

TWKC Feeling Class

Affect and Culture in the Making of Class Relations

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① INTRODUCTION

New understandings have developed recently in the analysis of class, emerging from understandings of culture and affect. These understandings expand the ways we recognize and make sense of class relations; they ask: what does the concept of class “do” and how does it do what it does? These are dynamic and performative understandings of class in the making that range in scale from the global to the intimate. They ask: how has the term class come into effect, by and for whom, and to whom does it apply? What purpose and interests does classification serve? And what significance does it hold for our understandings of social relations more generally?

For instance, affect is a highly recognizable but little discussed aspect of class relationships: fear, anxiety, and disgust have filled categorizations of class. The fear of the urban outcast or the contagious woman in the history of the UK or the “fear of the black planet” in the US have long been mobilized to generate political campaigns. Sonia Rose (1999) in a detailed historical analysis has shown how in moments of national economic crisis the figure of the “contagious dangerous woman” has been used to contain projections of British national anxiety. More positively, Barack Obama’s electoral success in 2008 was put down to the mobilization of hope, a campaign built around affect that is now mobilized in the UK in “hope not hate” mobilizations against racism. These mobilizations of hope took a very different form from the affects generated from class relations detailed by Tom Frank’s (2004) analysis of the G. W. Bush presidential campaign, which worked to shape the resentment generated from unemployment and lack of hope into a national

resentment of the figure of the privileged liberal. Moreover, Linda Williams (2001) demonstrates how the affective technology of melodrama has established the tone and the terms by which race relations are understood in the US. Here I will argue that affect and culture shape how class relations are made, known, and lived in social encounters.

I begin with a brief outline of Bourdieu's (1985, 1987, 1989) use of capital metaphors to understand how people can move through social space. I then point to the "doing" power of the term class, outlining its different historical trajectories to show how class is made to perform through analysis. Showing how it is always produced through associations with discourses of symbolic value and figures that condense moral value I then suggest that if we add affect to understandings of composite value (economic, cultural, social) we increase our capacity to understand class relations.

Bourdieu demonstrates how class is shaped by access to different capitals which over time become literally embodied, that is lived as bodily dispositions: our bodily movement, speech, and actions (especially dispositions such as confidence and anxiety) are formed by class (and I would add gender, race, and sexuality) over time. Bourdieu develops a model of social topography to demonstrate how relative positions and the *relations* between these positions constitute forms of power, enabling bodies to move in social space. Bourdieu identifies four main types of capital: economic, cultural, social, and symbolic:

- *Economic capital*: this includes income, wealth, financial inheritances, and monetary assets: what one owns.
- *Cultural capital*: this can exist in three forms: in an embodied state, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and the body; in the objectified state, in the form of cultural goods; and in the institutionalized state, resulting in such things as educational qualifications. Bourdieu defines cultural capital as high culture.
- *Social capital*: resources based on connection, networks, and group membership: who you know, used in pursuit of favor and advancement.
- *Symbolic capital*: the form the different types of capital take once they are perceived and recognized as legitimate. Legitimation is the key mechanism in the conversion to power. Cultural capital has to be legitimated before it can have symbolic power. Capital has to be regarded as legitimate before it can be capitalized upon, before its value is realizable.

People are distributed in social space according to: the global *volume* of capital they possess; the *composition* of their capital; *evolution* of the volume and composition according to their *trajectory* in social space. It is not just the volume and composition of the right sort of cultural capital (for national belonging, for instance), but it is also *how* one accumulates one's capital that is significant to its capacity to be converted. Bourdieu distinguishes between those who only have to *be what they are* as opposed to those who *are what they do* and, therefore, have to constantly prove that they are capable of carrying symbolic value.

Bourdieu also notes how proximity to necessity is one of the key ways in which we measure class relations: proximity to life (life expectancy and mortality rates are

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probably the most extreme example of unequal class relations), but also proximity to basic resources such as food and water, and proximity to health care: see Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) for an extended analysis of global class inequalities. Thus class relations range in scale through possibilities for accumulation: for instance the rich North is able to accumulate wealth based on the dispossession of the poor South, what David Harvey (2007) calls "accumulation by dispossession" which can be seen to shape global as well as national class relations, as well as the micro-scale of bodily dispositions and how we encounter others. The possibilities for accumulation of value to the person begin at birth, as studies of childhood show, with middle-class parents trying to load their children with as many forms of capital as possible: Annette Lareau (2003) describes this process as one of "concerted cultivation," in opposition to those denied access to forms of capital and/or who cannot compete for limited resources, or are not interested in "growing" their children in ways that subject them to continual educative and improving activities (Lawler 2000; Gillies 2007). The pressure on middle-class "mums" to provide extra-curricular activities points to the significance of the accumulation of capitals over time.

Forms of cultural taste are another mechanism by which class differences are established, enabling one group to claim rights to adjudication over what counts as taste and what is considered tasteless. In his classic study of "distinction" in France in the 1970s, Bourdieu details – quantitatively and qualitatively – how understandings of taste are established, institutionalized, paralleled by the education system, and maintained by those who are able to use access to symbolic power to preserve and reproduce their interests. Access to high culture enables people to develop dispositions and knowledge over time (refined and distanced contemplation for instance as opposed to expressions of direct hedonism). The ability to accrue high culture dispositions depends on exposure to social spaces, what Bourdieu calls "fields," abstract spaces in which the forces of history cohere, where battles for value and legitimacy are fought and where different forms of capital are converted (or not) into value over time. The symbolic system creates, circulates, and maintains distinctions from the perspective and interest of those with power (symbolic capital), enabling them to accrue value to themselves whilst keeping others contained in social spaces with little prospect of conversion, unable to access the capitals that have value to enable social movement to occur. Judgments of taste and classification are considered by Bourdieu to be acts of symbolic violence: "If there is any terrorism it is in the peremptory verdicts which, in the name of taste, condemn to ridicule, indignity, shame, silence . . . men and women who simply fall short, in the eyes of their judges, of the right way of being and doing" (1986: 511).

Social encounters are dialectical movements of value, whereby one may establish one's value at the expense of another (micro movements of accumulation by dispossession). Measures of cultural distinction also reveal how national culture shapes understandings of class relations. "Taste" in France is premised on cultural judgments reproduced by those with power, whereas in the US, as Michele Lamont (1991) demonstrates, it is less a matter of cultural judgment and more a matter of money that establishes national cultural worth. Interestingly, Bourdieu also considers these class-based taste judgments to be shaped by understandings of space: distanced speculation is (following Kant) a sign of good taste whereas immediate

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pleasure is considered to be vulgar. Proximity and distance inform very different understandings of scalar class relations in Bourdieu's class analysis.

② CLASS PERFORMATIVITY

Drawing on the work of linguist Austin (1962) and making an argument similar to that of Judith Butler (1999), about how the term gender and the classification "woman" and "heterosexual" come into effect, Pierre Bourdieu (1992) argues that theory is performative, bringing into effect that which it names, hence class theorists bring into effect that which they name: class. This is not to suggest that relations of inequality only exist when they are named, rather that they are only known, recognized, and shaped in particular ways when given a name by academics (and others if circulated through popular culture, or used to organize resistance, as shown by E. P. Thompson, the English historian). The term class has very different historical trajectories and is highly disputed. Is it a term that was generated by what we now know to be "the working class" or "the middle class" (that is, did they generate the term to describe their own experiences)? Or was it a term applied to people that was not recognizable to those whom it was meant to describe? Or does it matter if people recognize the term, if it describes the relations they live? Bourdieu maintains that it is important to challenge descriptions that consist in treating classes on paper as real classes. Metaphors, he argues, allow us to move beyond the alternatives of realism and nominalism, enabling us to make abstractions about social relations, to think about how they are "made." He notes:

The title of E. P. Thompson's book *The Making of the English Working Class* must be taken quite literally; the working class such as it appears to us today through the words meant to designate it, "working class", "proletariat", "workers", "labour movement", and so on, through the organizations that are supposed to express its will, through the logos, bureaux, locals, flags, etc., is a well founded historical artefact. (Bourdieu 1989: 16)

Thus the term "class" is performative, it brings perspectives, interests, and people into view in particular ways. As a performative classification it does things in two ways: first, to confirm the perspective of the classifier and, second, to capture the classified within discourse. As Bourdieu notes, "nothing classifies somebody more than the way he or she classifies" (1989: 19).

What is significant is the longevity of the term (stretching back to the Ancient Greeks, as Ste. Croix [1981] notes), is the way it is used as a way of explaining all social organization, how it is almost impossible to extract from the entwined condition of its utterance, how it is intimately tied to nation, sexuality, race, and gender, and how it has been known through proximity to labor. As a term like all other terms, it codifies histories and interests within its definition (Skeggs 2004). This is not to say that it is purely discursive, for it is a term that has very powerful material effects. As Mary Poovey (1995) notes, abstractions like "minorities" (however defined) receive differential symbolic and material treatment according to prevailing assumptions about their relative value to society as a whole.

③ DIFFERENT HISTORICAL TRAJECTORIES

There are two radically opposed trajectories to the historical emergence of the term class. The first, Marxist, prioritizes the role of exploitation and struggle in the making of classes and hence social relations more generally; the second focuses on class hierarchies and status without reference to struggle and exploitation (see Canadine 1988) and is recognizable in studies of "social stratification," or Weberian understandings of class. For Marxists, class has a number of distinctive features: class is a *relationship* that is always relative to other groups and the relationship is *antagonistic* because it is always based on exploitation and control. The antagonism is always formed in the process of *production*; and class is an *objective* relationship. It does not matter what people think about their location (subjective class position, identity); rather, it is about the location of people according to economic relationships (Callinicos & Harman 1987). And just because somebody believes they are middle-class does not mean that they stop being exploited through the economic system they inhabit, capitalism.

For Marx it is the bourgeoisie that calls into existence the modern working class – the proletarians – "who live only so long as they find work and who find work only so long as their labour increases capital" (Marx & Engels [1848] 1968: 51). The proletariat is "the special and essential product of the bourgeoisie." Class, for Marx and Engels, is a description of the conditions of existence of labor under capitalism.

This perspective could not be more different from the other major trajectory which concerns itself with the precise nature of classification, employment "aggregates," status, and how best to conceptualize occupational groups in a hierarchical order. It began in 1665 with William Petty, who set out to calculate the value of the "people" of England for taxation purposes. Petty is attributed with devising what is now known as the "political arithmetic" tradition of class analysis in which (associated with hierarchy rather than class struggle) the person was conceptualized as a quantifiable, knowable, hence *governable object*, tightly linked to national concerns and formation (Poovey 1995). James Thompson documents how, throughout the eighteenth century, there was a "drive towards an abstract and consistent and therefore predictable representation of exchange, that is, toward (new) scientific, quantitative, and mathematical modelling" (1996: 28). These processes involved the quantification of labor, making the person an object of calculation. Counting the worth of persons became institutionalized in the eighteenth century through the machinery of the New Poor Law (1834) which generated an avalanche of new information and mandated more and more far-reaching fact-gathering, inspection, and legislation.

The continued emphasis on measurement and calculation deflects attention away from the reasons for inequality into a methodological debate about how best to measure, into scientific calculus, as if divisions were the result of mathematical formulae. The significant difference between the two main perspectives is thus cause and effect: the first attempts to explain why classes come into effect, whilst the other measures the end product. However, central to both is work: labor as a force which shapes all relations and work as organized into occupations for measurement. Both

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definitions have been subject to feminist critiques which showed, first via Marxism, that paid labor was only one way in which capitalism operates, pointing instead to the significance of domestic labor for social reproduction, thus sustaining exploitation; and second, via feminist stratification critiques, that measuring women's social class on husband's and father's occupation was inadequate (see Stanworth 1984; Crompton 1993).

There is, however, one element still missing from the historical performative production of class, which is morality and how it was articulated culturally. Definitions of class often encode ideas of a person's moral worth. There have been certain periods when class was definable *primarily* by economic, monetary, and market value; at others it was defined in relation to moral behavior. During the 1850s and 1860s, for instance, there was less talk of working class and middle class, and more of deserving and undeserving poor, of "respectable artisans and 'gentlemen', as emphasis was placed on moral rather than economic criteria" (Crossick 1991). It was in the play for power and legitimation that morality became central to defining class. Adam Smith (1757), the proponent of political economy, for instance, advanced the concept of self-interest (and its according accrual of wealth) as a moral imperative, and the emergent bourgeoisie were concerned to legitimate their mercantile interests by differentiating themselves from the degenerate behavior of aristocrats via the use of religious justification.

However, it is not until the early nineteenth century that the term "class" appears regularly in discourse in England and is consolidated in descriptions of society. Some theorists argue that the term class emerged to coincide with the rise of the "middle sort" (Williams 1988). Dror Wahrman (1995) maintains that the crucial moment for fixing the idea of the middle class was around the time of the 1832 Reform Act when the need for political representation allowed the middle class to be consolidated as a group. Hence political interests brought the term into effect. Terry Eagleton notes how the middle class used the expression of "taste" and the generation of distinctive cultures: "the ultimate binding force of the bourgeois social order [was] habits, pieties, sentiments and affections" (1989: 22) to which they attributed higher moral value to legitimate their social position. The claims to high culture and taste continue to be a mechanism for promoting and legitimating distinction and enabling the recognition of class positions (see Bourdieu 1984 [1979]).

The emergence of the term "working class" is a similarly contested and nationally specific debate. Lynette Finch (1993) documents how, in Australia, the idea of class emerged from the middle-class colonial welfare administrators as a category to define the urban poor. Carrying with them British imperial definitions, Finch illustrates how they developed their own interpretations and categorizations that were particularly gendered and moral, conceived through the interpretation of the behavior of women of urban slums. In an equally detailed historical analysis of British imperial discourse, Ann McClintock (1995) suggests that the concept of class has a historical link to more generalizable "others," who were known through the concept of degeneracy, a term applied as much to classifying racial "types" as to the urban poor.

Domestic servants, for instance, were often depicted using the racialized imagery of degradation – of contagion, promiscuity, and savagery. As Friedrich Engels notes of the working class: "a physically degenerate race, robbed of all humanity, degraded,

reduced morally and intellectually to bestiality" ([1844] 1958: 33). What we see in Engels' comment is how a description, used in his case to advocate for social justice, is limited by the prevailing discourses of his time, which semiotically work to attach degeneracy to the working classes. In the bourgeois claim for moral legitimacy, domestic servants, in particular, became the projected object for dirt, and more explicitly were associated with the care of back passages, and the generalized poor came to be represented as excrement. Osbourne's pamphlet on "Excremental Sewage" in 1852 represents the working class as a problem for civilization, as sewage that contaminates and drains the nation (Yeo 1993). Moreover, hygiene became one of the first discourses to rely on marketing and commodities as a solution to the threat to the nation posed by those figured as decadent, degenerate, and unhygienic: washing the nation clean offered a defense to the threatening pollution of race, class, gender, and sexuality. Dirt and waste, sexuality and contagion, danger and disorder, degeneracy and pathology, became the moral evaluations by which the working class were coded and recorded in the discourses of the day (Nead 1988) – discourses not dissimilar to those reproduced today. Chris Haylett (2001), for instance, notes how in the 1990s in the UK the white working class were increasingly colored, coded as "dirty white" in government rhetoric; as degenerate, atavistic, and abject, surplus to the requirements of a vanguard bourgeois cosmopolitan nation.

Semiotic chains of association were established between already existing discourses such as hygiene, taste, and degeneracy and newly emergent terms such as middle and working class which enable them to develop associations that can be known, recognized, and established with value formations (lack and added value). If the Reform Law (political representation structured through property ownership) was key to the formation of the middle class, the Poor Law (basic economic subsistence) was significant to the establishment of the working class. In these differentially invested and incited formations – one that makes political claims for legitimated legal property ownership and one that forced recipients to perform their morality for the state legal/welfare system to stay alive – class differences come into effect.

Likewise, gender, race, and sexuality amalgamate in all class definitions. As McClintock puts it, "the invention of *racial* fetishism became central to the regime of sexual surveillance, while the policing of *sexual* fetishism became central to the policing of the 'dangerous classes'" (1995: 182). In most debates about the moral formation of the middle class, aristocratic women are seen to signal constitutive negative limits, particularly despised for their excessive and lascivious sexuality. Foucault (1979) argues that the middle class, struggling to find the means to define themselves, used reference to commodification to regulate sexuality as a means of social identification: "The middle-class thus defined itself as different from the aristocracy and the working-classes who spent, sexually and economically, without moderation . . . It differed by virtue of its sexual restraint, its monogamy and its economic restraint or thrift" (Foucault 1979: 100).

Capital metaphors – spent, restraint, thrift – shape the formation of moral class values. And just as Foucault identifies the four discourses that came to produce sexuality (the Malthusian couple, the masturbating child, the hysterical woman, the perverse adult), we can see a similar discursive production with class. The discourses

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of the dangerous outcast, the urban mass, the revolutionary alien, the contagious women, and the dirty degenerate came to produce figures to which ideas about what was known as "working-classness" became attached (Skeggs 2004). Ideas about what constitutes different classes are often moral battlegrounds, as struggles over "dignity" demonstrate. The sexuality of working-class women became not just a reference to moral denigration but also a source of desire and "scientific" observation for the Victorian male reformers who tried to apply "scientific methods" to the study of their objects of fascination. They attempted to justify their pursuits by claiming they were describing the absolute limits to morality. However, the outcome of this projected exclusion was to make the limit the site of all that was interesting and potentially desirable.

(4) CLASS RECOGNITIONS AND JUDGMENT

Yet what is interesting in these different amalgamations and trajectories is how different classifications of class were recognized, used, or became attached to different bodies. Class became a performative statement of a person's value, still used in the present (Sayer 2005). The moral evaluation of the category draws attention away from economic inequality. But most historians of class debate whether the working class made the term, or willingly used the term, strategically to receive poor relief, or recognized themselves in the classification.

E. P. Thompson maintains that industrial workers and artisans learnt to organize politically around the term class. He details how the term working class came to have increasing significance for trade union organizing (Marx's combination groups, e.g., the Chartists) and the formation of political parties (the British Labour Party), offering a space for identification for those who could join, and there are substantive debates about the exclusion of women from trade union campaigns (Brenner & Ramas 1984).

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The attempt to make the working class recognize their classification is also noted by Carolyn Steedman (1999, 2000) who introduces an important factor into the performative emergence of the category class. She traces how a working-class self as a moral categorization came into existence through the religious discourse of redemption, a self that had to be respectable and prove itself to be capable of narrating itself in the terms established by the state-legal interlocutor systems of poor relief. If they could not speak the narrative of redemption – an aspiration towards middle-class morality – they were unlikely to receive money for living – eating, safe water (beer), and sanitary conditions. Steedman's analysis is supported by David Vincent's (1981) extensive study of working-class autobiographies in England which details how specific narrative forms and techniques are used to tell the stories of a working-class life lived through narratives of redemption and dignity.

If we move into the present we can see how the same processes are in operation and come to shape different forms and figures; for instance in the UK at the moment the figure of the "Chav" follows in the tradition of the dangerous urban outcast and the contagious woman (Skeggs 2005). Chav is the symbolic condensation of all that is nationally negative attached to a body that is made recognizable as working-class. The recognition of the body and its lack of value comes into effect through

symbolic repetition and figural circulation via the media. The Chav classification contains every negative national value: every benefit-claiming, smoking, pleasure-seeking, fake-buying, noisy, space-taking form of excess. Chav women, in particular, are subject to extensive symbolic violence as their bodies are represented as dangerous and costly to the nation, excess personified through fecundity and obesity. The Chav figure was cited so much in British popular culture that the term became the *Oxford English Dictionary* word of 2004. As Bourdieu notes above, what it revealed was more about the class position and the perspectives of the classifiers, as they attempted to reach the moral high ground and draw distance from connotations of working-classness, than about the person to whom it was applied. The symbolic designation was an attempt by one privileged group (journalists, TV producers, writers, comedians) to denigrate another by turning them into a figure of contempt and ridicule, in which the classifier names their claim to moral and taste superiority whilst pretending it is an objective cultural judgment. The speaking of the term Chav reveals the snobbery of the speaker, as they attempt to name their social distinction. In this way the speaking of the classification Chav is an example of how class relations are repeatedly enacted through culture, visualizing and legitimating judgment.

The Chav was a distinctly white figure, only enabled through the distance that was drawn via discourses of multi-culturalism from the black and South Asian working class in the UK. But as Chris Haylett (2001) has argued, through both popular culture and government policy rhetoric, the Chav represents the attempt to divide and rule the working class through ethnicity so that governmental responsibility to deal with economic inequality is eclipsed by the emphasis on individualized cultural difference. She demonstrates how government rhetoric was able to paint the white working class as dirty white, thus making its difference from the respectable middle-class pure white clear and recognizable. In a reverse move, Cecily Forde-Jones (1998) shows how in an attempt to retain white power in Barbados in the Victorian period efforts were made to recuperate the dirty white population into the pure respectable whites *against* the black population. This re-allocation of value through associations between race and class exemplifies how those with power can use their access to the symbolic to organize, legitimate, and maintain their interests. The discourse of multi-culturalism and the morally loaded accusations of racism have partially protected the British working-class black and South Asian groups from similar morally denigrating figurations. They, however, have been defined as dangerous and threatening, not just as a national irritant subject to disdain and contempt, but as a threat to the core of the life of the nation itself.

Hence it is the adjective-value designations that are added to the term class that illustrate how structural inequalities of race, gender, and class are known and circulated through culture. Vicki Meyer (2011) demonstrates how in the US most people try to attach the term middle-class to themselves in order to defend against accusations of lack of cultural value. The term middle-class may have no relationship to their economic positioning but it represents how they want to enter interactions with others and be seen to have value. In a complete reversal of this imperative to claim value, Andrew Sayer (2002) demonstrates how in the UK middle-class people do not want to be attached to the term middle-class, as they consider it to be the expression of privilege and snobbery, leading to the bizarre

finding, in response to a MORI poll, that 76 percent of British people think they have "working-class feelings" (whatever these are is not defined). Applying the adjective "trash" to the term class means that no doubt is left as to the negative symbolic value loading: as Hartigan (1997) notes, to embrace the term "trash" would take considerable effort by those who want to be positioned as respectable, valuable, and part of the nation. The term itself signifies the impossibility of inclusion. But it also displays how significant judgment of a person's value is to understandings of class relationships.

When social inequalities become coded as moral positions, judgment of others' value may shape the form the social encounter takes, hence the insistence on drawing distance from certain groups – especially when, as Savage, Bagnall et al. (2001) argue, the middle class have through their access to circuits of symbolic capital (media, popular culture, political rhetoric) been able to construct what counts as normative. The middle class may not want to name themselves as such, and Savage et al.'s research echoes that of Sayer, maintaining that middle-class people in the UK want to be considered "ordinary," but they certainly want to attach to themselves the moral values of the normative nation, and are able to do this by naming the constitutive outside, the working class, the white trash, the poor black, the dangerous Muslim, and the Chav.

But how do those who are positioned as the constitutive limit, subject to continual symbolic denigration, generate value for themselves?

One of the ways in which the working class "combined," which is often overlooked, is through their demands for decadence, for fun and pleasure; a necessary defense, Zizek (2000) argues, against the grim conditions endured. Through fun and pleasure they also found alternative ways of challenging the moral authority and legitimacy of the classifiers. Martha Vicinus reveals how the working class reversed moral judgments by heaping scorn on those with pretensions to gentility, by laughing at those who restrained their own pleasure, and by deriding those who tried to occupy the moral high ground: "Putting on airs was the greatest sin anyone could commit" (1974: 262–3), a statement still found in contemporary research on class relations (Walkerline & Lucey 1989). A study of Victorian music-hall entertainment, and now contemporary entertainment, dramatizes a class struggle in which the working class challenge the moral authority that seeks to condemn them.

Paul Willis (1977) notes the hedonism, excitement, and defiance of authority achieved by working-class boys in the UK who invert the school's core values. American subculture theory from the 1950s (e.g., Cohen 1955) shows how boys disengage themselves from school rituals and values and re-orientate themselves instead around leisure activities. Walter Miller (1958) suggests that their behavior is not an inversion as such, but represents the focal concerns of masculine working-class culture – excitement, toughness, and luck. This "creative" analysis shows how dominant values are inverted, but I would argue with very different gender performances. In my ethnographic research (Skeggs 1997) of a group of working-class women I showed how they generated value for themselves by claiming to be the real and proper mothers *against* middle-class mothers who by "shopping out" their children (sending their children to private schools or to nursery at an early age) reveal themselves to be uncaring, unnatural, irresponsible, and ultimately immoral. My research respondents inverted class divisions and claimed *moral superiority* to

the middle-class women. This inversion of value has also been documented in other research on motherhood (Reay 1998; Lawler 2000; Duncan 2005) and child development (Walkerdine & Lucey 1989). What we see is a continual struggle over withholding consent to the legitimating practices of moral judgment (in this case mothering, which is constantly subject to judgment *and* a claim for value).

If we apply Bourdieu's metaphor topology theory, we can see how gender enables different forms of value inversion fought on key sites of gender performance: manual labor, pleasure, and motherhood. Lois Weis's (2004) longitudinal ethnography of the transition of "Freeway" in the US from an industrial steel town to a restructured service economy demonstrates what happens to the working class when traditional economies are destroyed and gender becomes detached from the sexual division of labor. Weis details how a considerable amount of class, race, and gender re-embedding occurs, with redundant men no longer able to fulfill their "hard work" ethos and unable to deal with domesticity. The women become more resourceful and creative in dealing with the new conditions, suggesting that irreverence and inversion are highly specific responses to changing capitalist relations.

The search for dignity beyond work, for value in conditions of devaluation, by both men and women, black and white, has also been charted by Mitch Duneier (1992) who illustrated how a group of black men in Chicago desired to be recognized as respectable and *not* as dangerous, criminal, or pathological, which (like the women above) was often how they were misrecognized and diminished in social encounters (Khanna 2007). Likewise, Michelle Lamont (2000) identifies a distinct moral code focusing on personal integrity and the quality of interpersonal relationships amongst both the white and black working-class men to whom she spoke. These were not responses of radical creativity (Willis) or antagonistic moral inversion (Skeggs) but straightforward attempts to claim worth and value for themselves. These studies, however, also point to the lack of antagonism present in generalized American class analysis and cultural theory, what bell hooks calls "the elephant in the room" – the unnamed subject that everybody knows is central to their lives but cannot be named as such; instead, "Race and gender are used as screens to deflect attention away from the harsh realities that class politics exposes" (hooks 2000: 7).

The next section explores how value judgments and the making of distinctions that eclipse inequalities through appearing as culture, but simultaneously make and legitimate those inequalities (circulating as forms of capital that cannot be easily separated as they cohere on the person), are actually experienced.

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AFFECT AND SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE

Cultural analyses of class enable us to see how value is distributed and circulated through social spaces in which people are able or not to access moral and cultural value and convert it into legitimate symbolic value and economic resources. If a person is a composite package of capital value that circulates through the social and can increase or deplete their value through the possibilities for conversion, we can see how social encounters are important micro-spaces of exchange where value is made visible and evaluated. If judgment is one of the key behaviors that

informs these encounters, which research into how class relations are lived demonstrates, we therefore also need to take into account how affect shapes these encounters.

We never enter an encounter without history or affect: every time we meet somebody we experience the encounter through different emotional responses such as disgust, horror, fear, anxiety, dignity, gravitas, pleasure, warmth, kindness. Even unoccupied spaces carry affects – such as houses and street spaces: we feel them. Our responses may be learnt from our inherited social position: for instance, we learn to fear and be disgusted by certain figures through repetitive symbolic loading. The figure of the contagious dangerous woman of the Victorian period was recognized through repeated visualizations (through newspapers, art, penny criminal stories, the media of the time), enabling even a slight resemblance to the figure to generate fear and disgust (Nead 1988).

If we add Spinoza's (1996) theory of affect to Bourdieu's spatial metaphors, we can see how what Spinoza terms "the force of existing" informs and shapes class relations. Seventeenth-century Spinoza maintains that when we come across somebody good, if they make us joyful, they increase our capacity/ability to act, whereas if we meet sadness, inhibition increases and it decreases our capacity to act. Spinoza was concerned to understand how people with power use sadness to affect us to increase their power and decrease the power of others (he studied priests). This continual variation experienced through all social encounters – increase–diminution or diminution–diminution or increase–increase – helps us understand why some people may, through repeated access to accruing, capital-converting spaces, learn to feel entitled to space and cultural resources, while others, due to lack of access and experience, feel constrained and limited in social space, where they may be subject to repeated judgment, subject to contempt, and humiliated (as were the women of my *Formations* ethnography). I would argue that the continual attachment of negative value to those recognized through prior symbolic figuring as working-class intensifies and increases the feeling of diminution over time and space as a metaphoric accumulation of negative capital – a disinvestment, a depreciation of value.

This is not just about individualized social encounters but how through repetition and performativity total social relations are shaped; affects arise from within the system of social relationships, institutions, and practices which exceed individuals. When one enters a social encounter with an awareness of the possibilities for denigration, a defensive response to the potential negative evaluation is prepared, as my ethnographic research demonstrated: defense against denigration was one of the main ways by which subjectivity was produced over time and space. The women of my research learnt not to enter certain social spaces for fear of contempt, misrecognition, and negative judgment. Institutions institutionalize symbolic value, they make people feel they *should not* belong. Spinoza and Bourdieu together offer us a way of understanding class relations as a moral topology of entitlement and constraint accumulating or depreciating over time. Together they show how culture and affect are materialized through bodily movement in social space.

Spinoza also notes how continuous variation in the force of existing is determined by the ideas one gives to the affects we feel. So if we feel diminished we may look for an idea to explain our diminution. If we look to the category of working-class

to explain our negative evaluation, we may either be able to convert it into something positive, such as trade union activity, or be able to generate distance from it (such as white trash, Chav) in order to protect ourselves from its negative effects (feeling sad, diminished, under-valued, mis-recognized as having no value, and out of place). Likewise, if diminished by class we may be able to protect our value through other classificatory systems such as sexuality, gender, or race which have different potentials for re-signification and value attachment (e.g. "Black and Proud" or "Queer and Here"). Thus social encounters are dialectical movements of value.

Sara Ahmed (2004) suggests that we inhabit an affective economy where affects such as hate are economic; that is, hate circulates between signifiers in relationships of difference and displacement and is distributed across a variety of figures through the process of what she calls "metonymic slide." Figures such as Chavs (and in her example, "asylum seekers," a highly racialized negative term in the UK) become readable as nationally cancerous, as rotting the moral fabric of the nation. Hate, she maintains, cannot be found just in one figure, but works to create the very outline of different figures or objects of hate, a creation that crucially aligns the figures together and constitutes them as a "common" threat, but with different intensities (e.g., the female and male Chav). In such affective economies, Ahmed argues, emotions *do things*, they align individuals with communities – or bodily space with social space – through the very intensity of their attachments. For instance, the ex-Conservative Party advisor, Ferdinand Mount (2004), points to the "sustained programme of social contempt and institutional erosion which has persisted through many different governments and several political fashions," to which the working class in the UK has been subject.

However, even if the working class feel anger, resentment, and hate, it is unlikely that their expression of these emotions will be given legitimacy through access to symbolic power – they are more likely to be criminalized for their expression. Or as Sianne Ngai (2005) points out, they will be symbolically devalued as the expression of "ugly feelings" by "ugly people." She details how:

While envy describes a subject's polemical response to a perceived inequality in the external world, it has been reduced to signifying a static subjective trait: the "lack" or "deficiency" of the person who envies. Hence, after a person's envy enters a public domain of signification, it will always seem unjustified and critically effete – regardless of whether the relation of inequality it points to (say, unequal ownership of a means of production) has a real and objective existence. Although envy begins with a clearly defined object – and it is the only negative emotion defined specifically by the very fact that it addresses forms of inequality – it denies the very objectivity of this object. Envy is in a sense an intentional feeling that paradoxically undermines its own intentionality. (Ngai 2005: 21)

Ngai charts a range of ugly feelings to demonstrate how justifiable responses to inequality are often read as a problematic pathology of the person who expresses them. Respondents from a recent research project noted how they thought it was unjust that they were constantly subject to blame for that which they could not control: being born into a working-class life, being sent to "dump" schools, or facing high unemployment on leaving school. They pointed out that when they

expressed these concerns at university to middle-class audiences they were repeatedly told to "get over it," and described as having "a chip on their shoulder." Their experience of injustice was understood as a subjective trait, their own problem, something they should transcend and entirely divorced from the conditions of production. What we see in the UK through the expression of such dismissal of concerns about injustice and the "new" unadulterated contempt is a public alignment of middle-class values *against* working-class lifestyles. The affects of antagonism thus become central to how people express their social relations and to how people are recognized, evaluated, and legitimated. Moreover, daily low-level affects such as resentment against injustice hum away, shaping social encounters, but they can be mobilized in different ways.

Tom Frank (2004) notes how in the US in the 1990s a disaffected, unemployed, male working class were persuaded through anti-liberal populist public outrage rhetoric to elevate "morality" via the protection of the family and the fetus, and in so doing align themselves with a Republican Right that promoted the interests of the super-rich. Part of the Right's rhetorical appeal was its ability to detach already formed moral values such as unpretentiousness, authenticity, hard work, and loyalty from the conditions of their original production (working-class life), a space which was increasingly entrenched, and re-attach them to the interests of an imaginary safe and secure, prosperous right-wing nation through the promise of respect and respectability. The aim of such rhetoric, Frank maintains, was to generate indignation by voicing the fury of the imposed-upon, enabling diminished subjects to voice their indignation, not just through claims to respectability, but by revenge: deriding the denigrators. Contempt returns to contempt. Cultural grievances and the challenges to authority are given national space and credibility through a very specific form of symbolic conversion into a political formation.

What we see from these different political mobilizations is how they are premised on already structured class relations from which class antagonism can be activated. The working-class men identified by Tom Frank (2004) in Kansas were ripe for recruitment to moral causes, such as protecting the fetus, because it offered them moral value whilst visualizing and naming an enemy which fitted their already existing class antagonisms based on their experience of inequality and injustice. Their grievances were detached from source and they were offered an affective fantasy of revenge to which they attached themselves, for a time. The moral struggles of the women of my ethnography are like a microcosm of this process; they live the antagonism and the diminishing, struggling to gain moral value through motherhood and respectability in an attempt to make their lives bearable and value-full. Unlike the Kansas men they have not been mobilized around the visualization of an enemy; instead they engage in minor battles in cramped spaces on a daily basis. What we see in all the working-class ethnographies (from early subculture theory to the contemporary, through race and gender) is a desire to be recognized as having value, and thereby not denigrated, when one is repeatedly symbolically positioned as valueless. Barack Obama's appeal to hope offered a much more positive shape to the negative affects in circulation. In a period of working-class black and white sub-prime economic devastation, he replaced hate with hope, suggesting that affects can be channeled.

⑥

CONCLUSION

Class is a relationship between people who inherit not just different categories but the values the categories contain: the inequalities and injustices. To inherit inequalities which are then symbolically repeated as ugly feelings, as a moral measure of a person, leads to justifiable resentments. Those who are subject to the judgmental gaze of middle-class institutions and authority are fully aware of how cultural distinction and classification work in the interests of the powerful – legitimating inequalities so that privilege cannot be contested. Class relations still determine life chances, health, and wealth regardless of how people speak their relationship to them (see Wilkinson & Pickett 2010). Class relations are dynamic forces that underwrite all social encounters. Capitalism is the inequality generator shaping how people live, what they inherit, and how they move through social space. To understand this process fully we need an analysis of an “economy of personhood” within capitalism which can explain how different values – economic, cultural, symbolic, social, moral – can be accessed, attached, and utilized, and how they work through encounters that repeatedly enhance or diminish value in the person. The analysis of culture offers us ways to understand how perspective and performativity inform classifications, showing how moral value and judgment are key to how class is lived and cohere on the person. If we add affect to this analysis we can see in even more detail how class relations are experienced and felt as bodies move through social space and time as enhanced or cramped. Even when inversion, reversal, or challenge to legitimacy and inequality occurs, these responses are shaped by the terrain of the class-infused social encounter, an encounter which is always a performance generated from the structure of class relations, whether they sing loudly or hum quietly. As the super-rich become super-richer and the poor become sub-prime we should stop trying to pretend that inequality is just a matter of culture or subjectivity and understand how the very grounds for our constitution as persons are shaped always/already by class, constantly felt in the making.

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