feelings. These views form shared assumptions within many traditional psychological theories that see some feelings, emotions or 'mindsets' as the cause of not acting as we should (Laird, & Apostoleris, 1996). Greeno, Collins, and Resnick (1996) have termed this the 'cognitive/rational in psychology' theoretical position.

As previously argued, during the 19th century the working-class were marked as the 'dangerous class' (Walkerdine, 1990) and very much understood to exist outside of conventions of rationality, with their bodies and practices as expressions of their dangerous, uncivilised, inferior minds while simultaneously eroticised by the "bourgeois imaginary" (Johnston, 2002 pg. 126). In addition, madness became viewed as a disease of sensibility which produced the working-class 'other', a moral disease which required treatment through the 'morally sanitised' asylum model where, as early psychologists argued, the dangerous classes were rendered more open to reason (Graham, 1858). However, what dominates and influences later eugenic approaches, viewed by some as psychiatric-darwinism (see Maudsley, 1868), was a view that 'bad stock' was responsible for irrational minds and therefore required correction via sterilisation and containment via detainment. Within this positioning the working-class mind and body became as site for the primitive mind and body which lacked the capacity for self-regulation (Blackman, 1996).

It is this history of this classed (and arguable raced and gendered) discourse of (ir)rationality which dictated that those who did not embody the rational required regulation and denial of the freedom and autonomy afforded to middle-classes. Working-class communities have been presented as

deficient in relation to self-control, which in in itself is often theorised as a psychological characteristic of the mind which expresses itself in a bipolar manner (high and low). Within this framing, the (middle-class) valued standard is for high levels of self-control while working-class subjectivities are constructed as being unable to control themselves due to their 'impulses' and their inherent 'drives' for immediate gratification.

Similar to the rise, fall and resurgence of the IQ and social class hypotheses shored up by both a dogged adherence to positivist notions of the idealised rational mind and the uncritical reproduction of the meritocracy discourse, we also now see a re-emergence of a new Darwinism. This can be understood as cognitive rational, where our thoughts are constructed as cognitions and motivations which lay at the root of a rational mind. In turn, this rational mind is romanticised as idealised thinking and argued to serve survival. However, the irrational mind is seen to expose a clash between adaptations designed for the ancestral past and the demands of the present, therefore, troublesome and indicative of more primitive thinking.

There is no better example of the focus on rational, adaptive self-control than the concept of deferred gratification. Deferred gratification is understood as a person's "willingness to defer immediate rewards in favour of delayed, more highly valued reinforcers" (Bandura & Mischel, 1965, pg. 698) and has been regarded as a key factor in the production of the 'successful' (middle-class) individual (see Rook, 1987). Regarded as the pioneers of theory around deferred gratification and social class, Schneider and Lysgaard (1953) followed earlier research (Davies & Dollard, 1940) focussing on "negro classes" and "upper (presumably White) classes" (pg. 153) and argued, perhaps that this research could be applicable to all of the American class system. As a result, they provided the earliest large-sample, quantitative study of a link between being middle-class (measured by SES) and a propensity to defer gratification compared with a lack of delay related to being working-class. Schneider and Lysgaard argued for this ability among the middle-class in all areas of life including career planning (further study versus immediate working), sexual practices (e.g. deferring sexual intercourse until becoming married), and consumption patterns (saving versus spending). Based on a sample of 15,000 high school boys, Schneider and Lysgaard found a slightly higher likelihood for middle-class than lower-class boys to have plans for further study, seen as a propensity to delay gratification. Wood (1998) argues that attention to the study findings are revelatory, e.g. the inclusion of questionnaire items such as 'If you won a big prize, say two thousand dollars, what would you do?' where most selected the responses that they would ``save most of it'' as opposed to ``spend most of it right away''. However, middle-class boys were slightly more likely to indicate

saving as opposed to immediate spending (middle-class 73% versus 68% of lower-class). In addition, while most disagreed with a second item 'In my family we always seem to be broke just before payday, no matter how much money is coming in', the proportion of middle-class participants disagreeing was, again, slightly higher. In sum, these findings do not invite conviction for the delay of gratification for middle-class people, and the fact that lower-class boys are more likely than their middle-class counterparts to say that their family runs out of money before payday is hardly surprising.

A second study (Brim and Forer, 1956) presented results from two questionnaire studies (from one sample of 2700 schools in Connecticut) which showed a small significant relationship between length of life planning measured in terms of weeks/months and years and father's occupational status, and father's education for the schoolboys only. Showing a shift from the new Social-Darwinism of the adaptive rational mind, Brim and Forer did consider this relationship to be a result of both cultural differences, as well as structural conditions. However, as with the pattern emerging, it is unacknowledged that this research tells us only about boys, most of whom were White.

An additional critique is that these supposed findings simply reflect larger discourses around rationality, control and social class, inherent, and reproduced in the history of psychology. For example, Levy (1976) argued that deferred-gratification is a construct widely accepted as a class-linked variable despite the fact that there is no evidence to support it. Not only did Levy find no significant classed differences but in fact working-class boys were more likely than their middle-class counterparts to choose a specific delayed reward.

Despite these critiques, research from this school of thinking has continued unabated. In the 1970s, in a programme of studies aimed at identifying the psychological motivations for drinking alcohol, McClelland, Davis, Kalin and Wanner (1972) concluded that working-class men who expressed the need for personal power and exhibited low levels of restraint were more likely to be heavy drinkers. Drinking, regarded as a behavioural manifestation expressing the need for power, was seen as an alternative to working-class men securing social power through other means such as holding a position of authority/leadership, something which is unachievable due to their lack of inhibition and impulse control. Thus, rather than
considering the structural and ideological forces which shape working-class lives and limit opportunities to secure social positions of power, working-class men's drinking, and low social

standing are understood as resulting from individual, psychological deficiencies (Parker, 1999) thereby justifying the status quo.

Moving on to the 1990s, a similar picture emerges but moves from explicitly drawing upon a biological or inherited basis to a spurious move to social values, 'prosocial' practice or 'mindsets'. For example, Kasser, Ryan, Zax, and Sameroff (1995) used mothers 'nurturing style' and family income (to measure level of social disadvantage) to reportedly find that adolescents whose mothers displayed 'non-nurturant maternal behaviour' (measured by type of emotional expression to child during a family interview) and had low family income were more materially-oriented, valuing financial success more than self-acceptance (e.g. hopes for autonomy), affiliation (e.g. hopes for positive relations with family/friends) and community feeling (desires to improve the world through activism). The authors argued that these young people value conformities more than self-direction therefore paying less attention to their own desires, preferring to seek rewards from external sources. Further, the authors argue that young people growing up in "high-crime, low-income environments" (Kasser et al., 1995. pg. 912) see conformity as a requirement for securing a job and financial success as a way of escape, therefore placing too much emphasis on money "relative to other more prosocial and growth-oriented values" (Kasser et al., 1995, pg. 912). Thus, personal growth, self-expression and self-directed behaviour are ideals which individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds fail to match up to. That those from middle-class backgrounds may have already acquired a level of financial security and material resources that enables them to direct their attention away from meeting basic needs and more towards "growth and self-expression" is not acknowledged (Kasser et al., 1995, pg. 907). In sum, poor and working-class people are positioned as subscribing to a value system and having a 'mindset' which is not only different to socio-economically privileged groups but also inferior, superficial and detrimental to 'self-development'. In addition, this justifies social inequality by implying that working-class minds and value systems are faulty while also obscuring an examination of structural and ideological barriers to social change.

While Rindfleisch, Burroughs, and Denton (1997) examined links between family structure (i.e. 'intact' families vs. 'disrupted' families), levels of materialism and compulsive consumption and found that adolescents from 'disrupted families' had higher levels of materialism and compulsive consumption yet lower perceived levels of household wealth than those from 'intact' families. One explanation offered by the authors was that children from disrupted families may use material objects as substitutes for absent parents. Again, we are presented with a picture of working-class families as failing and dysfunctional. In addition, explanations are reduced to the level of individual

blame (Parker, 1999) where significant social and material inequalities that commonly exist between single- and two-parent households are not considered, nor is the explanation that having less concern with material goods and consumption in more affluent families may be due to having less of a need for such.

Within this second research theme a classed construction of the mind and 'mindset' has firmly steered public policy. For example, In the UK, there has been a significant revision under way of the rational neoliberal subject towards a centering of self-control to ensure "good choices" which has been figured in policy during the last three decades, a revision which is in part resourced by the contingent knowledge from psychology on to behavioural economics (Bradbury, McGimpsey & Santori, 2013). In this refinement of the neoliberal rational subject, conceptions of happiness and success are contingent on rational moderation with motivations for 'bad choices' located in discourses that blame a relinquishing of self-control featured with regard to individuals who are not constituted as rational (O'Malley and Valverde, 2004; Reith, 2004). We suggest here that the costs of this normative subject making fall heavily on working-class communities.

"Why do poor people behave so poorly?": Cognition and behaviour

A final, third, theme of research rode in on the wave of the cognitive revolution in psychology (see Greenwood, 1999), and the rise of social cognition post WWII (see Fiske and Taylor, 2013 – From Brains to Culture) to create a branch of social psychological research which was very concerned with social and economic impact upon lives, in particular illness 'outcomes'. As Billig (2002) argues, rather than being simply scientific scholarship, this tradition of research reflected the climate in which it was produced, e.g. the continued assumption that there is a common, rational humanity was an argument against the Freudian and ethological understanding of the 'blood and guts' human or the instinctive position. However, despite its worthy and welcome focus on social inequalities, Wendy Stainton Rogers (1996) suggests it quickly became wrong-headed by con-current political movements. For example, the rise of liberal humanism was wedded with this new branch of research in a "missionary evangelizing" manner which promoted a type of "true faith'" (pg. 75). This ensured that rather than it being egalitarian, it quickly became profoundly ethnocentric and served to "bolster the power injustices that run through the relationships between the rich and the poor, indeed anywhere where there are differentials of power" (Stainton Rogers, 1996, pg. 75)".

This time, rather than the working-class as social 'animals' battling (and losing) with rational and irrational thinking and practices, selfhood was reconstructed into a 'faulty' information processer, following rule bound thinking models to reach 'poor' decisions that would predict behaviours, soon to be called 'health behaviours' (an euphemism for prescribed, socially promoted behaviours). Alongside this move to self as a faulty processor, psychology became preoccupied with the wider societal health agenda where health came to be seen as the most important feature in contemporary living which impregnated most major disciplines, psychology being one of the most influenced (Crawford, 2006).

As with much of the previous research already reviewed, class tends to be understood and defined in terms of SES determined by measures such as a person's income level (or the income level of the 'head of household' in which they live), occupation and educational attainment. Research into inequalities in health has tended to focus on those of 'lower SES' and has sought to identify the biological, behavioural and psychological factors that contribute to disparities in health. For example, being from a 'disadvantaged background' has been associated with 'negative' cognitive-emotional factors such as hostility, anxiety and depression which have all been found to impact negatively on health (e.g. Hatch & Dohrenwend, 2007). The predominant focus though has been on 'health-risk behaviours', defined as "habits or practices that increase an individual's likelihood of poor health outcomes" (Goy, Dodds, Rosenberg & King, 2008, pg. 314). For example, as with the previous research reviewed, lower SES has been linked to a range of health-risk behaviours such as smoking, poor diet, physical inactivity and heavy drinking (e.g. Wardle & Steptoe, 2003). However, here, inequalities in health status are conceptualized in terms of differentials in individual health-behaviours and lifestyle patterns (e.g. Richter et al., 2006). Put more simply, working-class people, from this perspective, tend to be unhealthier because they do not take adequate care of their health and make poor choices. Indeed, a research paper by Lynch, et al. (1997) is entitled 'Why do poor people behave poorly?'

In attempting to answer this question, psychologists have pointed to and investigated health-related perceptions, beliefs and attitudes as determinants of health-behaviour, signalling differences according to socioeconomic group membership (e.g. Lee, et al. 2008). For instance, research into 'health locus of control' (beliefs about the factors controlling one's health) and 'self-efficacy' (the extent to which the individual feels that they have the ability to perform a given behaviour or achieve a given outcome) has found that people from lower socioeconomic groups tend to hold beliefs that result in them making 'poorer' behavioural choices (e.g. low HIV antiviral adherence;

Halkitis & Palamar, 2007 and more opiate use in older adults with severe pain conditions; Musich, Wang, Slindee, Kraemer, & Yeh, 2019). Other examples include findings that lower SES peoples are more likely to hold beliefs that health status is due to chance rather than being under the individual's control (e.g. Grotz, Hapke, Lampert, & Baumeister, 2011) and that people's health is controlled largely by environmental and social factors rather than personal and lifestyle factors (e.g. Lemyre et al. 2006), the implication being that the latter is not a valid belief. Such beliefs, it is proposed, contribute to a sense of helplessness and discourage efforts on the part of working-class people to maintain a healthy lifestyle (e.g. Lee, et al. 2008). Unsurprisingly then, current health-risk reduction and health promotion interventions target the health behaviours of those from lower SES groups and the beliefs and attitudes believed to underpin these behaviours (Tyhurst, 2015; Shagiwal, Schop-Etman, Bergwerff, Vrencken & Denktaş, 2018). Once again, here, working-class people are characterized as problematic, with the failure of such interventions being blamed on the targets who, it has been claimed, are more resistant (presumably than middle-class people) to behaviour change (Lynch et al., 2007).

Walkerdine (2002) argues that psychology has played a special role in promoting the neo-liberalist notion (which she contends is a fiction) of the subject of choice. Neo-liberalist discourses (Rose, 1999) are said to be widespread in late capitalist societies and emphasise individualism, agency and the possibility of personal transformation. Similarly, Crawford (2006) argues that a good citizen is one that is widely regarded as taking personal responsibility for their health. Such discourses are detectable in the literature reviewed above wherein health inequalities are conceived of in terms of the lifestyle/behavioural choices that (working-class) people make, thereby assuming that they have choices. As discussed, the reasons for or causes of these choices are typically located within the individual in the form of cognitions and there is an assumption that these, along with the behaviours that they are regarded to underpin, can be altered or modified, even though such interventions are often unsuccessful. What becomes an 'absent present' within these discourses (and the literature reviewed above) are notions of poverty, inequality and class oppression (Ringrose & Walkerdine, 2008). There is some acknowledgement in the mainstream literature that class-related stressors (e.g. poverty) and discrimination may play an important role in health disparities. However, such factors have to date been under-researched and even when acknowledged, are typically treated as 'bolt on' variables in an overall conceptual model rather than pervasive and central issues that need to be tackled in social and political ways (see Myers, 2009).

Further, such individualism/neo-liberalism has important implications for notions of responsibility and blame. If we accept that people have a high degree of agency over their behaviours, have choices and can (relatively easily) change, then what follows is that (working-class) people become held as ultimately responsible and blameworthy for any harm that they suffer. A study by Ringrose and Walkerdine (2008), examining 'self-improvement' and lifestyle programmes on British television may be illuminating here. They found that the subjects to be transformed in such programmes are usually working-class women who are depicted as insufficiently self-regulating, excessive and as making unhealthy lifestyle choices which in turn impact upon the health of their children. A central aim of such programmes is often to 'shame' these women into making changes/better choices and they invite voyeuristic disgust on the part of the viewer (see chapter 4 for further discussion of the ways in which such programmes invite 'class disgust' in contemporary Britain). This disgust, we would argue, is bolstered by neo-liberalism. Such discourses may be played out in health settings and in the interactions between health professionals and patients/clients. For example, a documentary on 'teen excess and the NHS' (screened April 2009) featured footage of young (most working-class) people getting drunk and being admitted to hospital as a result and interviews with middle-class health professionals such as doctors. The young people in the programme were depicted as a significant drain on public resources. Indeed, Businelle et al. (2010) describes the primary motivation behind interventions aimed at reducing health-risk behaviours as to "ultimately reduce the burden of [smoking-related] disease" (pg. 262), the implication being that the 'burden' refers at least in part to the financial burden on the public-purse. In addition, the often-repeated argument presented by the health professionals interviewed in the programme was that individuals who engage by choice in destructive health-behaviours such as heavy drinking are not worthy (or are certainly less worthy) of NHS treatment than 'others' (e.g. the elderly). Such views may result in 'class-biased' health-care delivery which in turn can contribute to and bolster long-lasting health inequalities (Poulton et al, 2002).

Within this research, first, there is a widespread and uncritically accepted notion that the working-classes characteristically engage in health-risk behaviours. It is perhaps important to point out here that there is mixed empirical evidence surrounding SES and some types of health-risk behaviour. For example, some studies have suggested that those from lower socioeconomic groups (particularly young people) are sometimes less likely to engage in health-risk behaviours such as problem-drinking (see Richter et al., 2006; Kuntsche, Rehm & Gmel, 2004), possibly due to a lack of financial resources to support this. Secondly, (working-class) people are conceptualized as having choices and all too often as making the wrong ones with regards to their behaviours and how they live their lives.

The causes for poor health behaviours/choices are seen as residing mostly within the individual and therefore modifying these internal factors has been the central aim of interventions. Thirdly, those who engage in health-risk behaviours (and the person who does so is usually portrayed or imagined as working-class) are regarded as a drain on public resources.

Shifting the Blame and Highlighting Injustice

Finally, we present some examples of mainstream social-cognitive psychological research that has explicitly attempted to draw our attention to the impact of social inequalities on our selfhood, thereby shifting our focus away from individual levels of blame and responsibility to societal processes, practices and structures.

Going back to our first theme, 'Inherent Deficiencies: Essentialising Social Class', our first example is a body of experimental work that has troubled both the taken for granted individualist myth of social class as a cause of intellectual capacities, and second, that meritocracy is the explanation for social hierarchies. Instead, this work highlights the considerable impact of stigma and normative ideologies around economic inequities on measured performance in measures such as intelligence tests.

A good example of this work is Spencer and Costanzo's (2007) work that is primarily interested in classism in the classroom, theorised as 'class bias'. Using research that suggests that teachers display classism when estimating their students' abilities, the paper goes on to review a number of stereotypes associated with working-class children and held by middle-class educators and others. For example, educators described middle-class children as ambitious, whereas working-class children were ''low-ability,'' and ''angry and at risk'' (Brantlinger, 2003, pg.90). However, the main focus is on the existence of what is termed 'stereotype threat'. 'Stereotype threat' is predicted to produce poor performance on tests as a result of the fear of confirmation of stereotypes. Spencer and Costanzo report conducting an experiment which consisted of 15 difficult questions from the verbal section of a general intelligence test. The experimental manipulation occurred through making social class salient to the children by the attachment to the materials of a demographic form that asked for parents' income and occupation. The participants either filled out the form before or after completing the test. The former condition produced what the researcher named 'identity priming' which, in working-class children, created underperformance (compared with their middle-class counterparts) if they have their class made salient before the test. However, and importantly, they performed equal to their middle-class counterparts if they had their class made salient after the

test. Therefore, in Spencer and Castano's 2007 work, it is argued that negative stereotypes associated with working-class children result in 'stereotype threat' which produces poor performance on IQ tests as a result of students fearing confirmation of such stereotypes. Worryingly, provision of the kind of demographic information required in the research is commonplace before school and college tests and working-class children who apply for financial support for the costs of tests (common in the US) often experience "humiliating" (pg. 428) levels of attention to these demographics to prove they are poor enough to be eligible. The research concludes that socioeconomic inequalities are one of the "last frontiers" (pg. 432) and we need now to recognise that economic diversity is a factor that relates to achievement. We now also need to find a way to combat such prejudice and the negative impact that this has on lives.

Indeed, Croizet and Millet (2012) comprehensively reviewed stereotype threat research and were so convinced by the potential harm of ideology and practices in everyday testing that they concluded that: "Stereotype threat is the psychological manifestation of a symbolic violence embedded in evaluative settings. We suggest that future research should investigate how ideology (stereotypes), institutional practices (evaluative settings), and behaviour (performance) work together to recycle power and privilege into individual differences in intellectual merit" (pg. 188).

A second example of mainstream psychological work provides us with a head-on critique of the research presented in our final theme, '"Why do poor people behave so poorly?": Cognition and behaviour '. It does so by which directly shifting the focus towards social and economic inequalities faced by working class communities. Here, rather than feelings of a lack of control causing 'poor choices' thereby holding working-class people as directly responsible for their own ill-health, Manstead (2018) reviews the growing experimental social psychological research that has established that differing levels of self-reports of so called low 'self-efficacy', 'locus of control' or a person's sense of control etc. are *caused* by feeling part of a hierarchical social class structure.

This body of research is heavily influenced by sociologists such as Catherine E. Ross (Ross, Mirowsky & Pribesh, 2001) who persuasively argues that communities with high levels of crime, all too common in areas of social disadvantage, shape perceptions of powerlessness to avoid or manage the threat and sense of personal control is eroded, causing feelings of alienation and depression. Following this line of argument, social cognitive psychologists have experimentally manipulated subjective social class and examined the effects on measured different thoughts and feelings around control. They found that those with lower subjective social class status are also lower in their sense

of personal control which is related to a preference for situational attributions for a range of social phenomena. In sum, the theory is that those who grow up in working-class communities are likely to have fewer resources available to them, and this therefore is likely to explain various phenomena, ranging from income inequality to broader social outcomes that *are* beyond the control of the individual and therefore less self-determined (Kraus, Piff, and Keltner, 2009). Indeed, results from four different experiments found that there was a significant indirect effect of social class on the tendency to see phenomena as caused by external factors, via perceived control. In summarising these findings, along with other class-based findings, Manstead (2018) argued that:

"The social class differences [in differing feelings of control] reviewed here have their origins in economic inequality, it follows that redistributive policies are urgently needed to create greater equality" (pg. 287).

These two examples of research, while following positivist psychology and using empirical experimental research and therefore mainstream in every way, manage to resist the kinds of reductionist accounts of social class differences reviewed in this chapter by shifting the focus from individual level deficiencies to social inequalities and making call for social and policy change that readdress such inequalities.

Summary

We have illustrated, through highlighting such examples of contemporary mainstream psychology, that experimental research can be more sympathetic to the anguish, pain and suffering associated with working-class experiences , is able to formulate more complex psycho-social accounts of working-class minds and practices, and can and does seek to locate responsibility away from the individual. However, most of the research we reviewed fails to meet any of these standards.

In sum, this chapter reviewed traditional and mainstream psychological research that has examined the relationship between class (or socioeconomic status) and intellectual capacities, impulse control, attitudes, cognitions, motivations and behaviours. In doing so, we can now conclude that such accounts have not just obscured social and economic inequalities by leaving these unexamined, but have also served to rationalise and justify these by suggesting that they are the natural and inevitable consequence of differences in intelligence, minds, motivations, rational decision-making and so on and that social mobility is not fully possible for the 'faulty' working-class. We also argued that these accounts, some increasing in popularity, often derive from poor science, are generalised

beyond their mainly male (and often White) samples and uphold politically conservative ideals such as meritocracy, thereby challenging the positivist ideal that empirical, mainstream work in psychology is politically neutral and objective.

We also contend that the reproduction of such meritocratic and neo-liberalist discourses around class leaves working-class people to be regarded as either a drain on or waste of public resources or as deserving of their social and economic positioning. This, along with notions of individualism and agency, bolsters classism (see Tyler, 2008). In addition, this mainstream psychology has played a pivotal role in this and rather than these ideas abating, in some instances they are having a renaissance (e.g. meritocracy and new Darwinism).

It is unclear, and perhaps uncharitable to conclude that psychologists have intentionally set out to blame vulnerable people and place sole responsibility for social, economic or health outcomes on to individuals. However, as Day previously concludes in her analysis of health psychology and class (2012) "critical psychologists are concerned with the outcomes or consequences of theorising, empirical claims and actions (for example, interventions) rather than the intentions of individual psychologists." (pg. 65).

We conclude that these potential outcomes, like the discourses that shore them up, have increased in popularity, and, therefore potentially pose more danger to working-class communities now than they have in more than a century. These dangers are both from the impact of policies aimed towards them and through the day-to-day practices towards them that are produced and sustained by such governmentality. For example, buttressed by classist ideology, or as Belkhir termed 'Scientific Classism', that has saturated much of the research reviewed in this chapter, just four years ago the UK publication, The Spectator (2016) warned us of the "The chilling return of eugenics" in the UK. More recently we've seen, heard and read about government officials openly calling for a return to eugenics through policy ideas such as forced contraception on working-class young people (UK Government Adviser Andrew Sabisky, reported in 17/02/2020, The Guardian).

Finally, having reviewed the worst and best of traditional psychological research and theorising around social class (or socio-economic status), in our next chapter, Chapter 3, we will now turn to what critical social psychology is and what it has to offer us in our understanding of social class.

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