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CULTURE AND SOCIAL CLASS

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Ever since the transition of human societies from hunter-gatherer groups to surplus-producing civilizations, social classes have been dictating the division of labor. Ancient Egyptian, Greek, Indian, and Mayan cultures each divided their societies into nobility and rulers, priests, warriors, artisans, professionals, merchants, farmers, laborers, construction workers, and slaves. Later, during the Industrial Revolution, Marx (1867/2008) identified divisions on the basis of owners of production versus laborers. Social classes throughout time have been determined and defined by various combinations of occupation, land ownership, wealth, income, and education. In modern economies, they are given a variety of classifications; one version in common use in the United States divides classes into upper class, middle class, working

I thank Mark Brandt, Niobe Way, Suzanne Quadflieg, the Prejudice Research Laboratory at New York University—Abu Dhabi, and the students of the Fall 2011 Prejudice class and the Spring 2012 Culture and Context class at New York University—Abu Dhabi for their useful comments on an earlier version draft of this chapter.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/14274-003>

Culture Reexamined: Broadening Our Understanding of Social and Evolutionary Influences,

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class, and a class at the bottom, called variously the underclass, lower class, or poor (Argyle, 1994).

Throughout history, people who belong to different social classes have clustered in neighborhoods and regions, either as dictated by law, as in many ancient societies, or by economic circumstances, as in most modern societies. Studies have shown that an important association with social class is where a person lives (Reid, 1998), and wherever clusters of people live, one will find culture. Yet, at least in psychology, social class has been neglected as a source of culture (A. B. Cohen, 2009). In this chapter, I address this lacuna and pose questions about how the introduction of a study of the culture of social class may change how psychologists think both about culture and about social class.

This chapter has two main sections. I devote the first half of the chapter to situating the study of social class in the culture literature and demonstrating some of the ways social class creates what can be seen as culture. Rather than focusing on more material or tangible differences that might be the domain of economists, anthropologists, or sociologists, in this section I focus more on subjective or intangible differences between social classes that are of more interest to psychologists. I devote the second half of the chapter to an examination of how situating the study of social class in a culture literature raises questions about how researchers think about both social class and culture as heretofore mostly separate literatures.

SITUATING SOCIAL CLASS IN THE LITERATURE ON CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY

Culture has been defined in myriad ways across multiple disciplines. For the sake of simplicity, the definition used here is taken from a cultural psychology perspective, specifically Triandis's (2010), paraphrased as follows: Culture is a human adaptation to an environment, composed of shared practices and meanings that are transmitted to future generations. These practices and meanings can be concrete, as in the diet, clothing, and leisure activities of a people, or abstract, as in the attitudes and beliefs of a people.

Social class is a way of categorizing people into groups. The measures that social scientists have used in research to capture social class also reflect aspects of this composite, including occupation (e.g., Lipset, 1959; Reid, 1998), income (e.g., Henry, 2009; Oakes & Rossi, 2003), education (e.g., Lipset, 1959), or various combinations of these (Argyle, 1994). As with the definition of culture, the characterization of social class is rich with complexity and easy to oversimplify (Reid, 1998), and at the risk of presenting a construct that is too vague, my characterization of social class draws on the

composite of these and related socioeconomic indicators: income, accumulated wealth, education, employment status, and occupational prestige.

Social class is a social construction, a way of grouping people within a broader culture, much as with ethnicity and caste, in a way that differs from society to society. As with any other group-based identification scheme, including ethnicity or caste, it largely benefits those of higher status (Lott, 2002). However, the construction of social classes has also helped theorists of the social sciences understand social structures and hierarchies and how they perpetuate themselves. As early as Marx (1867/2008), groups of workers and owners of production were identified as social classes to theorize about the forces that operate between the two. Today, social class distinctions are helpful for determining the distribution (and redistribution) of resources in a society, for example, through union activities, graded tax laws, unemployment and welfare assistance, and scholarships devoted to first-generation and low-income college students.

Social class operates much as other sources of culture, such as ethnicity, nationality, and caste, in at least two ways. First, it shapes *identity*, a feature central to concepts of culture (Brewer & Yuki, 2010) that includes being able to identify oneself as a member of one culture as well as identifying others as part of one's own or other cultures (Côté & Levine, 2002). The identity aspect of culture involves an ownership of particular beliefs and practices as part of the self, presumably an identity one is proud of and has a goal to consciously pass on to future generations. Social class, too, can serve as a part of one's social identity. British and U.S. citizens willingly provide their social class when asked this question in surveys and interviews (Jackman, 1979; Reid, 1998), even if their subjective identification does not always match objective indicators (e.g., one poll showed that more than a third of sampled U.S. participants earning less than \$20,000 annually identified as middle class, as well as a third earning more than \$150,000; Pew Research Center, 2008). Nevertheless, social class involves group categories that a person can belong to and identify with. This identification can include a variety of labels depending on the historical context. For example, the peerage system in England included labels for those born into wealthy families within the system, such as *lord*, *baron*, and *duke*. The title *doctor* given to those completing a PhD, MD, or JD is used today to identify the highly educated classes. Pride of identity, however, can also extend to those of the lower classes. Several hundred years ago, for example, members of the lower classes were especially tied to their professions as part of their identity. Many English-language family names are derived from working-class crafts and occupations: Hunter, Miller, Cooper, Baker, Brewer, Carpenter, Cook, Smith, Forester, Gardner, Potter, Weaver, and so forth (Reaney & Wilson, 2005). The tradition of pride in the working class continued

through the Soviet glorification of the worker in postrevolutionary propaganda posters; through 19th century European art that broke from traditions of higher class portraiture and classical themes to focus on, if not celebrate, the everyday worker; to today's beer and truck advertisements praising the everyday hardworking American.

Second, social class divisions, much as do ethnicity and nationality, represent a way of breaking down a broader culture into groups that result in subcultures that have markers specific to them. Social class cultural markers can be identified in the clothing, speech and dialects, food, and so forth that differ along class lines. Individuals can identify others' social class with good reliability, even on the basis of a 1-minute clip of an interaction (Kraus & Keltner, 2009). American English is peppered with phrases that indicate whether a cultural practice is associated with a particular class: *classy*, *posh*, and *high end* are used to reflect upper class tastes and practices, whereas *ghetto* or *white trash* are used to reflect lower class tastes. Concerning higher class tastes, the rules of civility and good manners have been passed along the generations as the markers of higher-class culture, documented in relics such as the nearly 1,000-page tome *Miss Manners' Guide to Excruciatingly Correct Behavior* (Martin, 2005) or *The Official Preppy Handbook* (Birnbach, 1980). Historically, class divisions on these cultural markers have been enforced by law, as in the class-based sumptuary laws of Europe that prohibited individuals of the lower classes from wearing clothes that would indicate a higher class standing, laws that continued in some parts of Europe even through the early days of the Industrial Revolution (Freudenberger, 1963).

CULTURAL DIFFERENCE BASED ON SOCIAL CLASS: A SAMPLER

What are some of the dimensions along which one may observe markers of culture based on social class? What are those aspects of socioeconomic status (SES) that transcend ethnic and nationality differences to manifest themselves as culture? This type of exploration could take up an entire volume, and so it is necessary to limit the analysis here. One distinction is between material versus subjective cultural differences (Herskovits, 1955; Triandis, 1972), with material differences reflecting those that are tangible, visible to the eye, and clearly manifest, such as differences in clothing or food consumption, and subjective differences reflecting more intangible qualities of culture, such as values and beliefs. Because I am approaching this chapter from a psychological perspective, my focus here is on those subjective, intangible differences. This analysis is not meant to be exhaustive or even comprehensive, but a sampler of research on class differences that could be interpreted as cultural.

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A caveat: In general, the discussion of cultural differences walks a line between culture and stereotyping, and exploring social class differences is thus especially dangerous because members of the lower classes are, partly by definition, less powerful and are often the victims of prejudice and discrimination (Saegert et al., 2007). Complicating matters is that being a member of the lower classes is seen as a controllable (and therefore more harshly judged) stigma, at least in the United States (Weiner, 1995), and is especially stigmatizing for those who rely on government assistance (Gilens, 1999; Henry, Reyna, & Weiner, 2004). Furthermore, a cultural explanation has been used to describe the perpetuation of poverty among the underclass (Marks, 1991), blaming the cause of poverty on poor individuals themselves and the cultures they perpetuate, including the values people who are poor teach their children and share with their peers. This approach is at the expense of understanding factors of poverty caused by the broader society or otherwise outside of the control of the underclass. An examination of cultural differences based on class thus risks a value judgment that validates those in power and rejects those without it. This is not my intention here. Instead, what follows is only documentation of some of what social scientists have observed about differences based on social class.

A second caveat: Another theme that becomes evident throughout this summary is that research on the differences between the lower and upper classes focuses its explanations on attitudes and beliefs of the lower classes rather than those of the higher classes. Scientists typically ask, for example, why the working classes are more authoritarian, religious, and collectivistic, yet do not ask why the middle and upper classes are less so. This approach risks problematizing the lower classes, putting them in a position that is not normal and that requires explanation while implying that the higher classes are normal and do not require explanation. This criticism of isolating analyses to those who are disenfranchised in a society has had a long history in the social sciences, at least since Simone de Beauvoir (1949) famously raised similar questions about problematizing women as a group requiring explanation. The analysis of ethnicity has been similarly criticized (Perry, 2001). A similar lesson could be applied here with respect to social class.

Environmental Cultivation and Perpetuation of Class Cultures

Different workplaces are imbued with different cultural values (Sanchez-Burks & Lee, 2010), and these values may differ systematically depending on the social class associated with the modal worker. For example, the culture of white-collar institutions such as marketing and investment firms is different from that of blue-collar institutions such as factories. As an anecdote, while working in a factory in Madison, Wisconsin, I brought in a book of poetry

with the intention of studying a couple of lines between the timed arrival of plastic office supplies on a conveyer belt. The supervisor noticed and told me with some disdain, "We do not read here." Whether the reprimand was out of concern for my safety, concern for my productivity, or a transmission of cultural norms and expectations, the result was the same: One does not read in a factory. The country music in the background completed the working-class picture (cf. Snibbe & Markus, 2005). It is reasonable to expect that exposure to this setting 8 hours a day, 5 days a week—what would effectively amount to nearly half of an employee's waking life—would influence the psychology of the individual as much as any aspect of culture that an individual is exposed to. Whether the setting of a factory is a source of working-class culture or simply a reflection of the tastes of the working class is beside the point because the setting reinforces the norms of the class of the modal worker.

As early as Karl Marx (1867/2008), social scientists were considering how a person's and a culture's values can be influenced by modes of production, including the monotony of most laborers' activities throughout their long workday. Later empirical studies explored the relationship between social class and values (Kohn, 1959), and one oft-cited study considered specifically those elements of the workplace that can influence the values of the people who work there (Kohn & Schooler, 1983). In this study, those in working-class occupations in the United States had less opportunity for self-direction in the workplace (including less complex and more routine work with closer supervision), which was associated with valuing self-direction less for themselves, for their children, and even for their wives (Pearlin & Kohn, 1966). This effect has been replicated cross-nationally, including in samples from Italy, Poland, and Japan (Schooler, 2010), hinting that these class effects are not restricted to any one society and may be part of fundamental human social processes.

Qualities of self-direction are also transmitted and reinforced in schools. A study examining four types of schools (working class, middle class, affluent professional, and executive elite) showed that lower class schools reinforce conformity, dependency on the teacher, and little self-direction, whereas higher class schools reinforce creativity, autonomy, and self-direction (Anyon, 1980). Put another way, the classroom environment socializes and prepares students for lives as unskilled laborers or CEOs, depending on the class base of the school.

Empirical work in psychology has validated these findings. Unlike sociologists, psychologists are typically not concerned about the sources of these relationships but nevertheless have confirmed that members of the working class have less outward-directed agency and engage in less self-promotion (e.g., Snibbe & Markus, 2005; Stephens, Markus, & Townsend, 2007).

Altogether, evidence has shown that the environments in which people of different social classes find themselves help to shape beliefs and attitudes, specifically in this case beliefs about self-direction. However, one should not assume that members of the working classes are inherently uninterested in self-direction. Research has just as easily suggested that lack of self-direction may be a function of the futility of asserting self-direction at school or in the workplace for those of the lower classes, a consequence of their disempowered positions in their environments. If people change their work environments, they may change their sense of the utility of self-direction. Nevertheless, this is one example of a robust difference between the social classes in terms of beliefs and attitudes.

Authoritarianism

Strongly related to self-directedness is the broader construct of *authoritarianism*, or the value in conforming to authorities and rules at the expense of individual expression (Feldman, 2003; Stenner, 2005). Social scientists have long considered the relationship between social class and authoritarianism, starting most conspicuously with Lipset's (1959) classic article on working-class authoritarianism. In his cross-cultural review of a multitude of studies, Lipset showed that people who were less educated or had less prestigious occupations were inclined to oppose civil liberties and to endorse a more black-and-white approach to politics, signs of authoritarian-type beliefs. A later cross-national survey confirmed, across nine countries and using a different measure of authoritarianism, that working-class parents were far more punitive toward their misbehaving children than were middle-class parents (Lambert, Hamers, & Frasure-Smith, 1979).

Classic explanations for the working-class-authoritarianism link have focused the source of authoritarianism within working-class individuals themselves. These explanations include the greater economic insecurity (akin to a kind of frustration or aggression) and lack of social and political sophistication among members of the working classes (Lipset, 1959). This perspective is consistent with approaches that have shown that authoritarianism may be explained in part by a narrow worldview (Gabennesch, 1972) or a lack of exposure to multiple perspectives (Kelman & Barclay, 1963) that a good education would redress.

An alternative hypothesis focuses more on the context in which people of lower class find themselves. Working-class endorsement of authoritarianism may be more related to their stigmatized condition in a society, something that those of lower SES may feel acutely. Unpublished data using the World Values Survey reveal that in countries in which education is valued more, the relationship between social class (as measured by education) and

authoritarianism increases (Brandt & Henry, 2012b). Put another way, uneducated people are especially likely to endorse authoritarianism in places in which their lack of education is devalued and situates them more firmly in the lower classes.

Cultures of Honor

Several characteristics identify *cultures of honor*, in particular, the type found in Mediterranean Europe (Rodriguez Mosquera, Manstead, & Fischer, 2002), the U.S. South (Nisbett & Cohen, 1996), and inner-city gangs in the United States (Horowitz & Schwartz, 1974), where issues of interpersonal respect, social value, and reputation loom large. People from cultures of honor are especially likely to react harshly, if not violently, to violations of personal respect and dignity, such as insults (Nisbett & Cohen, 1996).

The leading explanation for the roots of a culture of honor has been the economic patterns in a region, notably the presence of a herding economy (Nisbett, 1993). Cultures of honor are said to emerge in herding communities because herders have to be especially vigilant in protecting their property from threats in the form of wolves and thieves, for example, and such vigilance embeds itself into the protection of the self against interpersonal threats as well.

This perspective was further elaborated on and clarified by the theory of stigma compensation, also called low-status compensation (Henry, 2009), which offers an alternative explanation for the prevalence of cultures of honor in herding communities. Rather than emerging from a response to realistic threats to people's herds, cultures of honor instead emerge from groups of people who are lower in social status, including SES. Those who compose the lower social classes find themselves in psychological circumstances that differ from those of the middle and upper classes, which include being targets of devaluation and stigmatization (Saegert et al., 2007). Because very few people want to be devalued or treated as second-class citizens, those who are treated in this way need to manage, psychologically, their marginalization and devalued sense of social worth. One way may be through increasing vigilance and defense of one's existing social worth, which may include reacting aggressively to those who further threaten that social worth with insults and verbal rejection. Recent evidence has indicated that those who are socially rejected on the basis of their group membership behave similarly to those who are rejected in an interpersonal manner (Smart Richman & Leary, 2009), including the aggressive defense of the self against insults. More important, gaining reassurance of one's sense of social worth may ameliorate this aggressive defensiveness. In one study, participants from low-income families were more likely to endorse a willingness to

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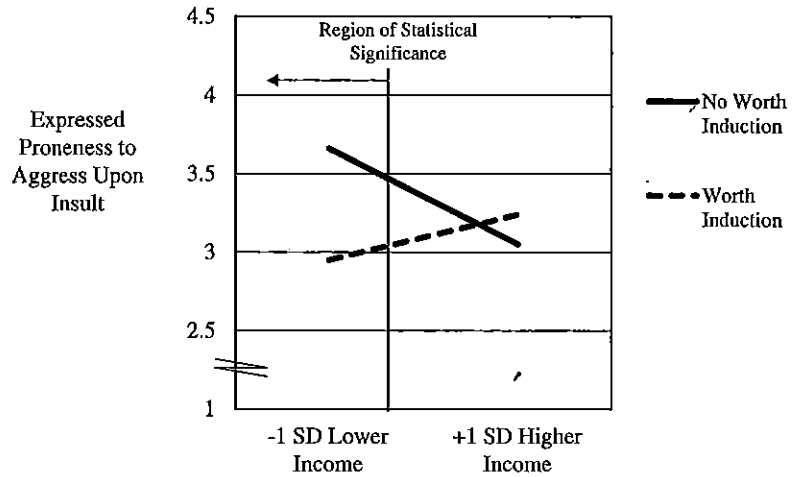


Figure 3.1. Expressed willingness to aggress as a function of socioeconomic status, with and without affirmation manipulations. From "Low-Status Compensation: A Theory for Understanding the Role of Status in Cultures of Honor," by P. J. Henry, 2009, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 97, p. 463. Copyright 2009 by the American Psychological Association.

react with violence in the face of insults relative to participants from higher income families, but when they were given the opportunity to reflect on their sense of social worth (through a kind of affirmation manipulation), that endorsement dropped to match that of participants from higher income families (see Figure 3.1; Henry, 2009, Study 4).

How are these patterns related to herding cultures, then? Herding cultures may lead to cultures of honor because herding economies are associated with greater inequality than other economic systems (Bradburd, 1990; Fratkin & Roth, 1990; Galaty & Bonte, 1992), and greater inequality typically means a larger and more marginalized lower class. The theoretical perspective of stigma compensation is, however, especially useful because in addition to explaining cultures of honor that emerge from herding societies, it also explains cultures of honor that emerge in places where herding is not a plausible explanation for its roots, such as inner-city gangs (Horowitz & Schwartz, 1974) and prisons (Jenness, Maxson, Matsuda, & Sumner, 2007).¹

¹A culture of honor among members of lower social classes is not inconsistent with findings that have shown that people of lower socioeconomic status may show more prosocial behavior under other circumstances (Piff, Kraus, Côté, Cheng, & Keltner, 2010). When seeing someone in need, people of lower socioeconomic status may be more likely than their higher status counterparts to seize the opportunity to exercise compassion. Although on the surface this behavior may seem contradictory to the impulsive aggressiveness suggested by a culture-of-honor perspective, the motivations may be the same. In the case of helping, the behavior provides a sense of value in a world that otherwise devalues them, whereas aggressing in the face of insults protects against further devaluing.

Religiosity

At this point, empirically, it is clear that people of lower SES are more likely to be religious than their higher class counterparts, a finding observed across the social sciences (e.g., Coreno, 2002; Norris & Inglehart, 2004; Ruiter & van Tubergen, 2009; Smith & Faris, 2005; Taylor, Mattis, & Chatters, 1999). One explanation is that religiosity provides comfort as a means of dealing with realistic financial hardships that accompany poverty (Norris & Inglehart, 2004; see also Ruiter & van Tubergen, 2009). Another explanation, also informed by stigma compensation theory, is that members of the lower classes are psychologically defensive because of their devalued and marginalized social position, and religiosity provides psychological protection irrespective of realistic financial threats (Brandt & Henry, 2012a). What is certain at this point is that regardless of the cause of religiosity among members of the lower classes, it seems to be an important component of lower class experience and culture.

Conversely, members of the middle and upper classes may cultivate more of a culture of agnosticism or of practicing their religious beliefs less devoutly. Perhaps the decreased value of religion among those groups is rooted in beliefs that religious devotion is for people who are superstitious, bored, or uneducated and easily duped. These explanations are speculative, however: Research on the relationship between social class and religious practices and beliefs has not sought an explanation for patterns of beliefs among the higher classes.

Individualism Versus Collectivism

Social class "may be the major variable that distinguishes individualists and collectivists" (Triandis, 1995, p. 82; see also Hofstede, 1980), and many psychological patterns of members of lower social classes resemble psychological patterns of those from collectivistic cultures. People of lower SES have been shown to be more likely to consider contextual aspects of their environment (Kraus, Piff, & Keltner, 2009), much as do their collectivistic counterparts (Morris & Peng, 1994). Working-class Americans show less emphasis on autonomy and individual choice (Snibbe & Markus, 2005), or at least their choices reflect pressures to conform to others' choices (Stephens et al., 2007), similar to results found with collectivistic cultures (Iyengar & Lepper, 1999; Kim & Markus, 1999). Other research has reflected the other-directed nature of the lower classes: People of lower SES have more non-verbal engagement with others (Kraus & Keltner, 2009) and tend to be more accurate in judging others' emotions (Kraus, Côté, & Keltner, 2010). Note here again the focus on trying to understand and explain lower class patterns

of behavior rather than higher class patterns. Few social scientists have tried to explain the greater individualism of the middle and upper classes.

However, these similar kinds of patterns of attitudes and thoughts between the lower classes and collectivistic cultures need not be caused by similar mechanisms. One explanation is that those of lower SES require interdependence as an economically based survival mechanism (Triandis, 1995). Another suggests that a lack of control in the environment of the lower classes may drive the focus on context as a means of recapturing that control (Kraus et al., 2009). Yet another suggests that the lack of emphasis on individual choice among those who are less educated may be a function of different strategies of agency that help protect against the adversities of the outside world (Snibbe & Markus, 2005). These explanations are notably different from the explanations for collectivistic cultures that are otherwise steeped in a rich political, economic, ecological, and social history, including mass media exposure, modernization, and immigration patterns (Kitayama, Ishii, Imada, Takemura, & Ramaswamy, 2006; Triandis, 1995).

WHAT CAN THE STUDY OF SOCIAL CLASS GAIN FROM A CULTURAL APPROACH

I devote the second part of this chapter to an analysis of how the study of social class and the study of cultural psychology, heretofore largely separate literatures, may inform each other by considering social class as a form of culture. In this first section, I consider two ways in which social class culture can help inform and possibly change some preconceptions of social class. In the next section, I do the reverse, considering how a study of social class culture can inform and influence approaches in cultural psychology. These sections self-consciously raise more questions than they answer, but the intention is to consider how the study of social class culture can open the study of both social class and culture to broader ways of understanding and studying each separate phenomenon.

Separating Social Class From Overlapping Categories

Social class differences have been observed in an otherwise relatively homogeneous population of people of the same ethnicity or nationality, such as parts of England a few decades ago (Reid, 1998). However, in most societies the identifiers of social class, such as income, wealth, education, occupation, and employment status, overlap considerably with other social divisions and sources of culture, including ethnicity, nationality, and caste. In the United States, those of the higher classes tend to be predominantly White, and those

who are working class and poor tend to be ethnic minorities. In Europe, the higher classes are typically nationals, and the lower classes are typically immigrants. In India, the caste system has theoretically been occupationally based: The highest castes have, at least historically, been priests and nobles and the lowest castes, waste collectors and disposers of the dead.

Yet ethnicity, nationality, and caste each has its own influences on culture that transcend social class. For example, many people across the socioeconomic spectrum in the United States identify with and celebrate U.S. culture, such that Americans of all social classes can be found celebrating the Fourth of July; enjoying apple pie, burgers, and beer; and watching American football. Similarly, the African American subculture is embraced by African Americans across the socioeconomic spectrum, from financially struggling rural families in the South to successful Black celebrities and entrepreneurs such as those interviewed on CNN's documentary series *Black in America* (see <http://inamerica.blogs.cnn.com/>).

The tight relationship between these overlapping categories of ethnicity, nationality, and caste and social class, raises the question of the utility of separating out the unique influence of social class on culture independent of these other influences. Is it even possible to separate out these influences? The situation of caste is instructive of the complexities of this endeavor. The relationship between caste and class has historically been so tight that it has been claimed that classes cannot form in the caste system and that caste is synonymous with socioeconomic class (Argyle, 1994). Another suggestion has been that "to look at caste and class separately would be an artificial exercise" (Jaffrelot, 2011, p. 610). Even fictionalized, futuristic visions of caste, as in Aldous Huxley's (1932/2008) *Brave New World*, have conceptualized it as inescapable, birth-determined occupations that are inextricably intertwined with a social class hierarchy.

Yet, despite the fact that caste is almost entirely permanent from birth, class mobility has been shown even within caste systems, with income and education fluctuating considerably among those in a particular caste (Biswas & Pandey, 1996). Although it is true that caste historically constrained one to a specific occupation, today the relationship no longer holds. For example, the Indian government program of reservations, a kind of affirmative action for underrepresented castes and tribes, helps to ensure that occupation and education are distributed more equitably across the castes. Caste culture also has cultural markers that operate separately from SES, including diet, dress, and rituals that, similar to ethnicity, can and do transcend the social classes (Bayly, 2001). Caste, unlike SES, is also rich with religious meaning, including the concept of reincarnation that imbues caste with a sense of legitimacy that even those of the lowest castes accept (Keay, 2011); social class is independently not religion based. All of these aspects of caste layer into the con-

cept of SES extra factors that are not generalizable cross-culturally. It appears that even caste and class are distinguishable.

Because social class is distinguishable from these other overlapping categories of ethnicity, nationality, and caste, is it worth making the distinction for the purposes of developing a theory of the universal influences of social class on culture? One example of the benefits of this endeavor is Kohn and Schooler's (1983; Schooler, 2010) cross-cultural research, described earlier, that considered the influences of working-class conditions on working-class attitudes. This work was conducted across multiple countries and with otherwise homogeneous samples so that social class could be considered more precisely. Other social scientists, too, have controlled for the effects of these overlapping categories by isolating the effects of social class within a homogeneous ethnic group (e.g., Whites in the United States; Murray, 2012) to useful effect. This research has arguably shed light on the universal nature of these working conditions in the development of different attitudes between the social classes, making a case for influences on social class culture that are independent of overlapping categories of ethnicity, nationality, and caste and that are generalizable.

An alternative solution could be to have class indicate a larger category that encompasses, rather than removes, the categories of ethnicity, nationality, and caste. Here, class-based cultures would describe the cultural markers of any groups that are disenfranchised versus enfranchised. This broader category of class-based cultures would be based on all the factors that contribute to one's overall status in a society, including not just socioeconomic indicators such as occupation, income, wealth, and education but also nationality, ethnicity, religion, caste, and so forth. This exercise would allow an examination of similarities across disenfranchised versus privileged groups across different cultures, to track similarities in cultural effects despite the wide range of contributors to what makes a group disenfranchised or privileged cross-culturally.

The overall point here, though, is to recognize that research on social class culture opens the possibility of considering universal effects of social class on culture, a question that has heretofore not received much theoretical or empirical attention. This question of examining universals could refer to similarities in the content of the markers of class culture cross-nationally (e.g., do members of the higher social classes uniformly endorse individualistic values more than their lower class counterparts cross-nationally?) or similarities in the roots of class differences (e.g., do members of the higher classes cross-nationally experience greater freedoms than their lower class counterparts in a way that affects their beliefs and attitudes?). The approach one would use, whether examining social class within a homogeneous ethnic, national, or caste group or by examining social class across a range of its

manifestations cross-culturally, would depend on the scope of the analysis and the ambition of the investigator. The utility of this endeavor is an open question, but I believe that researchers could better understand the universal aspects of social class culture.

Considering Cross-Class Identifications

A second way in which the study of social class can be informed by situating it within culture research is the examination of cross-cultural influences. A common assumption for more than a century has been that members of the lower classes imitate members of the higher classes or that considerable pressure is put on the lower classes to adopt higher class tastes, customs, and goods (Bourdieu, 1984; Veblen, 1899/2007). However, an examination of cultural exchanges throughout the centuries has shown that even less powerful, colonized, or oppressed cultures can influence the cultures of dominant societies. Might the same be true of social class, that the lower classes can influence upper class culture?

At first glance, plenty of evidence appears to show that the lower classes adopt higher-class cultural practices. A typical kind of study identifies the delay—or “cultural lag”—that occurs in the lower classes as they become aware of and later adopt higher class practices, often after the higher classes have abandoned those practices. One study examined how the *nouveau riche* of one Greek village would adopt higher class practices that were already passé and replaced by other practices, such as the use of outdated speech forms (Friedl, 1964). Economists (Leavitt & Dubner, 2005) have also shown that members of the lower classes adopt names for their children that have a higher class (and presumably successful) sound; however, by the time these children are older, their names are already outdated among higher class communities. A higher class name “starts working its way down the socioeconomic ladder” (Leavitt & Dubner, 2005, p. 204) as these names are adopted less by those from higher classes and more by those from the lower classes.

The lower classes not only adopt higher class practices but also higher class ideologies. The problem of the adoption of dominant ideologies by the working classes goes back to Marxist thought (Gasper, 2005) but has gained currency and empirical validation among psychologists through concepts of legitimizing ideologies as found in social dominance theory (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) and especially system justification theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994). One idea behind these theories is that members of lower status groups tend to disproportionately adopt beliefs and practices of the higher classes (rather than the reverse), especially in a way that serves to further disadvantage them and keep them in their lower status position in society (Jost, Banaji,

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& Nosek, 2004; Jost, Pelham, & Carvalho, 2002). For example, in representative samples of U.S. respondents, low-income respondents were even more likely than higher income respondents to endorse the idea that large pay differences are important for encouraging motivation in people and that economic inequality is legitimate (Jost, Pelham, Sheldon, & Sullivan, 2003).

Literary depictions of attempts by lower classes to adopt higher class practices abound, most classically in George Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion*, in which Professor Henry Higgins teaches a cultured, higher class demeanor to Eliza Doolittle, a brash, cockney, working-class woman. However, here the upper class standards are imposed on Eliza, not sought by her. The blockbuster Hollywood film *Pretty Woman* is based on a similar premise: A prostitute is transformed, successfully, into a cultured beauty queen worthy of the attentions of a multimillionaire businessman and socialite, this time with her approval. A typical comedic device in these plays and films involves people of the lower classes slipping back into lower class speech and behaviors when in higher class company. The television show *The Beverly Hillbillies* rested almost entirely on this comedic device, in which the Clampetts, a formerly poor family (presumably Southern), strike oil and move to Beverly Hills but continue to hand-churn butter, spin thread on a spinning wheel, and eat sorghum and hog jowls. This resistance to adopting higher class cultural practices despite their access to wealth would not be so funny were it not so unexpected. Higher class culture seems to be an ideal to strive toward, not resist.

It would be a mistake, though, to deny that the opposite influence occurs as well. Higher classes adopt lower class practices, too, and this phenomenon, although widespread, has gone understudied in the social sciences despite the fact that examples abound going back at least 500 years. In 17th century Europe, men of the higher classes were known to adopt the relaxed jackets common among the peasantry, and lower-class prostitutes, mistresses, and actresses were highly influential in setting high fashion (Freudenberger, 1963). In the 19th century, blue jeans originated as durable working wear for those hunting gold in California, but they have since become the classic symbol of U.S. fashion, even among the upper classes of society willing to pay premium prices (Sullivan, 2006). The modern fashion of sagging pants originated with ill-fitting prisoner outfits (Christian, 2007) and was eventually adopted by rap and hip-hop artists in the 1990s before spreading across the broader U.S. fashion landscape. Dance forms such as tango, martial arts forms such as capoeira, and musical forms such as jazz, blues, country, and folk all have origins in the lower and working classes but have been embraced by people of all walks of life. Some of the greatest composers of classical music have adopted countryside folk tunes in their oeuvre, including Mozart, Grieg, Copeland, Dvorak, and Mahler. Food practices that have originated in the working classes can now be found in

higher class establishments. A chopped liver sandwich goes for more than \$11 at Katz Deli on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, and meatloaf, tripe soup, and burritos have appeared in Michelin-starred restaurants. Even the hot dog has its high-end, costly versions, such as at Hot Doug's in Chicago, where for \$10 one can order a foie gras and sauternes duck hot dog, complete with truffle aioli and fleur de sel. Each of these examples serves to demonstrate that customs that originated in the lower classes can influence the higher classes.

These kinds of examples are well known in the anecdotal and historical record, but they have not been rigorously studied as a social class phenomenon. Their existence raises some interesting questions concerning the adoption of lower class practices by the higher classes. Under what circumstances would the higher classes adopt lower class practices? What are the consequences of this kind of approach to the lower classes? In adopting these practices, do those of the upper classes see them as quaint? practical? cool? Do they see themselves as being respectful? open-minded? ironic?

This kind of cultural influence is an open area for further investigation and could even be broadened for understanding not only the cultural influences of the lower social classes but also any group in society that is generally of lower status. For example, who might be most responsible for setting trends in language use and vocal inflections in U.S. culture—powerful, middle-aged White male public speakers? Wrong: Teenage girls (Quenqua, 2012).

WHAT CAN THE STUDY OF CULTURE GAIN FROM A SOCIAL CLASS APPROACH

The definition and concept of culture has developed almost exclusively in the context of studying how culture operates among ethnic groups and nationalities. However, the concept of culture may need to be rethought with an increasing understanding of broader influences on culture, including those represented throughout this book and, specifically here, social class. Just as situating the study of social class within the culture literature may help inform and broaden how researchers think of social class, the same exercise may also help inform and broaden how researchers think of culture. The following sections describe some examples.

Examining the "Mutual" in Mutual Constitution

One way in which the study of social class culture may inform culture research concerns the concept of *mutual constitution*, or the assumption that individuals influence their culture at least as much as culture influences indi-

viduals (Markus & Hamedani, 2010).² The concept of mutual constitution is potentially important and useful but nonetheless murky and untested. Taken at its strongest and most literal, the idea that individuals can influence culture as much as cultures can influence individuals is provocative but highly speculative.

The empirical record on social class and culture may give reason to question a strong version of mutual in the mutual constitution of culture or the idea that culture and individuals influence each other equally. The direction of influence between members of a social class and their culture may not be entirely reciprocal. In one classic study that examined workplace conditions, although the conditions of the workplace and the workers' personalities did mutually influence each other, a demonstrable lag was seen in the direction of the workers influencing their environment (Kohn & Schooler, 1983). That is, the culture of the workplace seemed to influence the workers' personalities more quickly than the workers influenced their workplace environment. Furthermore, this lag may be exaggerated for the lower classes compared with the upper classes: Politicians, for example, tend to be more responsive to their wealthier constituents than to their lower class constituents (Bartels, 2010), suggesting that more time and energy may be needed from members of the lower classes to effect social change, at least politically.

This research from the social class literature illustrates the need for more research to understand the relative influence of culture on individuals versus individuals on culture. Whether the findings of a cultural lag of influence in the social class literature can be generalized to other forms of culture, including ethnicity- and nationality-based cultures, is a currently untested empirical question. How easily an individual can influence a culture, and who one needs to be to do so, are important questions for those interested in making changes to any culture, whether for epidemiological reasons (e.g., changing cultural eating patterns that can affect diabetes rates), social justice reasons (e.g., increasing awareness of the importance of equality for women), environmental reasons (e.g., introducing recycling norms and behaviors to a culture), or other social and political reasons.

Understanding the Formation of Culture Via Adaptations

Research in cultural psychology typically starts with culture as a given and considers the consequences of being situated within a culture. For example, given that a person is situated within a culture that emphasizes

²Note that mutual constitution here is different from the preceding discussion concerning the mutual influence of cultures. Lower class culture influencing higher class culture, and vice versa, is not mutual constitution as it has been defined in the literature but is instead a kind of cross-cultural influence.

individualistic versus collectivistic values, how might that culture influence that person's thoughts, beliefs, and interpersonal relations? Psychologists typically do not investigate what is at the root of cultures: what forms them, perpetuates them, and changes them. These factors are often environmental, geographical, meteorological, economic, political, and social structural, factors that psychologists typically leave to the domain of anthropologists and sociologists (although a number of exceptions of psychologists tackling these questions about origins have occurred; e.g., D. Cohen, 2001; Henry, 2009; Kitayama et al., 2006; Nisbett & Cohen, 1996; Oishi & Graham, 2010).

Part of the definition of culture is that it emerges out of adaptations to an environment. In general, culture researchers have considered three types of adaptation to environment that result in cultural patterns, which I label *evolutionary vestiges*, *postevolutionary vestiges*, and *current society-level adaptations* and discuss next. However, I propose a fourth adaptation that has not been considered as much of an influence but that comes to light in an analysis of social class.

Evolutionary Vestiges

The types of adaptations that culture researchers have considered include, first, human adaptations over a million years of biological evolution, particularly during the environment of evolutionary adaptedness that predates agriculture and in which current human beings no longer live but for whom behaviors, even maladaptive vestiges, still exist. Evolved preferences may influence culture, such as the foods people are biologically prepared to eat (Konner, 2010; Rozin, 2010).³

Postevolutionary Vestiges

A second adaptation is also a vestigial one but does not involve biological evolution. Groups may have developed practices that at one point in their history were adaptive to their environment but that are no longer necessary. Nevertheless, the practice may continue despite its lack of utility (D. Cohen, 2001). For example, in my home city of Abu Dhabi, the Arabian *dishdasha* is a common way for local Emirati men to identify each other in an otherwise exceptionally international and multicultural city. The *dishdasha* is a uniformly white, full-body covering that at one time protected men from the sun

³This argument is different from that which states that humans have evolved the flexibility of adaptation to environments that results in cultural differences (a cultural acquisition device; Konner, 2010), which is intended to explain the general existence of cultural variability in the human species but not the existence of specific manifestations of culture.

and blowing sands of the desert while simultaneously reflecting sunlight and ensuring good ventilation. Many Emirati men nevertheless continue to wear this clothing in their everyday life that is spent largely in the air conditioned, sun- and sand-free indoors.

Current Society-Level Adaptations

Third are collective adaptations to a society's immediate environment, such as features of one's current climate, economics, and so forth, that are reflected in culture. Some examples include the skins and furs traditionally worn by Inuit cultures living in cold northern Canadian climates or the Spanish siesta taken to escape the midday heat. Similarly, the food choices of a culture may simply be a function of what grows in a certain region (Rozin, 2010).

Aggregations of Individual-Level Adaptations

I argue for a fourth type of adaptation—not considered carefully by culture researchers to this point—that results accidentally as a function of the collective acts of individuals. This adaptation is not the same as a collective adaptation to the broader environment of individuals' immediate geography, climate, and so forth. Rather, this sort of adaptation does not affect everyone in a region but only those individuals affected by particular circumstances, including individuals adapting to their socioeconomic condition. These adaptations develop into beliefs, attitudes, and practices that can be passed on to others in similar circumstances and from generation to generation. One might not intuitively think of a group of people coincidentally doing the same thing as culture, and cultural psychologists have cautioned against assuming that there is a correspondence between individual psychological experiences and culture (Na et al., 2010). However, the aggregation of individuals' beliefs and practices can be seen and experienced as culture by outsiders. A study of social class cultures may illuminate two ways in which these kinds of adaptations can manifest as culture: as a function of adaptation to realistic economic conditions and as a function of the psychological conditions of their immediate surroundings.

Adaptations to Realistic Economic Hardships. People who compose the lower classes find themselves in realistically difficult material circumstances that differ from those of people in the upper classes and that eventually result in beliefs and practices that can in and of themselves become culture (Markus & Hamedani, 2010). For example, people who are poor generally lack access to supermarkets and healthy foods (Crister, 2000; Zenk et al., 2005). The difficulty of accessing healthy foods might be responsible for the kinds of food choices made by those of lower socioeconomic status,

including opting for more readily available junk foods and fast food. These forced choices result in a heavier lower class, something that could develop into a marker of working-class culture.

Adaptations to Psychological Devaluing and Social Rejection. As discussed earlier, people who are of lower socioeconomic status also face psychological devaluing and social rejection compared with their higher status counterparts, an experience that may lead to cultures of honor. However, in this case, these cultures of honor develop where an aggregate of people are individually and coincidentally responding to their psychological condition of social marginalization. Cultures of honor emerge from these aggregates even though the individuals do not share a common fate or consciously pass along a practice of reactive aggression to future generations. The aggregate of individual-level adaptations may then appear as culture even though its origins are based on individual adaptations, not group adaptations.

Raising Questions About the Definition of Culture

To summarize this section, social class may contribute to researchers' understanding of how culture may form, not based on a collective adaptation to an environment but based on the aggregate of individual, coincidental practices. This pattern, however, raises a question concerning definitions of culture, which often have the transmission of culture as central to the definition (e.g., Triandis, 2010). If cultures can form accidentally and coincidentally, then how necessary is it to the definition of culture to have it consciously and deliberately transmitted across generations? Although basic social learning processes, such as modeling behavior, are sufficient, are they necessary? It may be possible that, for example, working-class children eventually adopt working-class beliefs and practices as adults not because the ideas have been transmitted to them but because they happen to find themselves in the same circumstances as their parents and thus acquire the same adaptations.

Understanding Social Class Culture at Multiple Levels of Analysis

A final point of consideration concerning how social class can inform the study of culture is related to multiple levels of analysis. Culture is often considered the broadest level of social analysis (e.g., Kruglanski & Higgins, 2007); however, the cultural level of analysis may itself be further divided into different levels of analysis.

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People typically understand social class in terms of how society is divided into groups on the basis of varying economic conditions. Social class culture has been studied in places in which people of a certain social class cluster in specific neighborhoods (e.g., Kusserow, 2004). However, society can be considered creatively as operating at multiple levels of analysis that go beyond the upper, middle, and working classes that operate at a national level of analysis. Class may operate on a global level. Karl Marx (1867/2008) identified the division of labor that occurs across countries and that "converts one part of the globe into a chiefly agricultural field of production, for supplying the other part which remains a chiefly industrial field" (p. 274). In other words, undeveloped countries supply the raw materials for production by wealthier countries, forming the economic basis of colonialism. This division across societies mirrors the division of labor that occurs within a society to produce class differences.

Today, countries have been given labels according to their resources and state of modernization, including *developed* or *industrialized* versus *developing* countries, which are modern versions of the *First World* versus *Third World* designations that emerged during the Cold War. These kinds of global class distinctions are likely to shape cultural differences. One can sense cultural differences, for example, between Stockholm, the capital of the very modern country of Sweden, and Khartoum, the capital of the developing country of Sudan, that are based on the state of modernization of the country alone. Compare other capital cities, such as Brussels with Guatemala City, Paris with Kolkata, Tokyo with Cairo, and the cultural distinctions clearly go beyond mere differences of region or ethnicity.

Class-cultural differences may be observed between cities within a country, too. In terms of a city's education level, compare Boston or San Francisco (among the most educated cities in the United States; Zumbrun, 2008) with Detroit or Cleveland. These education differences may manifest in cultural differences such as frequency and accessibility of bookstores, coffee shops, artistic venues, and performance outlets, as well as differences in politics and values.

Is it useful to understand other types of culture as they operate at multiple levels of analysis? Past commentators on culture have thought so. Edward Said (1979) famously understood the global level of analysis of culture in *Orientalism*, his critique of Western approaches to the Middle East. African American culture is an important aspect of U.S. culture, but pan-African culture is also a global phenomenon, as espoused by Black civil rights activists such as Marcus Garvey and Malcolm X. Religious cultures exist within societies but also on a global scale, with the Vatican representing global Catholic culture and Mecca representing global Islamic culture. As the world becomes increasingly globalized, identification of such global forms of culture will become harder to ignore.

CONCLUSION

Psychologists can no longer ignore the forms of culture that go beyond the familiar bases of ethnicity and nationality, including culture based on social class (A. B. Cohen, 2009). Given the complexity of social class across different economic systems and different societies, this task is no easier than isolating the antecedents and consequences of any plausible influence on a culture. Nevertheless, considerable value may be found in considering social class as a form of culture, including the ways in which research on both social class and culture can mutually inform each other by considering social class as leading to a set of beliefs and practices that are in and of themselves culture.

The foundation is just being laid, however. If the study of cultural psychology in general is young relative to that of other cultural approaches, the study of the psychology of class-based culture is in its infancy. It will therefore be important to continue to draw from sociological and anthropological influences in laying its foundation. Combined with the knowledge of social and cultural psychologists, these interdisciplinary perspectives can help build a theoretically rich understanding of culture and social class.

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