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Higher Education and Working-Class Academics

Precarity and Diversity in Academia

Teresa Crew

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"This is a clear, insightful study of working-class academics that does much more than fill a gap in the literature. It breathes intersectional life into the experiences of people short of material and cultural resources who are endeavouring to come to terms with academic identity and precarity without the benefit of a safety net. If you believe in equality and justice in higher education, read this book."

—Graham Scambler, *Emeritus Professor of Sociology, University College London, UK*

"This book is a passionate and lyrical account of the workings of class and inequality in higher education. Drawing on the narratives of working class academics, it paints a powerfully and compelling picture of the everyday systematic injustices faced by those from working class backgrounds who never lose a sense of being outsiders. The book also shows the way forward, calling for a real democratization of our universities, one based on mutual support, solidarity and the valuing of working class pedagogies."

—Diane Reay, *Professor of Education, Cambridge University, UK*

"Reading this book as a working class academic was not easy, flashes of personal experience of microaggressions, exclusion, and ridicule were in every page. I would urge every Vice Chancellor, head of department and Student Representative to read this book—and to think about their working class students, and staff with more care."

—Lisa McKenzie, *Assis Professor of Sociology, Durham University, UK*

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Introduction

Fig. 1.1 'Rucksack'

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Introduction

A working-class scholar is perceived to be contradictory, even romantic descriptor. But this ignores the multi-faceted nature of 'a working-class identity' (Loveday 2015). Working-class academics make an interesting case study on class inequalities. They challenge yet support notions of social mobility. They are heralded as the poster boys/girls of widening participation policies when they enter higher education, but their achievements (and struggles) are lost (or ignored, for the cynical among us), once they enter the academy. They occupy a unique social space. Some describe this lived experience as an 'outsider within' (Hill Collins 1986), others argue that academics from disadvantaged backgrounds are only conditionally accepted in the profession (Grollman 2014). This book provides a more nuanced depiction of working-class academics by

1. taking an intersectional approach to the experiences of working-class academics, and;
2. talking about the range of 'capital' working class academics bring to academia.

Working-Class

Commonly understood as a demographic characterized by relative similarities, the classic definition by Marx (1867/1990) focused on ones 'relationship to the means of production'. If you purchase labour power, you belong to the bourgeoisie: if you sell your labour (whether it be via your hands, bodies or minds), you are part of the proletariat. Marx's dichotomous view of society is overly simplistic. We have an extensive middle class and in Britain, 65 percent of which have 'economic assets' such as owning their own home (Parliament 2017). Occupational definitions of class were popular during the 1970s onwards, where the chief income earner in skilled or professional occupations were defined as the 'higher' classes, and those in semi and unskilled employment at the far end of the scale (Savage et al. 2013). This schema was unsatisfactory as it ignored the position of women. Also, class positioning should be seen in relation to other indicators e.g. education, taste, affiliations, and cultural values.

Over the past twenty years research on social stratification has been heavily influenced by the French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, himself of

working-class origins. Derived from a combination of theory and research, Bourdieu talks of how social differences are based on one's different access to specific resources and power otherwise known as capitals: i.e. economic capital (e.g. income and wealth), cultural capital (e.g. education, intellect, style of speech) and social capital (e.g. social ties and networks) (Bourdieu 1984). These forms of capital can be transferred from one arena to another (Navarro 2006). Groups who have the desirable form of capital in a specific field will hold an advantage over those who do not possess it. Previously a degree qualification would have been an indication of cultural capital, and one's position in society. But as working-class young people are now much more likely to have gone to university compared with previous generations, a measure of one's cultural (as well as the other forms of capital) is now *which* university they graduated from.

The Great British Class Survey (GBSC), a collaboration between the BBC and Savage et al. (2013) utilised Bourdieusian theory with survey questions relating to income, one's social circle and hobbies/interests. Their findings demonstrated that social class is more than household income. It's the friends you have, the music you like and the school you go to. In other words, cultural and social capital play a considerable role in distributing people into class positions. The survey also provided evidence of a fragmentation between the middle and working classes. The survey illuminated highbrow practices such as attending elite educational institutions, a spatial concentration in London and around the South-East, and a proclivity towards sophisticated cultural activities. A criticism of the GBCS was that managers and professionals were vastly overrepresented (Savage et al. 2013). But still, this provided social mobility researchers with a unique data set to explore upward mobility into, and "distinction and differentiation within, elite occupational groups" (Devine and Snee 2015: 255).

Despite a decline in the number of routine and semi-routine workers in Britain, sixty per cent of people who took part in the British Social Attitudes survey defined themselves as being working class. A statistic that has remained unchanged since 1983 (Evans and Mellon 2016). There can be a nostalgic attachment, a romanticism even, to a working-class identity: think 'starving artist', 'grammar-school boy', the 'heroic worker' (Lawler 2014). It is perhaps no accident that there are few positive female working class representations. The working classes are also positioned as inherently "lacking"' (Quinn et al. 2005: 13), depicted as "chavs" (Tyler 2008: 1), or "benefit scroungers" (Lawler 2005: 431), and latterly, the ignorant

Brexiter. But this ignores that there are intersections of a working class identify.

One's class position is not the sole determinant of people's life opportunities as we simultaneously occupy multiple social positions. Middle-class professional women are relatively insulated from the costs of a capitalist society, and working-class men benefit from a masculine construct of class. Whereas working-class women experience, and must come to terms with both. (Ferree 1990: 187–188). DiAngelo (2012) talks of having to push twin "boulders" of classism and sexism. She saw these barriers leading to her experiencing internalised oppression, for instance, a lack of self-confidence, and external limitations, for instance, institutional barriers. DiAngelo (2012) concedes that her white privilege has helped her 'manage' the class and gender inequalities she has faced, and "has elevated me over others, some of whom were also raised poor and female, but not white". Whereas white men and women, whatever their class biography, are insulated from the costs of racism. Bhopal (2014) reported that Black academics, especially BME women from working-class backgrounds, faced a triple oppression—gender, ethnicity and class (pp. 11–12). The Social Mobility Commission (2019) found that women, disabled people and minority ethnic groups from working-class backgrounds experience multiple disadvantages in occupational outcomes". People with a disability, even if from more privileged backgrounds, are 30 per cent less likely to enter professional occupations in comparison to their non-disabled peers. It is telling that when you 'search' for information or research on the 'disabled or BME working class, these 'groups' as seen as separate entities.

Academic

Definitions of an 'academic' appear in dictionaries with very little expansion. One may be left trying to understand what academics actually do, in a way we do not, when reading a definition of a nurse. Key words in definitions include 'intellect', 'expertise' and 'academic freedom'. Intellect is a concept steeped in class as working-class cohorts who are 'clever' are perceived to move up the social mobility ladder, 'leaving' their class background behind (hence why the concept of a working-class academic is so problematic). Speaking to my respondents (more about them later in this chapter), most talked of how prior to working in higher education, they

did not understand what academics were, or the work that they did. Entering into any field requires a practical sense for what needs to be done in any given situation—what Bourdieu describes as "a 'feel' for the game" (Edgerton and Roberts 2014: 200). This emerges via the acquisition of capital and the specialized knowledge of a field derived from a matrix of familial, educational, and social structures and institutions (McCormick 2006). Thus, those with family from academic backgrounds are likely to navigate the 'field' with relative ease.

Broadly speaking, an academic is someone who works in the domain of academia. There are many academic roles within academia, ranging from administrative positions that support student recruitment, retention and education to subject librarians who provide information skills training and in-depth subject support for students and staff. Alongside this, there are Deans, those who manage a specific college: overseeing the teaching, hiring, policy and strategic vision in their faculty. But in its most basic sense, an 'academic' is someone who is employed at a university in the role of Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Reader or Professor (Binns 2019). Other common academic roles within UK universities include Postdoctoral Researchers and Research Fellows, these posts are principally research based. In order to provide a broad discussion of academia, I also include Teaching assistants, sometimes known as Graduate Teaching assistants. These are PhD students employed on a temporary contract by a university who have teaching-related responsibilities. This was an important addition as it gave me the chance to extend the discussion to academic precarity and class. Typically, an academic, particularly those who are on permanent contracts, work across three domains—teaching, research and administration.

Teaching, Research and Administration

Academics teach academic or vocational subjects to undergraduate and postgraduate students via lectures, seminars, tutorials, practical demonstrations and field work. Alongside this they mark assignments as well as design, prepare and develop modules and teaching materials. They are also expected to continuously develop their teaching pedagogy (Binns 2019). As I will discuss in Chap. 6, the academics in this book talked of having an innovative approach to their teaching. Academics also engage with undergraduate and postgraduate students on a one-to-one level as a personal tutor, or research supervisor. The personal tutoring system supports students with any academic or personal issues the student may have i.e.

worries about exams, choice of modules as well as signposting to various support services, including mental health and applications for financial assistance. Chapter 5 draws upon my interviews with working class academics, who reported having an affinity with their students and providing support, above and beyond their duties.

Research activities include undertaking research projects (either funded or self-funded) and disseminating the results to their peers, in research journals, books or via educational conferences and workshops. Academics also develop knowledge by attending conferences, and are expected to present their research (either as a delegate, or as a keynote speaker). They supervise PhD students and research staff, and, if they are the Principal investigator (PI), manage research budgets. Alongside this they will prepare bids for funding for departmental research projects. The academics who took part in this study took part in and had developed their research portfolio. But in the interview setting, they focused on their experiences of teaching.

Administration responsibilities vary, depending on the institution. For instance, there are Directors of Teaching and Learning, who lead on curriculum development and design, Directors of Student Experience who focus on admissions and recruiting activities, as well as Senior Tutors, who look after student's pastoral care needs. Academics often organise monthly research seminars and may also sit on various committees, for instance—such as Equality and Diversity, Ethics, and Staff/Student Liaison. As an academic's career develops, they may be asked to act as a PhD chair or examiner, as Internal Examiners, before being requested by other institutions to act as an External Examiner (Binns 2019: 34).

Over the past twenty years the REF (Research Excellence Framework) has incentivised staff to focus on grant income and research outputs, as opposed to teaching. A speech by the Universities minister Jo Johnson, which ignored the impact of the REF, argued that university lecturers are more concerned about building their own brands and research as opposed to teaching. However, the marketisation of HE has meant that the pendulum may be swinging back towards teaching, particularly since the introduction of the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) introduced by the Government in England to recognise and encourage excellent teaching in universities and colleges. Rising student expectations caused by increased fees have further increased the workloads of academics. The UCU Workload Survey 2016 reported that more than

75 per cent of teaching staff said that student administration has increased, and more than half indicated that student consultations and pastoral care has increased. The latter may well be due to the rise in the number of students seeking mental health support as statistics show that this has increased by more than 50% in five years (Spitzer-Wong 2018).

Yet looking at the literature there was little clarity over who is an academic. Is it when you have a permanent contract as a lecturer or a researcher? I ask this because as I will discuss fixed term, insecure contracts are increasingly the norm in academia, and if we were to use the above as a descriptor, that would exclude many individuals conducting important academic research, or teaching a variety of subjects within a university. Despite being one of the most prestigious professions currently more than half (54 percent) of all academic staff and 49 percent of teaching staff in UK universities are employed on some form of insecure, non-permanent contract (University and College Union 2016). Those who do not have some financial support will find it much more difficult to sustain this way of working. With this in mind, my definition of a working-class academic is:

> *one whom defines their background/upbringing as working class and continues to identify in this way.*

Researching Working Class Academics

Statistical data from the Labour Force Survey, which drew upon a large survey of professional occupation employees, including academia, found that 14 per cent of academic respondents were from a working-class background (Friedman and Laurison 2019). My book wishes to expand on this finding with qualitative data derived from interviews with 89 working class academics from across the United Kingdom. Respondents were recruited via the social media platform 'Twitter', various academic conferences, as well as referrals from those who had already taken part in the research. In selecting interviewees, I required they:

1. Self-define as a 'working class academic' and
2. Currently/worked in the last 6 months at a UK university.

Initially this appeared to be a fairly open criteria, but as I wished to include respondents who might be 'between' contracts, I relaxed the second requirement. I kept the focus with UK academics as this is a HE sector with which I am familiar.

Just over two thirds of respondents were female (n. 62). In terms of ethnicity, 14 per cent of interviewees identified as being 'BME'. I was disappointed with this as I had contacted individuals who run message boards, and social groups relating to academics from BME backgrounds and also emailed individual BME academics who identified as working class to invite them to take part in the study. But on hearing about some of my respondents experiences with some White academics, I now understood their caution. In terms of disability, n. 5 respondents ported that they had a disability, but I suspected that the true number was higher. I recruited respondents from all 'types' of institutions, with similar levels of respondents from 'red brick', 'traditional' and 'post 1992' institutions, less so from Oxbridge universities. I interviewed academics from twenty different subject areas, as well as n. 2 respondents from 'professional services'. Just under half were early career, either Graduate Teaching Assistants or Lecturers. There was close to an even split of respondents who were on permanent (n. 48) or precarious contracts (n. 41). Location wise respondents mainly resided in English (n. 62) and Welsh (n. 18) institutions. Approximately half of respondents had worked at more than one institution, but I recorded the last/current institution.[1]

Prior to interviews taking place, I ensured informed consent by sending the interviewees a copy of the information sheet and permission to record interview form. I sent respondents the original ethics form so they could have full details of the study. Before the interview, I introduced the study, and reminded respondents of their right to leave the study at any time (and that their data would be destroyed if they did so), then discussed other relevant ethical issues such as confidentiality and storage of data. Trust was vital when approaching this research study as I would be asking respondents about deeply personal experiences. Mellor et al. (2014) note that it is desirable for 'class matching' as it engenders empathy on the part of the interviewer, which allows for openness on behalf of the participant. This is one reason why my interviews seemed to run smoothly. Alongside this, I used 'conversational interviewing' as this is a flexible approach and is not as formal as the typical interview (Currivan 2008). Interviews were mostly carried out via Skype, or email, with a small number being conducted in person in a public place, such as the respondent's workplace or

a café. I started off all interviews with a friendly chat about their day, before focusing on three main areas:

- *What makes an academic 'working class'?*
- *Broad experiences of the academy*
- *Qualities working class academics bring to academia*

Lincoln (1995) urges researchers to "come clean" about their position in relation to their study. I would like to follow that pattern. In case it has not been obvious thus far, I am a working class academic.

I'm Spartacus!

My dad, brought up in a large, working class family from Nottingham, worked alongside most of his brothers in the primary employment in the area, coal mining. This presents a picture of the respectable working-class, yet my family history also includes periods of long-term illness and relying on the 'dole'—a narrative often linked with the 'underclass'. A word so symbolically violent, it sickens me. In contrast, my mum's biography may be described as lower middle class as my grandparents rented a corner shop in a small area of Liverpool and encouraged their sons to go to university (they combined employment with their studies as opposed to receiving financial support from my grandparents). As such, my uncles were able to gain professional occupations. Conventional notions of male/female roles in the 1950's meant my mum would have been preparing for marriage as opposed to university. Observing my parents, I feel I have inherited the intellectual potential that was under-utilised in them both due to a lack of opportunity.

I was born in 1972, the eldest of four children. For the majority of my childhood I lived in Runcorn, Cheshire in one of the social housing developments built in the 'new town' for young families. As the Thatcher revolution of the 1980's was still to come, working class families like mine did not tend to own their own home. Evaluating my childhood from a Bourdieusian perspective I can see that my cultural capital was developed early. In what I now recognise as a display of middle-class educational practices, my mother would often be the lone voice amongst other parents in asking the school about homework, and after school activities. I enjoyed school but the older I got, the less interested I became. My parent's lack of academic qualifications, alongside my dad's 'choice' of employment

and my own habitus, meant that how I would conceptualise my own career 'choices', would be solidly working class e.g. gaining employment, as opposed to entering further study, would be my primary concern.

After leaving school I went on to work in a series of routine roles as a waitress, a chambermaid and working in customer service for a variety of organisations. These roles are often described as being menial work but they were responsible for teaching me what would now be defined as employability skills. Alongside this I had two children by the time I was 22, so my capacity for learning went into instilling in them a critical understanding of the world around us, coupled with the contradictory notion, that they could achieve anything they wanted to as long as they worked hard. How little did I know! After years of manual employment, I went back to education. With support from my partner, I did an Open University (OU) course in Sociology. Despite my inroads into further study, I did not consider I was university 'material' until my tutor at OU suggested I should consider enrolling on an undergraduate course in a traditional institution. This is typical of working class cohorts as the validation of an authority figure in education is needed before many consider HE (Archer and Leathwood 2003: 11).

University was everything I expected and more, however I was expecting to get a tap on the shoulder or an email to say there had been a terrible mistake and I should leave the premises forthwith. I've never forgotten my first day in the lecture theatre. Nerves, excitement, being overawed, those feelings don't easily leave you, so I recognise it immediately in students. I know the impact that a kind word[2] can have, so this gives me a deep, personal connection with the student experience. In fact, this research was inspired by various comments by students about how approachable I am. One comment in particular stands out:

> *Teresa, I thought all academics would speak like the parents of those on University Challenge, but you are, well normal.*

As female academics, and women in general tend to be perceived as (or expected to be) nurturing e.g. kind, sympathetic and helpful, I wondered if these interactions were situated in gender. But the phrase 'normal' intrigued me as it echoed experiences described by two friends (male, working class academics). I wondered if my ease with students was situated in 'class' as elements of my working-class heritage are ever present: from where I live (in social housing) to my interests outside of academia

(predominantly low brow culture with smatterings of highbrow culture) and how I speak (casual littered with profanities), all mark me as an atypical academic.

But my class situation is complicated. I recall Wakeling's (2010) critique on the idea of whether academics could be considered to be working class. His argument being that one cannot compare academia to other "solidly' working-class occupations such as a cleaner or supermarket checkout assistant" (p. 38). His arguments still resonate with me. I can't talk about my 'working-classness' without acknowledging the tough working conditions of my family and friends, who tend to be employed in manual employment. Can I really compare my rather comfortable afternoon spent writing this book in a café, with the one my friend had, when she has more than likely been 'serving' someone like me? When I think of my family who work in retail, I'm reminded of by Goodley and Ashby's (2015) investigation of working at Sports Direct, which was reported as not dissimilar to a day at 'the gulag'. While I work long hours, teaching, helping students and writing, it feels churlish to complain about my day when my partner returns home after working a twelve hour shift as a cleaner for the NHS, especially when I know that the physicality of his role has only exacerbated an existing back problem. What I do doesn't exactly constitute 'work' in the sense of 'blood, sweat and tears'. Wakeling (2010), perhaps had this in mind when he asks how many academics have been sacked for poor punctuality? (p. 39). My respondents agreed somewhat, but as Ann said:

it is hard to be late when you are always working!

Yet it's impossible to ignore my privilege, and how my store of capital cushions me. I apply the moniker of 'working-class academic' with a great deal of humility, and an acknowledgement of the advantages I have accrued. But, as this book will outline, academia is not quite the pampered ivory tower one imagines!

Theorical Framework

Habitus, Field and Capital

Bourdieu's (1977) cultural reproduction theory has been used extensively in higher education (see Ingram 2009, 2011; Thatcher et al. 2015; Burke and Christie 2018) to explain how social inequalities are reproduced

through the education system. Friedman and Laurison (2019) drew upon it to explain the powerful 'class pay gaps' that exist in Britain's elite occupations. Central to Bourdieu's theory is the field, defined as a set of relationships which can be intellectual, cultural, educational, etc. (Navarro 2006). The field is the arena in which an individual and their social biography (habitus) interacts. One's habitus influences an individual's ability to generate and accumulate capital (or power) (Bourdieu 1986). A field is a competitive space with its own rules and patterns of behavior (Bourdieu 1984), those whose habitus and capital are desired will be privileged. In academia, it is middle-class dispositions and forms of capital that monopolise the field.

Community and Cultural Wealth Model

Tara Yosso (2005) provides an alternative lens through which to position socially marginalized groups in a particular field. Inspired by critical race theory, which challenges traditional interpretations of cultural capital, Yosso contests Bourdieu's argument view on the value of 'elite' and middle class 'knowledge' since this frames anyone those outside of these classes of students of colour as somehow 'deficient' and perpetuates deficit models of thinking. I owe a deep sense of gratitude to Dr Tara Yosso as her work focuses on the wealth of "cultural knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed by socially marginalised groups that often go unrecognised and unacknowledged" (p. 69). She outlines six forms of capital held by members of marginalised communities:

- *Linguistic*: intellectual and social skills attained through communication in more than one language and/or style
- *Familial*: cultural knowledge from kin that carry a sense of community history, memory and intuition
- *Aspirational*: maintaining hope despite barriers
- *Navigational*: skills of manoeuvring social institutions
- *Resistance*: knowledge and skills fostered through oppositional behaviour that challenges inequality
- *Social*: networks and community resources (pp. 77–80).

This model has been used in relation to communities of colour, for instance representations of Black communities in Sociology courses (Caputo-Levine and Lynn 2019 and Black middle-class identities (Meghji

2019). The framework also has broad application to other under-represented groups in society, for instance students with disabilities (Duma and Shawa 2019); or first generation, low-income students (Bagley 2019). This model will be used to illuminate the 'capital' that 'working class academics' bring to academia.

Intersectionality

Feminist academics, with their progressive thinking have "broadened the scope of what constitutes valid knowledge" (Skeggs 2008; David 2014 cited in Sang 2018: 193). For instance, 'Feeling Academic in the Neoliberal University Feminist Flights, Fights and Failures' by Taylor and Lahad (2018), provides a "gendered deconstruction of the academy" (Taylor and Lahad 2018: 2). 'Feminist Academics: Creative Agents for Change', by Morley and Walsh (1995) is a compelling discussion of the structure and culture of academic institutions. Feminist researchers have demonstrated that the research process is not neutral, and as such we need to be aware of our own positionality within the research—something I referred to in a previous section. When describing her university experience, bell hooks (1994) says: "individuals from class backgrounds deemed undesirable… [are] encouraged to betray our class origins" (p. 182). However, hooks's experience should also be seen in terms of the intersections of class with ethnicity.

Intersectionality is a theory I will also draw upon as it is a key analytic framework that identifies how interlocking systems of power impact those who are most marginalized in society (Cooper 2016). Emerging in the late 1980s as a way of understanding the unique positionality of black women and other women of colour, the term was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) in her critique of US antidiscrimination law and social-justice movements. Crenshaw challenged the assumption that women are a homogeneous group, highlighting Black women's unique experiences of racism and sexism, and argued for the need "to treat race and gender as mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis" (p. 139). Intersectionality posits that social categories such as ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status and disability intersect to create unique experiences (Browne and Misra 2003). This key theory will be used to explore how the everyday experiences of academics of working-class origin are influenced by other aspects of their identity.

Structure of the Book

The rest of this book is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 discusses the key features of a working-class academic identity, drawing on family background, precarity and habitus.

Chapter 3 focuses on the various financial barriers experienced by early career academics and later on in the chapter, by working class academics with disabilities. This chapter addresses the impact precarity has on their pedagogy, work/life balance, job satisfaction and workplace identity.

Chapter 4 outlines how 'presentation', be it accent, sense of humour, or the size or shape of their bodies marked some respondents as being 'other'. Interviewees also reported experiencing classed gendered and, to a greater degree, racial microaggressions.

Chapter 5 examines how my respondents identify with disadvantaged students as they understood the sacrifices that it takes, especially when one has little money, caring responsibilities and a life outside that does not gel with the university 'experience'.

Chapter 6 talks about the lived experiences working class academics bring to their teaching and research, which led to a working class pedagogy.

Chapter 7 summarises the main findings. It then ends with a selection of practical solutions for policy makers and universities so that academia can move forward and make room for class and all its intersections.

Notes

1. Further details of respondents are in the appendix.
2. Thank you to Dr Julia Wardhaugh and Professor Charlotte Williams for their kind words when I was starting out. Without these kind words, and having them as role models, I would never have thought I could belong in academia.

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CHAPTER 2

A Working-Class Academic Identity

Fig. 2.1 'Chameleon'

T. Crew, *Higher Education and Working-Class Academics*,
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Introduction

Over the past forty years there have been a number of texts that focus on the working-class academic experience. In their entirety, their general thesis is that the academy is not a welcoming environment for scholars from disadvantaged backgrounds. Three influential texts are based on research from the United States (US). In 'Strangers in Paradise': Academics From The Working Class', a book by Ryan and Sackrey (1984), there are narratives that talk of transition and challenge. The consistent theme is of being a misfit in the academic world. The autobiographical essays of 'This Fine Place So Far From Home: Voices of Academics from the Working Class' by Barney Dews and Leste Law (1995) reveal an academic world defined by conflict—of difficult relationships with their working-class families and the anguish of hiding their working-class background. Lubrano (2005) continues this theme in his book 'Limbo: Blue-Collar Roots, White-Collar Dreams', describing the internal conflict within individuals raised in blue-collar homes, now living white-collar lives. Interviewees discussed hovering between worlds, not quite accepted in either. The emphasis in the book is they are on the 'outside looking in' and how psychologically demanding this can be (Bentley 2020).

More recent texts address contemporary themes such as casualisation and intersections of identity. In Bread and Roses: Voices of Australian Academics from the Working Class, edited by Michell et al. (2015), Papedolos talked of her experience as a contract worker in academia. This involved high teaching loads with little opportunity for research, the latter being important as deemed more prestigious than teaching experience when looking for a permanent position. Peace's chapter is particularly interesting due to what may appear to be his apparent privilege as a 'white straight male professor'. Despite his professional and academic attainments, he related how he continued to feel like an outsider in the academy: "my privileges are…eroded by other sources of marginalization" e.g. his working-class background (p. 92). 'Experiences of Academics from a Working-Class Heritage: Ghosts of Childhood Habitus', by Carole Binns (2019) is a recent addition to the literature. Using interviews with working class tenured academics, employed in one UK university, she identifies three conceptual groups. Group one recognised their original working-class background, but generally presented as middle-class. Group two were similar to what Lubrano (2005) describes as straddlers. Despite acknowledging their social mobility, group three

still considered themselves to be working-class (p. 106). 'Inside the Ivory Tower: Narratives of women of colour surviving and thriving in British academia' by Gabriel and Tate (2017) provides compelling narratives on women of colour in academia. While it does not address social class in detail, their work was important for my understanding of how multiple intersections can lead to subtle and overt microaggressions.

Two recent texts, both from the US, consider the experiences of working-class academics from the intersections of class, multiple forms of identity, alongside their position in the academy. Hurst and Nenga's (2016) book, 'Working in Class: Recognizing How Social Class Shapes Our Academic Work' examines class privilege and disadvantage in the lecture theatre. Two chapters exemplify the latter issue. Svec and Thomas discuss how the university classroom becomes the place to "confront unexamined beliefs and expectations" (p. 127). While Streib, who relates a series of examples of how easy it is to reproduce class inequality, talks of keeping her eyes open for ways she might unintentionally do this (p. 90). I return to these pedagogical (teaching and learning) themes in Chap. 5. Ardoin and martinez's (2019), 'Straddling Class in the Academy' provides narratives from students, staff and faculty. In Evans, Guevarra and Roper's chapter on the tenured academic, they illuminate both the roadblocks they experienced as well as the family support that aided them in their academic endeavours. This is an important addition to the literature as much of the research on the working class in academia of a lack of family support. In the conclusion, Ardoin and martinez propose various methods of increasing class consciousness and inclusivity in the academy e.g. defining and gathering data to evaluating institutional policies and practices. I return to this in the final chapter.

What Makes an Academic 'Working Class'?

Throughout my review of the literature I observed that apart from Wakeling's (2010) book chapter 'Is there such a thing as a working class academic?' there is little critical engagement with the term. As I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of why/if respondents saw themselves as working class academics, I used the following quotation from Wakeling's chapter as a vignette in the interview. Vignettes are a story or a short description that research participants are invited to respond to (Given 2008). Vigenettes are suitable for studying value-laden concepts such as 'class' (Torres, 2009). The following extract from Wakeling (2010) was

useful because as my interviewees had initially responded to a call for people who considered themselves to be a 'working class academic', it was important that interviewees engaged in more depth with why this idenitity resonated with them.

> It does not follow that the occupational position and life circumstances of a junior professional such as an academic can be compared to that of someone in a 'solidly' working-class occupation such as a bus driver, cleaner, supermarket checkout assistant or lathe operator. In general, pay and conditions are better in the professions, as are the measurable outcomes for quality of life (p. 38).

"Can I Describe Myself as Working Class?"

The material conditions in which people grow up may have a lasting impact one's identities, but when some enter a hierarchical institution like academia, it can leave them feeling confused about their identity. Asking respondents to speak about this led to a small number of them (n. 5) expressing some conflict of whether this was a suitable identifying descriptor:

> *Am I working class? I don't know.* [Karen, professional services at a post 1992 institution]

This was a slight departure from the rest of the findings as respondents from 'new universities' were the most likely to describe themselves as being working class. Others referred to lifestyle differences, when compared to their parents, as a reason why they struggled with defining their class positioning:

> *We don't experience the same grind that my parents did. But no matter how educated or different our lifestyle is now, that background is never gonna go away.* [Tiffany: senior lecturer in Social Sciences at a post 1992 institution]

The rest of the respondents who were unsure about how to 'place themselves in a class', agreed in part with Wakeling's (2010) reasoning i.e. they had economic privileges in comparison to the bus driver, cleaner or supermarket checkout assistant (p. 38). This may be due to their relatively

settled position as permanent members of staff (although academia is anything but a settled profession). Melissa, a researcher within Health Sciences at a traditional institution, was also unsure, referred to the struggles a typical working-class person experience:

> *Its difficult. On one hand I could say I'm middle class as I have a house. But I am working class as I am always having to try.*

This ability to navigate through the tough times is something that is often connected with the working-class experience (Gerrard 2019). It is also an example of what Yosso (2005) calls 'aspirational capital', a form of capital that refers to the ability to maintain dreams and the tireless commitment to pursue those dreams despite countless structural and institutional barriers. Melissa makes a further comment that is interesting—she isn't working class because she owns a house. A view that sees home ownership being associated with more affluent households (Burrows 2003). But this ignores Margaret Thatcher's 'Right to Buy' scheme which gave all tenants of local authority houses—most of whom were working-class people—the right to purchase their home. By 1996, 30 per cent of tenants had become owner occupiers (Davies 2013). Although 'generation rent', a result of the 2008 economic recession, has meant that homeownership is once again becoming the preserve of the wealthiest households (McKee and Soaita 2018).

Joanna, an assistant professor in Social Sciences, at a red brick institution, expands in more detail regarding the difficulty for an academic claiming a working-class identity:

> *I look around at my life and I think I have no right to call myself working class at all because me and my partner have more money…we live in a very sort of proper kind of middle-class area and we do very middle-class things… But then I can't describe myself as being middle class because I always feel like I have one foot in the working-class world.*

Joanna has a point. We already see a fetishization of working-class culture in fashion, music and in the street food revolution, while in academia, inequalities experienced by working class people are colonised by middle class academics for publications. There are examples of white elite academics, oozing with privilege, who desire that attractive working-class status, until it's not inconvenient, and then they shed it like a second skin. But for

Joanna and others, it's not as easy to say they are now middle-class as each referred to concerns about their finances. When working class people move into middle class worlds, the fear of debt is always there.

"You're Not Working Class"

We are often told that a working-class scholar is a contradictory notion. Melanie, also an assistant professor in Social Sciences, at a red brick institution, expands on why this is:

> *What working class means to everyone looking in at the working class, and sometimes how working-class people see themselves, is that working class means failure, working class means at the bottom of everything. Working class means not being educated, not well read. It always has these really negative connotations. Everything that is about being at the bottom, not good enough.*

With this in mind, about one quarter of all interviewees reported examples of the negative commentary they received when they had spoken to their friends or colleagues about taking part in this research study.

> *I mentioned to some friends I was doing this interview… Completely changed the whole atmosphere. "Why are you doing that?" "Why do you identify as working class?"… It was almost like I was making an attack. I never really talk about my background because…it makes people uncomfortable.* [Tara, a lecturer in Sociology at a post 1992 institution]

> *A colleague said to me, you know, you're a lecturer, you're on a good wage, you own your home, you're not working class. The thing is, it's like um, why should we feel guilty for the class identification…and why do we have to prove that to anybody else?* [Nathan, a lecturer in Sociology at a post 1992 institution]

This is similar to the experience that Cavanagh (2018) describes. When talking to her friends after she went to university as a student she would be told: "you're not working class, if you go to university!" But this opinion predates widening participation policies, when fewer people from disadvantaged background when to university. Nathan's comment at the end of the extract is interesting as he refers to the need to have to "*prove a working-class identity*". His comment links well with Tara's as despite Britain supposedly being a society obsessed with class, it is still seen as inappropriate to talk about it openly.

Challenging someone's class can be hurtful. I've had my own uncomfortable conversations while writing this book. Perhaps claiming a working-class identity, from the supposed advantaged financial and educational perspective of an academic, could be seen as pretentious. Or, as someone said to me during the writing up of this research, "wanting the best of both worlds". One reason why the concept of a working-class academic may be difficult for some people to grasp, is because the terms social class and socioeconomic status (SES) are often conflated, where they should be distinguished as separate constructs (Ostrove and Cole 2003). SES is one's current social and economic situation. Low SES households have little income or wealth to buffer against the negative impacts of an adverse life event. Whereas social class refers to a stratification system that divides a society into hierarchal social positions. One's class background typically remains static across generations (ibid.). A working-class person can be in a 'blue-collar' occupation and have a high amount of cultural capital, and vice versa, be in a professional role, and still be a working-class person.

Despite this book starting with a reminder that the 'working classes' are not a singular entity, there seems to be: "*a very clear demarcation between being working class and educated*" [Seb]. Returning to Cavanagh (2018), she argues that the belief that you can't 'consume' sophisticated culture, and still be working class perpetuates well-worn stereotypes of working-class people. Ignorant stereotypes about the 'uneducated working class' rolled out during Brexit are dangerous as they can be internalized. As Connolly (2017) notes, it ignores all the social, cultural and economic limitations that initially held him back (p. 238). In his book entitled 'Knowing your Place: Essays on the Working Class by the Working Class' he asks, does something as simple as avocado make you middle class? (ibid). Connolly (2017) argues that "if we want working class writers, actors, politicians, and judges, if we want those institutions to understand working class life, then we need to expect… [them] to be educated and intelligent, perhaps even cultured" (p. 238).

Around one quarter of respondents were angry with the idea that there was even a conflict over the working-class academic identity. Comments from two interviewees stood out:

> *I actually like get very very angry about that because I think stripping working class academics of their working class title is a way to neutralise us and I think it's a way to take away some of our power. I had it fed a lot to me, like I did my*

> *masters in an elite institution and I had that sort of used against me quite a lot when I was trying to raise awareness about inequality, about snobbery and elitism within the college. Quite often it would be used a bit, a bit of a comeback of like "you're not working class anymore". And I think it was, it was done to delegitimise what I was talking about.* [Isabelle]

> *For generations there have always been autodidacts. I've been around self-taught people all my life. Very interesting people, well read, well-argued people. Why does going to university and getting a piece of paper mean that one person is educated over the other. I don't accept that. I don't accept that in anyway. So that's why I call myself a working class academic as I don't see class as this high and low culture… culture is formed through context, history, narrative and experience. So therefore, it is not high and low, it is different.* [Melanie]

The sum of the experiences described in this section suggest that a working-class and academic identity exists in a dichotomous relationship, where one is depicted as in almost complete opposition to the other. This is a problematic discourse and should be rejected.

Key Features of a Working Class Academic

Examining the interview data, I found four main features that defined respondents as being a working class academic:

- Family background,
- Uneven access to capital
- A lack of a safety net to 'manage' academic precarity,
- A "habitus war." (Bentley 2020: 27)

Family Background

All respondents identified their social history as being a key feature of their identity:

> *My lived experience i.e. free school meals, council housing, class erasure and poverty influenced my life chances.* [Daisy: associate lecturer in Human Geography, on a fixed term contract at a Russell Group institution]

Respondents, while insistent their parents had given them a good upbringing, talked of their life choices being restricted due to a lack of economic capital. For instance, a third of respondents hadn't even considered university to be an option for them. The delayed decision to engage with HE correlates with the research on working class adults, where they discuss higher education being 'not for the likes of me' (See Reay et al. 2009).

For those who attended university at the traditional age, their lack of economic capital meant that under half of respondents attended their local institution, normally a post 1992 university, as they had not considered there was choice. Research on students by Donnelly and Gamsu (2018) found 'staying at home and studying locally' is something that tends to be found in disadvantaged communities. Further to this, only 20 per cent of my own respondents had attended either a Russell Group or Elite institution for their first degree. This is similar to statistics by Wyness (2017) who reported that the most disadvantaged applicants are six times less likely to enter a high tariff institution compared to the most advantaged. Binns (2019) found that this was also a factor with 'academics of working class heritage', as there was an almost universal reluctance of her interviewees to move away from their current institution and to consider employment at elite institutions (p. 112).

Returning to the experiences of my academics and their cultural capital, those from disadvantaged backgrounds, it is argued, tend to engage in populist cultural activities such as watching television or attending football games, whereas classical music and avantgarde movies are examples of elite cultural tastes, concentrated among sections of the middle and upper classes. (Halle 1993). My respondents reported examples of 'low brow' culture e.g. 'playing in the street', watching TV and playing sport [mainly football]. Yet some, displayed objectified cultural capital, such as a love of vintage clothing, as well as the ability to 'consume' the work of Milton, Shakespeare and Brown. But, again, a lack of economic capital meant that these cultural activities were rationed. Frank, a lecturer in Geography, at a Russell Group institution mentioned that his father worked as a steward in a London theatre which gave him the opportunity to watch plays for free. While Paul, a teaching fellow, in Engineering, also in a Russell Group institution, discussed how his mum and dad had a shared interest in the style of French new wave e.g. Vivre sa vie, Breathless etc.

As they were expensive films to buy, they would buy one film at Christmas.

As alluded to in this interview extract, 'purchasing' such examples of embodied cultural capital required economic capital, but as their families had fewer financial resources, building cultural resources was often difficult.

Respondents acknowledged that their fewer life chances meant that their early childhood consisted of small social networks. This is unsurprising as Putnam notes, "social capital is even less equitably distributed than other forms of capital" (Putnam 2000). Li et al. (2008) found that those from disadvantaged backgrounds were less likely, in comparison to those from advantaged backgrounds, to 'know' a solicitor or a bank manager. My interviewees tended to agree, reporting that they typically had dense local ties within strongly connected neighbourhoods, and a continuity of relationships when they were growing up.

Uneven Access to Capital

After becoming academics, my respondents reported having varying degrees of economic, cultural, and social capital that was not comparable to that of their more advantaged colleagues.

Economic Capital

For all but the 'late career' respondents, access to economic capital was complicated.

There's this assumption that if you're an academic that you've automatically got money, a nice house, a nice pension and all of these material things. [Wendy, a postdoctoral researcher in History at a traditional university]

Respondents argued this was not the case, in some cases respondents were earning less than minimum wage. Daisy reported being paid 4–5 hours a week, which she suggested worked out "*at around £100 per week*". But in order to complete her duties to the best of her abilities, she needed to work approx. 12 hours per week. The extra hours she needed to ensure her work was completed to a high level, meant that her wage equated to "*minimum wage*". A further problem she faced was that she did not have full time availability for a job outside of the university. Thus, she would undertake, insecure, ad hoc work from the university to supplement her income. Others reported their difficult financial position:

By some definitions I am underclass as I earn so little. [Sarah, an associate lecturer in Sociology at a red brick institution]

I have two to three jobs to make rent. I live in London which you know is not cheap. I'm not going to be homeless yet, but I wonder where my next pay cheque is coming. [Lindsey, a guest lecturer in History at a post 1992 institution]

If they manage to traverse academic precarity, and gain permanency, their financial situation does not improve overnight:

Since becoming a lecturer I have spent the last five years paying back debts that have built up throughout my education. [Paul]

Economic capital also refers to savings and property. While around half of my respondents (n. 48) had a regular income upwards of £35k per annum, almost all referred to having little access to financial support from family. Others, who did not own their own home, reporting paying high rents to live close to their institutions.

Cultural Capital

Bourdieu defined cultural capital as familiarity with the legitimate culture within a field. The field in this case being academia, and the various forms of capital including 'objective' e.g. books and works of art; 'embodied' e.g. language and mannerisms and 'institutionalised' e.g. education credentials. Most respondents accepted that their cultural capital had developed since they had entered university so that they were, in comparison to their family, able to 'decode'—the cultural capital of the dominant culture (Martin 2008). But they were left feeling adrift at times as they did not have the same shared cultural experiences that forms the basis of many conversations.

All my formative experiences were influenced by being from a working-class background. Everything I associate with being middle class, I have only experienced over the last ten years. [Bethany, a senior lecturer in Biological Sciences at a red brick institution]

While you may develop cultural capital in university as a student, and then in more depth as an academic, you are always playing catch up with your middle-class colleagues.

> *I have got friends whose family have PhDs and they know what they are doing and they understand the system, what you are supposed to do. Whereas its been a lot harder for me to figure it out.* [Paige, a lecturer in Health Sciences at a redbrick institution]

I return to this theme in Chap. 4 because respondents reported that a feature of being a working-class academic was that they were left feeling like 'failures' in the academy.

In comparison to those working in the South of England, Scotland or Ireland, respondents from the North of England and Wales embraced the term 'working class academic' with more ease. I was not surprised by this as portrayals of the 'north' are grounded in relation to various forms of working-class industry such as mills, mines and factories, whereas Wales is of rugby, sheep and the hills. These portrayals are representative for some, but they are also problematic as they ignore post-industrialisation employment such as "warehouse and distribution work and payday loan companies" (McKenzie 2018), and focus primarily on a white, working-class masculinity. Welsh academics reported similar experiences to those in the north of England, as:

> *all of Wales is working class.* [Ivy, an independent researcher in Social History]

While a sweeping statement, statistical data shows that in Wales, 28 per cent of all local areas were among the poorest 10 per cent of areas before housing costs, a higher proportion than any other part of England and Wales (Office of National Statistics 2020). According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2015), 25 per cent of all jobs, and 45 per cent of part-time jobs in Wales, pay below two-thirds of the UK median hourly salary (Collingwood 2015). Nathan, a respondent born in Wales, working in England, saw his national identity inextricably connected with class:

> *I don't know if you realised… I haven't got a really strong accent, but I'm Welsh. I mean, that is also something, I think that is really linked to my class identify. I mean, I come from South Wales where…most people identified as very working class etc. For me, those two things are very much kind of intertwined.*

Nathan's comment was reiterated by others from Wales. "Welshness, for them, was understood as embodied behaviours, synonymous with a working-class habitus" (Evans 2019: 181). Some respondents originally from Wales also reported microaggressions based on accent (See Chap. 4).

Social Capital

Less was said about levels of social capital. Perhaps this is because throughout the interviews I rather naively made the assumption that as academics, they would have greater levels of social capital. The metaphor for social capital is that "people who do better are somehow better connected" (Burt 2005: 202). If one is to compare their situation prior to accessing academia, this would be the case for my respondents, as they would briefly refer to how their social circles had expanded. But when discussing social capital in more depth, respondents, both male and female, felt they did not have the same depth of networks when compared to their middle-class colleagues.

> *Yes I have more networks now. But people look for like-minded people, so my network is not as big as one might expect.* [Frank]

> *If there was a project available, I don't believe I would be 'first on the list' of who colleagues would contact. This is nothing to do with my capabilities, but more to do with who I am.* [Daisy]

An explanation for this can be found in the work of Friedman and Laurison (2019) who produced a detailed study of four professions—tv, architecture, accountancy and acting. Among other things, their research showed that there was risk aversion in the recruitment and promotion of people, so much so that the hiring process resulting in a focus on 'like-minded' people. Examples of class based microaggressions, discussed in Chap. 4, are a reason why working class academics, a minority in academia, may find it difficult to develop their social capital. While their store of social capital had increased, they were "lagging behind" their colleagues, and as such did not 'pass' as a typical academic.

Academic mobility, a key feature of being an academic, was also an issue as the 'regional stickiness', or emotional connections that affects decision making (Finn 2015) meant that not all academics were as mobile as others. I found that typically. the academics from working class backgrounds that I interviewed, were less mobile in comparison to those from traditional academic backgrounds. Female respondents reminded me that their local ties often had a negative impact on their careers as they were often expected to take on caring responsibilities such as looking after relatives. Acker and Armenti (2004) note that women are especially mobile as ECRs, because they may have fewer family responsibilities than in the later phases, but again, this does not take into account the intersection of class.

The female working class academics I interviewed, who were not always the "*typical young mobile PhD student*" [Lynn, a graduate teaching assistant in Mathematics at a post 1992 institution], felt that their mobility was constrained. Co-working academic partners are reported to have a gender egalitarian division of labour in the home (Pixley 2008). But it is acknowledged that having children impacts more on women's international collaborations more than men. The key issue that appeared to influence one's mobility was whether they attended university at the traditional age, or if they attended as mature students. Those who attended as non-traditional students, male and female, had already built a life, and had other responsibilities, so tended to work at institutions that they could "travel to easily by car" [Ruth, a lecturer in Geography at a traditional institution].

A Habitus War

When one's habitus, a product of life trajectories encounters a field with which it is not familiar (Reay 2004) "reflexivity and transformation may occur" (Ingram and Abrahams 2015: 145). Habitus war, an insightful term by Bentley (2020: 27), sums up the feeling of many of my respondents. This refers to a set of dislocating symptoms produced by the reconciliation process between a working-class identity and the hierarchically organized field of academia, where a working-class habitus is 'deficient' when placed in direct comparison with the preferred middle-class habitus (Skeggs 2004). When speaking to my respondents I was interested in how they managed their class migration. Various methods were discussed. No specific 'type' was the most 'dominant form of habitus.

Cleft Habitus

A third of respondents talked of feeling in 'limbo', what Friedman (2016) calls, 'double isolation', from both their original and current class positions (p. 136). Lubrano (2005) describes this as being *"two people"* (p. 1). A cleft habitus is where the way one acts, thinks and feels may be 'split' due to experiences of social mobility. Also known as habitus clive, a common way of expressing this feeling is "this place is not for the likes of me". Respondents reported being uncomfortable with the obvious differences between their past and current class positions.

> *I spend a lot of money of a good bottle of wine that would seem obscene in my family.* [Audrey, a senior lecturer in Psychology at a traditional institution]

Academics at elite HEIs in particular, noted differences

> *I work in a very privileged institution where black-tie, five-course dinners in beautiful halls are the norm. I spent £130 on the May Ball recently. That's a week's wage for my mum. I feel sick.* [Linda, a post-doctoral researcher in Gender Studies at an Oxbridge institution]

Friedman (2016) comments that this divided sense of self may be a 'painful' position for these class 'transfuges' (p. 132). Reay (2013) describes her own experience in an autobiographical essay, stating that "social mobility can often be a difficult, alienating process… It can tear community and sometimes even the family out of the heart of individuals. I struggled to keep my family close despite moving so far away in terms of social space … [it] is difficult to avoid a sense of treachery and overwhelming guilt. As a result, despite immense relief and gratitude at my privilege, I have an enduring ambivalence about what I have and who I have become that characterizes many of the upwardly mobile" (pp. 672–673). This transformation, at times, lead to strained family relationships among my own respondents:

> *I am quite middle class in terms of my lifestyle, and all the rest of it. And sometimes my family and I don't seem to connect because of this. I feel torn when my family can't understand words I say and the subjects I talk about.* [Marianne, a researcher in Economics at a Russell Group institution]

> *I've drifted from my friends. I'm writing a book and my dad asks me what it is about. It might as well be rocket science.* [Paul]

Sadly this comment resonated with many respondents. Lubrano (2005) points out that despite parents wanting social mobility for their children, when that child become one of the middle classes (the boss) it can be difficult for some working-class parents (p. 32).

Respondents reported that social mobility had some detrimental effects on some of their closest personal relationships.

> *I wasn't aware of differences while at university. But since I become a researcher she does say that I think I "know everything". Don't get me wrong, she is very supportive.* [Richard, a research fellow in Geography at a post 1992 institution]

A study conducted in the United States by Schiebinger et al. (2008) found that thirteen percent of their survey respondents had partners who are not active in the paid labour force. Most striking was that 86 per cent of academics with stay-at home partners were men. I did not find comparable data among my own respondents. Anecdotal data suggests that this may be because male academics who are from working class backgrounds are more likely to be in precarious employment, compared with male elite or middle-class academics. Something that directly contradicts the masculine norm of 'success' (adapted from Morley 2013, cited in Courtois and O'Keefe 2019). But as I will discuss in Chap. 3, precarity can affect relationships.

Lawler argues that upward mobility can be especially problematic for women, as 'women's desires for social mobility have long been portrayed as markers of 'pretence and triviality' (1999). This was something that respondents at the end of the study briefly discussed, so further research is needed in this area, but there were conversations with a small number of female respondents who reported having "very difficult times" [Amy: a teaching fellow in English at a Russell Group institution] when they would talk about their work at home.

> *I worry how I must come across because if there is something on the news that I have invariably either researched or taught about, I'll end up making remarks about it. It seems to make my husband feel inferior and I don't know why.* [Veronica, a lecturer in History at traditional institution]

> *Its tough from time to time as we are in different worlds. But she keeps me grounded too.* [Amy]

Skeggs (1997) talks of a sense of dislocation, going onto to describe this as being someone who 'got above herself'. I heard a similar comment from two female respondents:

> *It has become difficult to talk about what I do with my husband. It's likes he thinks I am above myself when we talk about these things.* [Hayley, a lecturer in Geography at a traditional institution]

> *Talking about my research causes an argument, its not worth it.* [Deb, a teaching fellow in Health at a post 1992 institution]

More personal conversations during the interviews, lead to the aforementioned respondents suggesting that their career had caused difficulties in their relationship.

Discussions of these relationships were complex as the respondents also talked about how proud their spouses were about what they were doing:

> *He tells me, and everyone how well I have done. He reads through my drafts, even though it might sound like double dutch to him. But there are some areas that can be difficult.* [Jade, a teaching assistant in classics at an Oxbridge institution]

Existing research talks positively about dual-career academic couples, but little is said about female academics who are in relationships with partners outside of academia. This may be that despite advances towards gender equality, it is still quite unusual for men to be the main supportive spouse for a woman's career (Folke and Rickne 2020).

Academic research also tends to focus on women with academic partners. Bach's (2019) PhD is a departure from this. She examined the experiences of men partnered with women in high-income professions. She addressed "the 'cultural work' necessary for these men to construct themselves, their lives and their relationships". It was heartening to see a positive study where the men who were 'running the family' "were able to build intimate relationships with their children…and (re)construct themselves as caregivers, [transforming] what it means to be a father and a husband". Reading through the transcripts of my own interviews with the women who talked to me about having some difficult times, it was clear that when their male partner had a 'job' to do in the household, relationships ran more smoothly. But as Bach (2019) says "the husband who supports his wife's career is not necessarily an easy position to take and maintain". One respondent who discussed these issues from the point of view of sexual orientation felt, that while there was conflict from time to time, in the main she agreed with commentary from Gibson (2006) who found that lesbian academic couples were collaborative, but were also willing to abandon the security of tenured positions for the sake of their relationship. But again, this is the experiences of a couple where both were in academia. This is an area that needs further research from not only a gendered perspective, but taking into account intersections of class, sexuality etc.

An Abandoned Habitus

As the secondary field of the university exerts a more dominant influence, the primary habitus is "usurped or overwritten" (Ingram 2018: 68). For one third of my respondents, this meant they began to 'pass' as the more typical academic. Passing as middle class required superficial adjustments

> *I spent a lot of time observing. What women wore, what words they would choose to use.* [Oliva, a senior lecturer in Social Sciences at a traditional institution]

> *Take up less space.* [Polly, a researcher in Business Studies at a red brick institution]

As Burns (2019) says: "You have to make yourself gentle, physically small and approachable. You have to smile more than is natural, but never too broadly. You have to nod along and make reassuring gestures in conversation". This comment resonated with Polly: "*This is me!!*" Burns (2019) asks is the price of passing worth paying? Deb welcomed the privileges she accrued in a middle-class space, but like others, she felt that she was contributing to the silence around class by not being open about their background.

> *I'm closing down important discussions and contributing to stereotypes about working classness.*

In other words, by making ourselves seen and heard we then provide disadvantaged students a clear example of what they might do beyond graduation. It also allows for honest discussions about the barriers they may face, and how they may overcome them. 'We' should come out to them as working class. I return to this discussion in later chapters.

Chameleon Habitus

The rest of my cohort appeared to have flexible dispositions (Reay et al. 2009), similar to what is described by Abrahams and Ingram (2013) as a *chameleon habitus.* These respondents kept their working-classness:

> *You don't just leave behind your whole landscape of childhood and life and values and all of that just because you enter into a certain job.* [Jacqueline, a senior lecturer in Drama at a traditional institution]

But they embraced their new world: "*I'm proud of what I do*" [Diane: a post-doctoral researcher in Health Sciences at a post 1992 institution]. They acknowledged the difficulties they faced earlier on in their career, but were able to adapt their habitus to better fit with new fields

> *I change according to the environment, the same I do if talking to my GP and my best friend.* [Pat: a professor in Biological Sciences at an Oxbridge institution]

> *I am me when I am being professional, dealing with students, colleagues etc, but when with my family, I am also 'me', a wife, a daughter etc. We have more than one side to us.* [Lynn]

For some, performing a professional job and earning a salary did not eradicate the habitus formed in one's family (Tokarczyk and Fay 1993). Instead, changes were incorporated, resulting in 'unremarked adjustments' (Bourdieu 2000: 157–160) to the habitus. For these respondents, academia was an interesting part of their life, but it wasn't their whole life.

There was also the sense that there "*one person for work, and another person for home*" [Connie, a teaching assistant in Mathematics at a Russell Group institution]. Abrahams and Ingram (2013) speak of this in their paper about chameleon habitus. Referring to 'Stacey', they discuss how she "does not present her true self to those at university, rather this is reserved for her home life". A number of respondents such referred to how they are a different person at home compared to work. The common theme being that they "*could not be themselves*" [Pat] in the academic setting as there is a particular way of behaving in academia that does not "*fit*" with who they were [Jacqueline].

> *I'm not saying middle-class people aren't warm, but there's a different set of codes with their language and behavior that I don't always get and when you meet other likeminded people you feel "Oh I can finally relax now!* [Kimberley, a graduate teaching assistant in Film Studies at a traditional university]

These respondents, in their totality talked of how they were aware that they had minority status within the institution, and that their identity would not be validated or affirmed. But instead of wanting to 'pass', they refused to engage with what they saw as the "*very conservative world of*

academia", [Ella, a teaching assistant in Geography at a Russell Group institution], any more than what was necessary. Instead they used academia for the resources it could give i.e. the ability to teach what they wanted, "*to be paid to read*" [Jeremy, a postdoctoral researcher in Geography at a red brick institution], and to be able to gain grants to carry out their own research interests.

A Lack of a Safety Net to 'Manage' Academic Precarity

One consequence of the rise of the 'neoliberal' university has been the growth of casualised employment amongst academic staff. British higher education institutions use more zero-hour contracts compared with any other employment sector (Butler 2013). The casualisation of the traditional academic pathway from PhD to permanent lecturer has been replaced by hourly paid teaching and 'research assistant' contracts. This new 'arrangement' presents a 'fundamental change to academia, splitting it in two—the 'tenured' and the 'tenuous' (Kimber 2003: 49). When an academic does not have a financial safety net to manage the income insecurity, precarity becomes 'classed'.

A survey by the UCU found that over 40 percent of higher education and further education staff on either short-term or zero-hour contracts have struggled to pay bills. Some 30 percent earn less than £1000 a month cited in Lyons 2015). This is in a sector where over 90 percent of academics earned over £30,000, with a third of those earning over £50,000 (Advance HE 2018). UCU also revealed that 17 per cent of those on precarious contracts said that they struggled to pay for food, one third (34 per cent) said that they found it difficult to pay rent/mortgage payments, and 36 per cent said that they struggled to pay essential household bills like electricity, water and gas. Amongst my respondents on precarious contracts, half had struggled to pay their mortgage/rent, to the point that they had been on the verge of homelessness. All but three respondents had used foodbanks while on 'casual' contracts.

> *I teach four hourly paid modules so am paid for eight hours of teaching which works out at around £220 per week. But even with my wife's wage, we can barely run a household. We are on a final warning from my landlord, and have visited food banks on two occasions.* [Lyra, a teaching assistant in Theology at a red brick institution]

While many academics are on fixed term contracts, there are different degrees of disadvantage depending on social class. People from advantaged financial backgrounds are often able to immunise against insecure incomes via family support. I discussed precarity from the point of view of social class with a number of (self-defining) middle-class academics. One researcher, unrelated to this study who did not wish to be named, commented:

> *It was pretty grim having so few hours, but I could manage as my husband has well-paid employment and mum and dad are doing ok.*

Academics from disadvantaged social backgrounds do not have a financial buffer. As Talia, working in a Russell Group institution, said:

> *I think if you are from a working-class background, like my family, they, they aren't property owners, you know, there was nothing to hand out, or inherit, or own. There's no security blanket, and so, you know, and I think that's what might make it a little different from perhaps another academic, who may be on a 0.5 contract or maybe struggled for years to do a PhD without a grant for it or anything, but underneath all that there is some kind of sense of security, that there is, there's money somewhere.*

Or as Seb says:

> *When you say to somebody in academia, "Oh! I don't have any money this month". They hear that as "Oh I don't have as much money as I thought I was gonna have this month". They don't have, there's no language to communicate with somebody "I don't have money". I have a sort of income and if I lose my money, I can't move back in my Mum, I can't put that on her. She's poorer than I am like and I have no other family who can like, there's not safety net for me. If I fall off that tight rope, I die.*

Without other income, many have to turn to the welfare state for support in between jobs. Although the welfare conditionality of Universal Credit that requires an individual to demonstrate to 35 hours per week job search activity, is incompatible with academia as eight hours paid teaching often equates to full time employment when 'prep' is factored in. As I will go onto discuss in the next chapter, this lack of a financial buffer meant that a number of my respondents were seriously considering or had already left academia.

My respondents also discussed other issues, highlighted by Thatcher (2019), that marked them out as being a working class academic e.g. a halted career progression, the need to 'prove' yourself, and a sense of alienation:

> *Up until 18 months ago I was on a fixed term contract. I am managing to get on my feet money wise now my contract is permanent, but I am playing catch up, economically and culturally, in comparison to those who had a smoother transition into academia. I know how incredibly lucky I am to get a permanent post but the stop start nature of my career to date has left me hugely anxious, about my position in academia.* [Jim, a lecturer in History at a traditional institution]

Academia seemed to be a site of self-doubt for many of my respondents. The next two chapters focuses on the issues described in this short extract.

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CHAPTER 3

Precarity

Fig. 3.1 'Precarity'

T. Crew, *Higher Education and Working-Class Academics*,
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Introduction

The global economy has gone through seismic change over the last thirty years. One such example was highlighted by Guy Standing (2011), who talked of how a precarious existence, one that is lacking in predictability, job security, material or psychological welfare, is becoming the norm in many industries, including academia. As mentioned in Chap. 1, just under half of my respondents (n. 41), were on various forms of 'fixed term' contracts. I devote a chapter to this subject as precarity is a classed issue. As Talia says: "*everything is enhanced when you are working class*". Having economic capital 'buys' you the time and space to manage insecure contracts, and to further develop other forms of capital which may offer opportunities to move from precarity to permanency.

Numbers of Precarious Academics in Academia

It is notoriously difficult to calculate the exact number of casualised workers in universities as reliable information about research and teaching contracts can be difficult to access and, individual situations differ across departments and institutions. Courtois and O'Keefe (2019) also report that casual employees are hard to reach or may be scared to discuss their experiences. One very recent example of the latter can be found in my interview with Pam, a graduate teaching assistant in Economics at a traditional institution. In 2018, 2019, and 2020 there were a series of connected strikes in Higher and Further Education. Pam revealed that she felt awkward whenever the strikes were mentioned as she felt she should strike because she is on a temporary contract and wanted to show solidarity. But due to her "frighteningly precarious financial situation" she could not afford to do this.

Data from the Higher Education Statistic Agency (HESA) shows that 34 per cent of academic staff were employed on fixed-term contracts in 2017/18 (HESA 2020). This is lower than levels of precarity found among my own respondents. Yet, HESA data is inconsistent as they do not collect information on the length or type of contracts, or on the use of hourly-paid staff. It only collects data on the balance of fixed-term contracts, as against open-ended contracts, and on the use of 'atypical' contracts—those which are not 'employment' contracts and have a high level of flexibility. When the use of atypical academic staff is factored in 54 per cent of all academic staff and 49 per cent of all academic teaching staff are

on insecure contracts (University and College Union 2016). These statistics contrast further with those from the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) who claim there only 3.2 per cent of full-time equivalent academic workforce are on 'atypical' contracts, and they arise from universities' need for "skilled professionals contributing specialist teaching". Hunt (2016) notes that as around 90 per cent were paid at junior lecturer level or below, "if this is a reserve army of specialist professional labour, it's not charging a very good hourly rate".

What Does Academic Precarity 'Look Like'?

Academia is precarious in a number of ways. Your employment may be subject to frequent and unpredictable changes (Zheng 2018), and contracts are short term, time dependent on the teaching demands, or the project if on a research contract. Precarious staff may not know if their contract will be renewed until a few weeks before term (University and College Union 2016). Teaching staff tend to be paid hourly, and they are often only paid for the front facing work that they do i.e. the hour that they teach, and not paid for any preparation. Precarity can also involve frequent and unpredictable changes i.e. change of hours or modules taught. They also face being dismissed—or their contracts not being renewed—for any reason—without recourse to an appeals process (Zheng 2018: 236).

> *I taught three modules last year. Then with no explanation, the next year, zero. There was no one I could speak to about this, no one I could put in a complaint to, so that was it.* [Ben, a graduate teaching assistant in Biological Sciences at a Russel Group institution]

As I will go on to discuss in the chapter, precarity can leave those without a financial safety net, subject to the threat of poverty and homelessness. This can leave some susceptible to illnesses such as anxiety and depression.

Respondents undertaking this 'flexible' form of employment reported being saddled with large classes, having a lack of access to basic facilities such as printers, and being offered little career development or pastoral support (Lyons 2015). Some, like Samantha, report being feeling like a second-class citizen:

I had four or five short-term contracts. I had no formal induction, I was treated like the help, given more work than I was paid for, and I'm pretty sure, my supposed colleagues had no idea who I was.

Other respondents felt marginalised from colleagues, undervalued and expendable. Some felt exploited due to the levels of unpaid labour they carried out such as writing and reviewing articles, running blogs—activities seen as central to academia, and also necessary to climb up the academic career ladder.

I have conducted literature reviews and analysed data for a Professor, and he hinted this may turn into a permanent post. [Paul]

Some see these tasks as the experience needed to gain permanency, Kuehn and Corrigan (2013) describe them as 'hope labour', something which keeps workers locked into precarity.

Similar to what Zheng (2018) reports, some, so utterly demoralised by this precariousness were, on the verge of leaving academia. The difficulty of managing work and having a private life was cited as the main reasons for leaving academia. David, a Lecturer in Natural Geography at a Russell Group institution talked about the realities of his working life

I work evening and weekends, Christmas, Easter, birthdays. I travel frequently. I am single. But only because I've not had time to spend quality time with a potential partner. This is too much, so I am leaving academia in January.

Respondents talked of how academia can be incompatible with relationships for most people, and also making motherhood difficult for many women. This is consistent with Bozzon and Murgia's (2017) findings on postdoctoral fellows working in two Italian universities. They found that women in particular found that the frequent periods working abroad and participation in conferences were obstacles to the maintenance of private relationships (p. 339). Whereas the men in Bozzon and Murgia's (2017) research, as well as my own, reported more stable relationships. I will return to the theme of work/life balance later in this chapter.

Who are the Precariat?

The typical academic precariat is someone who works part time, is an ethnic minority, female and under the age of 40, and is employed at a post 1992 institution on a research only contract (Bryson and Barnes 2000; Standing 2011). At senior lecturer/senior research fellow level, precarious employment becomes less likely. Characteristics of my own respondents both match and differ somewhat from this. Data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), is useful but it does not provide statistics according to class background. Nor does it give details relating to intersections of ones identity i.e. age and ethnicity.

Age

Data from Advance HE (2018) found almost two thirds of (65 per cent) of academics aged 40 and under were on fixed-term contracts (p. 60). This is to be expected as precariousness is associated almost exclusively with young academics due to the typical understanding of the academic trajectory e.g. A Levels, onto degree, Masters study, then PhD, and after that a permanent academic post after a few years working as a Teaching Assistant/Associate. However, 28 out of the 41 respondents I spoke to who were in precarious contracts reported having a non-traditional academic trajectory e.g. starting their BA degree in their mid-late twenties, thus they had not completed their PhD until their mid-thirties. Four respondents were on fixed term contracts in their forties, something that was a worry for them.

I'm not sure I'll ever get a permanent job. [Amy]

Given the few opportunities for permanent employment, this may be an acute observation as precarity can now extend for one's entire 'career' (Gill 2009).

Gender

Much of the existing research shows that academic precarity disproportionately affects female academics (See Zheng 2018; Courtois and O'Keefe 2019). A 2014 study by the Higher Education Authority in Ireland found that men acquire 70 percent of all permanent academic positions in all seven universities in the country (cited in Ivancheva 2015). Among my

respondents there was an even spread of both men and women on fixed term contracts, and further questioning revealed that this was the case in their institutions. We discussed gender differences in relation to academic precarity and the general consensus, from both my male and female respondents, was that classed as opposed to gender differences were more apparent. For instance, Emma and Lucy relayed their observations of how the men in their department move onto permanent contracts with apparent ease:

> *This middle-class guy, within twelve months he has gone from teaching assistant to lecturer. He's just got senior lecturer, this is by year three. All the while I've been working as a TA for 4 years.* [Emma, a teaching assistant in Health Studies at a post 1992 institution]

> *We are both Teaching Associates, same subject area, but he has been given longer contracts, the more advanced modules, little bits of research over the summer.* [Lucy, a teaching associate in Law at a Russell Group institution]

Ant, a teaching associate in Social Sciences at a Russell Group institution, saw similar stories of preferential treatment:

> *I've been there for two years. I cover the introductory modules. I understand some people are struggling to get any hours, but it's clear who will move onto becoming a lecturer or research fellow—the more traditional academics.*

I asked these respondents if their experiences could be explained in anyway by gender, but they were insistent that one's apparent class position impacted on their opportunities for progression. For instance, Sophie, a teaching assistant in Biological Sciences at a Red Brick institution argued:

> *There is no doubt that women are negatively impacted. But if you ignore the intersection of class, and ethnicity, disability etc, it may appear that women are doing well. In my institution, I can't speak for others, if you are a middle-class woman you have a good chance of competing with your male colleagues for opportunities. But if you are from my background, male or female, its limited.*

Ant, agreed somewhat with Sophie:

> *I have it easier than some women in a lot of ways, but being a blunt northerner marks me out as a lesser male.*

The work of Connell (2005) supports the latter comment and serves as a useful analytical tool to identify the practices that perpetuate classed gender inequalities. Connell (2005) cited multiple forms of masculinities besides the idealised, hegemonic masculinity. For instance, the marginalized masculinity represents a more nonconforming or 'failed' masculinity (Cheng 1999) that is associated with men of colour, men with disabilities. In academia, the marginalised masculinity also includes working class men.

Disability

HESA data shows that disability disclosure rates were slightly higher among full-time academic staff on open-ended/permanent contracts compared with fixed-term contracts (3.9 per cent compared with 2.9 per cent among academic staff) (Advance HE 2018). A lower proportion of professors disclosed a disability (2.7 per cent) than non-professorial academic staff (3.8 per cent), and a smaller proportion of disabled academics were employed on senior academic contracts than academics without a disclosed disability (Advance HE n.d.). Within my cohort, five respondents, which corresponds to 6.6 per cent, had a disability. April and Ashley self-defined as being 'physically impaired', Jessie, an associate lecturer in Linguistics at a Russel Group institution, talked of having a condition which makes it difficult for her to read for long periods without experiencing nausea and headaches, Tina had a hidden disability and Brandon defined his impairment as 'severe mental health concerns'. Not all respondents disclosed this to their institution. Jessie, for instance, talked of feeling she could not afford to disclose her disability this until she was made permanent.

Dolmage (2017) says metaphorically and physically there are steep steps to the Ivory Tower, where only the truly 'fit' can survive this 'climb'" (p. 44). Accounts of structural ableism were reported by all five respondents with a disability. Tina reported difficulties in obtaining reasonable adjustments, while April and Ashley talked of inaccessible campus infrastructure. What was distressing was their opinion that their requirements were not addressed as they were not 'full staff members'.

> *They are not going to come out and say that, as the Equality Act protects people with disabilities. But for the two years that I have been a teaching associate, I have been continually timetabled in an inaccessible classroom. These issues might not be sorted as the module convenor does not have time, but considering*

I'm her support staff, that's quite disheartening. [Ashley, a teaching assistant in Psychology at a post 1992 institution]

For April, a lecturer in Biomedical Sciences at a traditional institution, a disability meant additional academic labour.

The support is there for students, quite rightly of course, but I have to e-mail, phone people up, liaise and organise, just to make sure I can access the buildings where I will be teaching.

These factors caused disproportionate levels of anxiety and stress, which were detrimental to mental health. Including disability in the conversation about precarity is vital. At present, the academic and grey literature focuses on precariously employed academics experiencing stress and anxiety *because* of working in precarious employment. It says little about those with existing disabilities who also experience stress and anxiety due to the difficuties they have while navigating academia with a disability.

The intersection of class and disability is important to understand as the sixth State of the Nation Report by the Social Mobility Commission found that disabled people from working-class backgrounds are three times less likely than non-disabled people from privileged backgrounds to be in higher-paid jobs. Impairments, health conditions and social responses to these conditions often prevented people with disabilities from working, thus depriving them of income. Disability often brings with it a series of higher and additional costs e.g. equipment essential for independence, as well as ongoing expenses such as food, clothing, utilities and recreation. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation estimated the following weekly budget was required for people with a variety of disabilities.

- £1513 for a people with high support needs;
- £389 for a people with low-medium needs;
- £1336 for hearing impairments;
- £632 for visual impairments (Smith et al. 2004)

Brandon, a teaching assistant in Health Studies at a post 1992 institution, offered an understanding of the impact of disability when on a precarious contract:

I'm fixed term so do not 'receive sick pay'. If my mental health worsens, as it likely with my condition, then I am in financial trouble.

According to a recent The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development report, half of the population will develop a mental illness at some point in their lives, with adverse effects on their productivity, wage, and employment opportunities (OECD 2014). This means that "*not only is there a social justice case for ridding the system of precarity, there is a business case too!*" [Daisy].

While the above situation would be typical of all precarious academics with poor mental health, those from working class backgrounds are much less likely to have the economic capital to allow them to take much needed time away from work, and as such tend to work "*through it*" as Coleen, a lecturer in Psychology/Linguistics at a traditional institution says, which makes her condition worse. Tina, a lecturer In Secondary and Post Compulsory Education at a post 1992 institution, discussed how she would work for long periods while unwell.

> *If I'm in work its presumed that I am well, but in reality, I'm normally 'half well'. There is no understanding that I might be unwell but need the money.*

This binary notion of being 'well' or 'sick' is not helpful for someone like Tina where their impairment is invisible, and there is a 'shaded area' between health and sickness (McGurk et al. 2018). Is not helpful for someone like Tina where their impairment is invisible.

Family/Social Support

Reading through the extracts of interviews, I saw many examples of encouragement and moral support from family members, that helped to negate some of the additional barriers they faced due to having a disability within academia. For instance, Jessie said that her mum, despite not understanding subject area, would read out loud research papers that Jessie written, and make edits where she indicated. Brandon reported that if he was suffering an attack of anxiety his dad would drive him to work when he has teaching and wait around for him. These participants commented that their friends and family provided the support that the university should provide.

Respondents also reported the familial/social support they received from online support groups relating to their disability. Tina referred to being a member of a Facebooks group where members had a similar disability to her.

The group can be a constant source of support when my MS is particularly difficult to cope with. But as most in the group are not involved in academia, I can talk freely. I have used it to talk about how class can affect my current financial situation.

Tina used this support group to manage the difficult times she had navigating academia. Such groups can be popular with people with disabilities as online support can provide a more welcoming venue to discuss sensitive topics.

Ethnicity

James and Valluvan (2014) identified a dangerous "mutual embrace" between racism and neoliberalism in higher education, where the 'market' has clearly had an impact on who is employed in HE. Amongst UK nationals, BME groups make up only 8 percent of Professors, while amongst non-UK Nationals, they comprised of 14 percent of Professors. White males comprised of 69 percent of Professors, whereas White females comprised of 23 percent of Professor, leaving BME males comprising of 7 percent and BME female 2 percent respectively (Advance HE 2018: 164). Due to the lack of data on social class, I'm not able to calculate how many working-class black female, or female professors we currently have.

The above statistics support Puwar's (2004) description of female BME academics as "space invaders", as their very physical presence disrupts the normalized white male spaces of the academy. Casualised contracts magnify pre-existing inequalities in the workforce, so it may be no surprise that HESA data found among both UK and non-UK academic staff, a higher proportion of BME staff were on fixed-term contracts (33 percent and 50 percent, respectively) compared to White staff (28 percent and 39 percent, respectively) (Advance HE 2018: 180). Among my own respondents, four from a BME background were on a fixed term contract. My respondents had similar experiences to that reported by Bhopal and Jackson (2013) e.g. several detected a lack of trust in them by senior colleagues. For instance, David talked of being challenged on how they had marked students' work, while Jamie, a lecturer in History at a traditional institution, felt that the finer details of her teaching was often scrutinised:

You end up feeling paranoid that you are not as good as everyone else. I was told this was imposter syndrome but in fact, the more I look at it, it was the scrutiny I was put under as a junior academic. I feel I have to earn my place more than others.

Similar experiences were reported by Deem et al. (2005), Wright et al. (2007) (cited in Leathwood et al. 2009), but they had no discussion on the impact of class background.

I should pause here to say when looking for research on ethnicity and class, I found very few results that focused on this intersection. I asked some BME respondents about this and they felt this was because as ethnicity, like class, is linked to disadvantages, so finding research relating to ethnicity and class and success in education would be more difficult. Returning to Jamie's experience of being over-scrutinised, she had concerns over whether this would affect her career moving forwards, and if this would affect her chances of moving from precarity to permanency. Taking research on BME academics without the intersection of class, as an example, she is right to feel this concern. Shilliam (2014) reports there is a lack of mentorship for BME academics, and these challenges begin during PhD study. Further to this, Black academics—and especially women - tend to be overlooked for promotions. Alongside this, reports of bullying and mentally debilitating racial harassment are commonplace (p. 32). Bhopal argues that despite legislation such as the Equality Act 2010, BME staff continue to experience disadvantages in higher education compared to their White colleagues (Bhopal and Jackson 2013; Pilkington 2013 cited in Bhopal 2014). For instance, BME academics reported having to reach a higher threshold for career promotion and progression when compared to their White colleagues (cited in Ibid.: 41). The epitome of the 'white privilege' that Bhopal (2018) goes onto discuss in her book of the same name.

The Classed Nature of Precarity

While Zheng (2018) and Courtois and O'Keefe (2019) provide excellent discussions of the gendered nature of insecure contracts, I am continually surprised by how little focus there is on how social class, or socio-economic status can influence one's experience of precarity. Interviews highlighted four specific areas:

Income Insecurity

Around one fifths of all respondents provided some form of financial support to their parents and siblings, Jeremy explains:

> *When I was at university, I sent my mum small sums of money that might help her with the weekly shop, every few weeks or if I had a little left over when my grant came through.*

Half of those who talked about supporting their parents, partner or a sibling were on precarious contracts.

> *I am still looking for a permanent job and I worry, I worry everyday as I have to keep going with my rent as I have to support my boyfriend. I send money home to my sister, she has a little girl, my mum, she has mental health problems. I have responsibilities so it makes the precarity worse.* [Clara, a lecturer in Geography at a red brick institution]

Respondents would also be concerned when they were coming to the end of the contract or academic term.

> *I've got £40 and it has to last me for the next two weeks. Hopefully I will get a further research assistant contract.* [Elaine, a researcher in Social Sciences at a post 1992 institution]

Elaine said she didn't not know when she would hear about the contract, she thought it would likely be at the last minute. By this stage, she, like many others, would be in debt. For a number of academics, I interviewed this meant they were considering leaving academia. Jack and Robert separately mentioned that it was impossible to live on the short term, low pay they were receiving for undergraduate teaching. Robert in particular, a teaching associate in Business Studies at a Post 1992 institution, was so short of money on the day I interviewed him, he had been given food by his friends. For both respondents it was apparent that they would have to make some tough decisions about their futures at the end of the semester.

> *If I don't manage to get some additional work, such as being a research assistant for a few months I'm going to give up my PhD for the foreseeable future,*

and have to claim UC[1]. [Jack, a teaching associate in Mathematics at an Oxbridge institution]

This decision is made all the more difficult as Standing (2011) notes that there are precarity traps such as the long delays between becoming eligible to receive employment benefits and starting to receive them. Thus, it would be difficult for any respondent to claim a benefit such as Universal Credit, and then take a short-term role in academia. Issues that are not a concern for someone with an economic safety net.

Economic exploitation was a key theme in my interviews with precarious academic staff, particularly amongst female academics in Russell Groups institutions. Elaine talked of being given an admin role, normally undertaken by permanent staff:

Every other weekend there is an Open Day, and I am asked to come in represent my subject. They clearly need me, there is a job there for me, but I have been on casual, hourly pay for three years despite doing the work of an admissions officer.

Deb, who also had a key admin role within the school despite being on a temporary contract, talked to me about being "*over worked and underpaid*". Her head of school told her to consider how privileged she was to be given such a key admin role so early in her career. She felt she was being exploited.

I have spoken to academic colleagues about this, some mentioned that this was the "way it is, the way it has always been". But this was at a time when those who were looking to become academics were most likely from wealthier backgrounds. Today's ECRs, some of whom are from distinctly less advantaged financial backgrounds, are in a catch 22 situation: they need experience to continue as academics, but this experience was expected to be gained at their own expense.

This PhD [and MA] came with a tuition fee waiver, so it cost me nothing, but in order to keep my kids fed and housed I had to work full time. [Liam, a lecturer in Social Policy at a post 1992 institution]

This particular respondent represented the classed nature of precarity contracts as he needed to combine his PhD, with teaching, alongside whatever work was available within his institution. When I listen to Liam's story, and that of Amy, who is working three part time jobs while doing

PhD, just to keep her head above water, and many others without financial security, I can't help but contrast their experiences with academics with financial security. Clara explains this well:

> *My friends chilled out, recovered [after doing their PhD], whilst I was like shit what am I going to do?…. I could hold out for another year, two years if I was from another background. I don't resent this at all but I could get my books out, a couple more papers and go for an Oxford lectureship, but because I need to have something now, I am calling up [unnamed university], asking if you still have work for me. So, yeah, it changes your opportunities.*

Analysing the data and it was clear that respondents were only able to sustain their current levels of precarious employment if their partner was earning a high income. Others were "*one month or so away from calling it quits*" [Jack].

Work/Life Balance

Being an academic is generally characterized by high autonomy and comparative levels of flexibility. Despite this, a global study by *Times Higher Education* in 2018 surveyed the views on university staff in relation to the work-life balance. Almost 3000 higher education staff—of whom 85 per cent are academics and 67 per cent are female—said that their workload affected their ability to balance their careers with their personal lives (Bothwell 2018). Typical examples from my own interviewees of poor work-life balance included: working too many hours, constantly checking work emails and a poor social life. Respondents with partners in academia complained that cashing timetables meant that during term-time they hardly saw each other as there were little boundaries between work and home. Some acknowledged they could take time off together, and that they had an 'understanding' when times were especially busy:

> *If I'm writing he will look after the children or take them somewhere so I can concentrate.* [Dee, a researcher in Economics for a traditional institution]

But for those whose partners were not in academia, or in professional employment, it was very difficult. Respondents talked of sitting in another room reading or working weekends to finish research papers. As Jeremy says:

These are weekends that should be spent with family, but I need to write these papers in order to get a permanent job. This is hard for someone to take who doesn't work in academia.

People just focus on academics with families, but it's tough for couples. I want to spend time with my wife, I miss her. But I also need to be made permanent, so I have to publish. [Amy]

These respondents felt it was much more difficult for them because as their partners did not understand how academia worked, this time away from the family caused a huge strain. So much so, that two respondents said that their relationships were strained beyond repair:

My relationship is at a crossroads. My wife has had enough. I work long hours, travel excessively, it's not conducive to a healthy relationship. [Steven, a senior lecturer in History at a red brick institution]

We have arguments over my job. It's at the stage where I will have to choose between a job and a relationship. You can't sustain a relationship when you are hoping the person will hurry up what they are saying because you have to work. [James, a senior lecturer in Health Studies at a red brick institution]

Respondents on precarious contracts were more likely than other respondents to have considered leaving the HE sector as they could not see the benefits of the work they did, and they could not demonstrate benefits to their family. As Lucy says:

What do I have to show? We are short of money, I'm tired and don't have time for my partner.

Ill-health

Carrying on from matters discussed in the previous section, Gill (2009) talks of the 'hidden injuries' of contractual insecurity where precarity is not just an economic problem, it is a major public health issue. Academics in her study reported chronic stress, anxiety, exhaustion, insomnia and spiralling rates of physical and mental illness (Gill and Donaghue 2016: 91). A survey by Gorczynski et al. (2017) found that 43 percent of academic staff exhibited symptoms of at least a mild mental disorder. This is nearly twice the level of the general population. These were also key

discussion points amongst my respondents, with over three quarters (n. 17) saying their mental health had been affected by working on an insecure contract as well as other stress factors such as increased workloads and the need to publish and obtain external revenue. Acker and Armenti (2004) who researched mothers building an academic career, found that their respondents reported stress, exhaustion, and sleeplessness. All five of the female respondents I spoke to whose partners were not in academia, reported a similar experience. As April says: "*I'm exhausted, constantly anxious and can't sleep*".

Respondents referred to a variety of physical problems such as headaches, weight gain/loss, acne, digestive issues, as well as constant aches and pains. Anecdotal reports suggest that academia has a high prevalence of people with eating disorders. The recent Universities UK #stepchange mental health in higher education policy says mental health should be a strategic priority as student suicide numbers are rising. Higher education institutions have a duty of care to safeguard students and this has had a positive impact on student retention/engagement. Freedom of information requests from the Guardian newspaper revealed that counselling services were inundated with academics, referrals having risen by three-quarters between 2009 and 2015. At one university, staff engagement with counselling services increased by 300 per cent over a six-year period up to 2015 (Weale 2019).

Structural issues, like excessive workloads and responsibilities, line management and workplace surveillance (Weale 2019) are often cited as being problematic, but for my interviewees, a lack of a financial support network meant that academic precarity, for the working class academic, brings additional stress. This is a collection of the experiences reported:

- *"No sickness pay nor annual leave"* [Amy]
- *"You better hope no relative is seriously ill, or that you don't get ill, or become disabled, or actually are disabled"* [Jeremy].
- *"Your cultural capital remains stagnant as you won't have institutional access when you are between jobs. There is little scope for personal development as your time is taken up with preparation for teaching or working additional hours on the project that will lead to a research position that never materialises"* [Deb].
- *"Funding for conferences is nigh impossible and if you can't afford to pay for it, you don't develop that all important social capital"* [Mark].

- *"The teaching year ends, or the project is completed and you are left high and dry"* [Hannah].
- *"You are promised 'lead author' but your work doesn't belong to you so you become one author of many on a paper that you wrote. If you are 'lucky' it all starts again"* [Unity].

Precarity and Attending Conferences

Conferences are an integral part of being an academic. They are the place to present existing research, or to discuss new idea with your peers (building professional capital), to understand the latest developments in your academic field (building cultural capital) and to meet new scholars to collaborate with on papers or projects (building social capital). Interactive workshops are a further benefit of conference attendance as they enable delegates to learn new skills (Harrison 2010).

The Need for Economic Capital

But attending conferences costs money, and to attend these conferences, you need substantial economic capital as a typical multi-day conference can cost in the region of £500, and with other associated costs such as accommodation, travel and sustenance, this can bring the total costs to at least £1000. Conferences operate on the understanding that academics can finance their attendance via the economic capital academics have through the institutional funding one might have with a permanent academic post or a funded project. As outlined here, this is clearly problematic:

> *I do get reimbursed but the initial outlay of booking a conference is something that puts me in financial hardship.* [Mary: PhD student in Economics at a post 1992 institution]

> *"Your supervisor says: There's this great thing coming up that you should attend. It's going to be crucial", "Oh yeah, absolutely". "It's going to cost you 250 pounds". I don't have 250 pounds, I don't have 50 pounds, I don't have rent for this month".*

This quotation from Seb encapsulates why for people from working class backgrounds there is no Ivory Tower. While my respondents, both fixed term and permanent, spoke of the considerable barriers they faced

participating in conferences, a key part of academic life, those on fixed term contracts were clearly more disadvantaged due to their academic precarity. Respondents such as Emma, and Jade attempted to navigate these barriers by only going to one day conferences that were free or had a small fee. But these were few and far between. Respondents who lived in London, or close to big cities were able to cite many events that they attended, but those living in Scotland, Ireland or Wales were not as lucky as the headquarters of most academic associations were situated in England, mainly in London.

Conference Grants

A typical conference call will advertise grants that may provide either a full, or partially subsidised registration fee, And/or accommodation, travel expenses. These are competitive grants, and not limited to academics from working class backgrounds. The criteria differs, but tend to require that the applicant:

1. Is a member of the society/association;
2. Is a PhD or an ECR with less than 3 year's experience;
3. provides a contribution to the conference: e.g. the applicant has had an abstract accepted for presentation as a paper in the conference programme;
4. explains how conference participation will contribute to their professional development.

Applications are then reviewed by the conference panel, judged on the scholarly quality of the applicants' submissions and their CVs. But becoming a member of an association is unlikely to be a priority, for someone on a precarious income.

> *I thought you applied for the funding and you get it if there was enough money left. I realised, too late for when I was an ECR, that conference organisers also expect the applicant to bring some form of value for money. Despite being an ECR who might have little on your academic CV, you need to 'sell' your credentials.* [Jeremy]

Respondents talked of not having the same feel of the game compared to those from an economically and social advantaged background. Jamie comments:

Those with bourgeois values and income will instinctively know what to say in their application.

Unless award selection committees are diverse, unconscious bias or assumptions can unintentionally influence judgment (Equality Challenge Unit 2013), and favour in-group candidates that belong to their own academic network (Zinovyeva and Bagues 2010). As the conference panel is likely to reflect the socio-economic demographics of academia e.g. middle class or elite academics, they may be more inclined to favour applicants from these backgrounds. Some ECRs set up smaller academic groups within professional societies, and as a result, may get a free place at a conference. This is an activity that is expected to be on an academic CV. But again, this expectation is problematic for academics without economic capital, or on a precarious contract as ECRs are expected to also co-organise and help facilitate these conferences for free. And as a friend reminded me, not only do you provide this labour for free, you also need to make sure your subscription is paid for otherwise you will be charged the subscription fee to arrange a conference! Of further interest was those respondents who said they could not work for free in this way, as they were already working to supplement the small income they received from teaching. As facilitating conferences are a chance for ECRs to network, it is obvious that some respondents will not be able to take advantage of this networking 'opportunity'.

Reimbursement Culture

If my respondents were fortunate enough to be funded by their institution, they were often required to find the costs upfront. Emma talked of realising that her combined travel and accommodation costs for two conference would be around £1500.

Luckily, I can cover these costs through a combination of internal funding from my department (a £500 research grant and £250 conference grant) and an external award. However, none of this money will become available to me until I provide receipts for my expenses, after I've already paid the costs upfront and can 'reimburse myself'.

Coleen recounts a similar experience.

The conference fees, hotel, food, not even taking in account the air fare from Dublin to London comes to £1,200. Although I have got a travel bursary and institutional funding that will give me £800 towards it, so I'm £400 'down'. But I have to pay for everything up front. Then wait around 6–8 weeks to be reimbursed. Alongside this my supervisor wants me to go to a research methods summer school that costs £1,500. I got turned down for a grant for that, but my supervisors insist I go as it will help with my research. I'm dreading, absolutely dreading telling her I can't afford to go as she's not approachable and has no idea about money.

This general reimbursement culture is another demonstration of the eliteness of academia, even for those fortunate enough to have institutional or external funding. Later in this book I discuss how a number of respondents managed to navigate and resist precarity. The next chapter focus on some of the negative encounters respondents have experienced in academia.

Note

1. Universal credit—a monthly payment to help with living costs when on a low income or out of work.

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CHAPTER 4

Hostile Encounters

Fig. 4.1 'Mask'

T. Crew, *Higher Education and Working-Class Academics*,
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Introduction

Dominant discourses about social mobility focus on its expected positive effects i.e. equality of opportunity; higher incomes and better health outcomes. Upward mobility is presented as a way to "free" oneself (Reay 2017: 114) from the "baggage" attached to 'being' working-class (Friedman 2016b: cited in Bentley 2020: 64). Social mobility has a "neoliberal vocabulary of aspiration, ambition and choice" (Reay 2017: 112), where the notion that talent and effort determine individuals' place in the social hierarchy still persists (Alon and Tienda 2007: 489 cited in Bentley 2020: 52). Little is presented to contradict the advantages of upward social mobility.

Not Fitting In

Ryan and Sackrey (1984) highlighted some of the difficulties faced when they referred to the sense of anxiety and unease inherent in the working-class experience when one achieves social mobility. One way that this was expressed by my respondents was in statements that alluded to imposter syndrome (IS). Deb's comment about it being *"only a matter of time before I'm found out"* being typical. Cisco (2020) explains that these feelings of IS can have tremendous consequences for the sufferers, from insomnia, and severe depression, to an inability to enjoy one's own success. I do not mean to imply that imposterism is something experienced only by working class academics, as we know that an estimated seventy percent of high achievers report these feelings at some time in their career (Buckland 2017). The best-selling author, Neil Gaiman, reflecting on his own experiences suggested "if Neil Armstrong felt like an imposter, maybe *everyone* did" (Blyth 2018). But Maddie Breeze (2019) explains it well when she describes imposter syndrome as being 'a public feeling' that is intersectional and situated with those without power. While examples of IS were noted within my cohort, when I delved deeper, commentary from respondents tended to focus on whether they 'fitted in'. And as I discuss later in this chapter, was linked with various, hostile encounters.

Almost all respondents, irrespective of personal characteristics, subject area, and to a lesser degree, institution, felt they were not 'natural' academics (Mewburn 2017). Beverley Skeggs (1997), when discussing her own experiences as a working-class woman in academia, talked about "not getting it right", adding "you are never absolutely sure what 'getting it right' would be" (ibid.: 130–131). Throughout my interviews the same theme reoccurred:

> *I don't 'fit in'. My accent, my clothes, I don't share the same sense of humour as my middle class colleagues.* [Belinda, a lecturer in Social Policy at a red brick institution]

When respondents were asked to elaborate on why they felt they did not 'fit in', they referred to aspects of their 'presentation' such as accent, clothes, and sense of humour. As hexis is the physical embodiment of habitus the dispositions of middle-class people are coded inherently 'right', inherently 'tasteful' (Lawler 1999: 6), while the working classes carry the 'marks' of their impoverishment (Charlesworth 2000) on their body. One's social history is displayed by one "deportment, stance, gait, gestures, etc." (Jenkins 2000: 75). My respondents referred to various examples of how their bodily hexis manifested, with accent being cited most often.

The 'Wrong' Accent

One's grammar, semantics and vocabulary may vary, but an accent is something particular to the locality in which its speakers reside. Linguistic prejudice has been documented against speakers of regional dialects and various racial or ethnic groups. In a survey of attitudes towards 38 different British accents, Indian accents received low ratings (Sharma 2019). In her interview, Saira, a senior research fellow, also an Indian working-class academic said that her 'strong' Indian accent had been commented on when giving a presentation. There is a long tradition of using "brown voice" for caricature. 'Apu', a recurring character in the animated TV series The Simpsons has long been seen as a racist stereotype and Donald Trump's reported mockery of Narendra Modi's accent being yet another high-profile example (Amin 2018). When Saira highlighted this linguistic prejudice, she was greeted with accusations of being oversensitive. As we will see later in this chapter, this is a typical response faced by ethnic minorities.

My respondents also reported being stigmatised for their regional accents, particularly if they were 'northern' or 'welsh':

> *I presented at a UK conference, the top scientific one in my field. An audience member puts up her hand and says: "I'm finding it very hard to follow you as you are talking in a regional manner". Upset I mentioned it to my supervisor*

> *who was at the same conference. Rather than be sympathetic he asked if I could tone it down?* [Polly, a lecturer in Medical Sciences at a red brick institution]

> *I moved for a Lectureship, and on the first day I had two colleagues kindly 'advise' me that I may want to 'work on' my 'strong' Welsh accent if I intended to teach students.* [Catrin, a lecturer in Community Health, at a red brick institution]

In Jamie's interview she mentioned that a colleague *"jokingly said my keynote will need subtitles"*. Donnelly et al. (2019) reported that teachers they interviewed were told, advised, or felt a need to modify their accents in order to be perceived more 'professional'. In one example, a teacher from Bristol modified his accent to avoid being perceived as a 'yokel who lives on a farm'. Coogan (2019) in an article for the Times Higher Education commented that our "ingrained linguistic habits" can mark us as being inferior. He reports feeling the need to say something clever when he meets someone for the first time to "overcome the initial impression that [his] accent creates". Coogan (2019) asks "Is my Salford accent, cultivated on a council estate, really "wrong"? Larcombe (2016) has a similar experience, reporting that an irritant he faces is that people often say to him: "you don't sound like a professor".

The association between accent and social class in Britain has a long history. Hiraga (2005) found speakers of urban accents like Birmingham were perceived to be the lowest in status measures such as wealth and intelligence, whereas speakers with received pronunciation (RP) were classified highest. One's language—accent, intonation, style etc.—can reveal the class-mediated relationship of different groups to their social context. Language use reflects the socially constructed relationship between people and their position in the social world. Betraying our class positioning by its very utterance (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977: 117). Bourdieu and Passeron (1977: 116–167) cite class differences: where bourgeois language is abstract and formal, working-class language, influenced by a life of material deprivation, is "common", and "vulgar" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 60). Two interviewees said that they had been 'jokingly' referred to as Vicki Pollard, a comedy character in Little Britain who is a single-mother teenage delinquent, or chav, from the West Country. Such comments revealed a class-based prejudice of working-class life.

Katie Edwards, speaking in a BBC radio programme about accentism discussed that after giving a conference presentation, an audience member told her that she really enjoyed her paper but it took a while to "get over" her accent. This seems an incredibly rude comment to make, but it spurred Edwards on to interview other academics to hear about their experiences. She spoke to 20 academics from Russell Group institutions and found accentism was rife in as every respondent had negative experiences (Edwards 2019). Binns (2019) mentions similar issues among her respondents, as interviewees reported being mocked due to the way they spoke (p. 67). Among my own respondents, those from Russell group institutions were more likely to report negative experiences, compared with interviewees from post 1992 institutions. I asked a number of interviewees who had worked both 'types' of institution about their experience. Most reported that they felt more comfortable in post 1992 institutions, for instance Sal, a lecturer in Social Studies at a traditional institution, said this was because her accent did not stand out in the same way that in had in the elite institutions, she had worked in. Deb, who also worked in different 'types' of institutions, felt those working in the elite institutions may have had more difficult experiences as she noticed that colleagues in post 1992s had known each other throughout their educational trajectory.

> *Many of my colleagues did their BA, and then postgraduate qualifications together, before becoming staff members. They live in the local area so are less likely to be snooty about someone's accent.*

A regional accent could be an advantage with some students as they may feel more comfortable with lecturers who 'sound like them'. From a teaching perspective, it is important to ensure that students 'see' diverse academics involved in teaching, research and administration. I return to this discussion in Chap. 5.

The 'Wrong Sense of Humour'

Humour, a basic part of human interaction, is a way in which people can make light of the difficult situation or establish shared experiences. Nurses who took part in a study by Ghaffari et al. (2015) reported that humour affected patient outcomes positively and promoted nurses' physical and mental health. Laughing together is a sign of belonging (Kuipers 2010),

but my respondents noted that their sense of humour was another cultural marker of class distinction:

> *My sense of humour is quite self-deprecating, and my colleagues don't seem to get it.* [David]

If a sense of humour is not shared it can be difficult to build up or maintain a relationship (Kuipers 2010). When canvassing opinion at the 2009 Edinburgh Festival Fringe, Friedman (2011) observed differences in humour. He categorised his respondents as having either 'low cultural capital' (LCC); 'mixed cultural capital' (MCC) or high cultural capital' (HCC) (p. 352). When evaluating preference in comedy HCC respondents used terms such as 'intelligent' and 'intellectual' and had a somewhat 'disinterested aesthetic' (Bourdieu 1984: 32–48 cited in Friedman 2011: 360). In comparison, for LCC respondents, pleasure and enjoyment was paramount, so the emphasis was on 'feeling good'. Both categories of respondents expressed an interest in 'clever' comedy, yet HCC respondents appreciated complexity, whereas LCC derived enjoyment from humour that related directly to their lives (p. 363). Although Friedman's sample may have been skewed towards MCC and HCC respondents as they are more likely to attend such cultural events.

Humour was seen as central to the working-class experience, with both genders suggesting that they could relax immediately with people with similar class origins as

> *We take the piss out of each other.* [Eleanor, a researcher in Gender Studies at a traditional institution]

Working-class humour, particularly men's typically is portrayed in a negative light. The suggestion being that it consists mainly of derogatory remarks and sexual comments (Collinson 1988: 185–186). Yet my respondents saw humour as a way of displaying friendship or solidarity:

> *If I joke it's because I see you as a friend.* [Tim, a post-doctoral researcher in Computer Science at various institutions]

Humour is a characteristic of the "most effective teachers" (James 2004: 94). For instance, Ted, a lecturer in Media Studies from a post 1992

institution talked of using humour to help his students relax in their first classes:

> *It's interesting that you mentioned a sense of humor because I do use my sense of humor a lot with students, If they're a working-class student and I talk to them about working-class things, that's more likely to resonate with them than someone who you know, the kind of trendy middle-class teacher who comes in and talks about going to a rave at the weekend, it's not really gonna work.*

As most of the interviews were free flowing and relaxed, I noticed interviewees (and I) using the occasional profanity. In later interviews, I asked respondents about this.

> *I do think the swearing quite an interesting thing for the study because swearing is unrestrained speech and academia by default is inhibited speech, so I think it's funny that we started like "You OK with swearing?", "I'm OK with swearing" kind of feeling each other out a little bit.* [Seb]

A slightly smaller number of female respondents compared with men would 'joke around' in the interviews and use the odd profanity (approx. four females compared to 7 males). There were no other obvious differences e.g. identity characteristics, or type of institution employed at, or primary subject of expertise. But the general consensus among interviewees was profanities were linked with the self—deprecating humour of the working classes. As Jay and Janschewitz (2012) notes "a cleverly placed swear word in a funny situation can be very amusing".

> *I couldn't imagine telling an anecdote without popping in a swear word.* [Nicole, a Business Studies lecturer in a post 1992 institution]

Others, such as Helen, who worked at a Russell Group institution as a History lecturer saw swearing as a facet of the freedom of a working-class identity.

> *Working-class people in general are just freer, you know. The last thing I want to be worried about is whether a swear word comes out of my mouth.*

My respondents would also use profanities as an adjective or an adverb, in situations where the speaker wanted to emphasize what he or she is

saying. The use of the profanity has more impact on the listener than just saying "oh that was good".

The Wrong 'Look'

Clothing performs a major role in the social construction of identity, being a visible marker of social status. In the early twentieth century, Richmond (2013) talks of how 'the poor' wore second-hand, often home-made garments, or utilitarian clothes provided by charities. This often made them the targets of pity and/or ridicule, which in turn often led to mental distress. As the middle classes had the financial resources for a greater variety of fashion, they were able to buy new, ready to wear garments.

A visible sign of working-class respectability is a smart suit or dress. Respondents referred to such clothes at work events.

> *We organised this conference, I think a conference is formal, so I've got a skirt and a little blazer on—you know smart outfit. My friend turns up in just leggings and a baggy t-shirt. I felt like I should dress in an appropriate like smart way to suit the spaces whereas the middle class just walk in feel like they own it and can turn up in their slippers if they wanted to.* [Isabelle, a PhD researcher at a red brick institution]

This should not be problematic but unpicking the extract it highlights another example of a working class academic not knowing 'the rules of the game'. In this instance it's knowing the types of clothes they should wear at such events.

> *I seem to get it wrong as I come dressed in my best outfit, whereas everyone else [read middle class the respondent suggests] seems to be dressed, in my opinion, either very scruffy, or very expensively. I fit into neither category.* [Sal]

Clothes convey meanings in society that go far beyond the clothes themselves. A police uniform, for instance, tells us immediately what the wearer's occupation is. Most respondents mentioned the traditional image of an academic being a tweed jacket with patches on the elbows, an image that excludes women as there is no stereotypical female version of the tweed jacket. Many respondents said they had learnt what academics should wear by attending conferences. For male sociologists, the academic conference attire was "*flowery shirts and jeans*" [Neil, a Lecturer in

Sociology at a traditional university] or "*dark denim and a polo shirt*" [Jeremy]. Whereas, female academics at conferences, proposed by a number of respondents, tended to either wear clothes from Boden or Jaeger, retailers known to be favourites among the middle classes, or what was described as "*the newsreader dress, a figure-hugging, knee-length dress in a bright colour*" [Amy].

While not one of the examples given above, the following extract from Bentley's (2020) thesis demonstrates the difficulties that a working class woman trying to dress for a middle class profession has: "Initially, without much thought, I muted representations and signifiers of my working-class culture in the research setting … because I knew that signifiers of my working-class culture (my gold hoop earrings in particular) were not only 'valueless' outside of the working-class community (McKenzie 2015a cited in ibid.: 92), but subconsciously I viewed them as having a detrimental impact on how I would be perceived in the interview setting. So, at first, I dressed conservatively, with little makeup and no jewellery". Goffman (1959) believed that when an individual comes in contact with others, that individual will attempt to control the impression that others might make by changing or fixing his or her setting, appearance and manner. To be 'feminine' is to fit into an idealised, higher-class position (Hatherley 2018), but due to their superior financial resources, this 'hegemonic, 'acceptable' femininity is a resource more readily accessible to middle-class women (Skeggs 1997).

Unhealthy Food and Weight

Interlinked factors of income inequalities and food literacy have traditionally pushed people from disadvantaged communities towards unhealthy eating (Templin et al. 2019). Income inequalities makes planning, budgeting, storing and preparing healthy meals difficult, while one's food literacy exacerbates the capability to make healthy food choices. These factors are often passed on from generation to generation. A small number of respondents talked of being overweight, linking this back to the food they ate when growing up. Everyday eating practices are bound by distinctions of taste, according to one's social position. This becomes problematic for academics in elite institutions where attending formal dinners. Wills et al. (2011) drew on two qualitative studies which looked at diet, weight and health from a social class perspective. They found economic

structures may limit agency, leading to classed food and eating practices. As Daisy mentions:

> *We have formals three times a week throughout term time. We dress up in gowns and enjoy a lovely three-course meal. I enjoy them, but I'm not used to this fancy food. I grew up eating chips and pies.*

Elite institutions are not an easy experience for students (see Reay et al. 2009; Bathmaker et al. 2016; Coulson et al. 2018; Reay 2017) and for my respondents working in elite institutions, felt it was particularly difficult as they had few people that they could discuss issues such as formals.

A number of female respondents reported being self-conscious of their weight. A slender body can be more of a class signifier than dress itself. Bordo (2003) refers to the relationship between fatness and social mobility. Previously the wealthy ate in excess, and 'fatness' was associated with wealth and beauty. But in the last few decades, the slender body has become the signifier of aristocratic status, while being overweight is associated with working class populations. The emerging middle class chose to embrace the svelte aristocratic body as opposed to the irresponsible working-class population. Some of the women I interviewed referred to feeling uncomfortable about their weight as they felt that they were 'larger', in comparison to the middle-class women they worked with. For instance, Caroline, a researcher in Psychology at a traditional institution:

> *I worry I am reinforcing stereotypes of stupid fat working class.*

The concern is understandable as gendered stereotypes tend to associate beauty with smallness, unobtrusiveness and passivity (Hatherley 2018: 29), all aesthetic qualities associated with middle class as opposed to working class femininity.

Some female respondents mentioned they could identify working class women at academic conferences:

> *Our dress sense stand out [in a good way I mean], but we are more likely, in comparison to middle class women to have softer, perhaps overweight [but more beautifully feminine bodies].* [Amy]

But as obesity is often equated to moral and intellectual laziness, being overweight in the academy can lead to anxiety. Rudolph et al. (2008)

found the probability of being offered an academic position was reduced if an applicant presents as being overweight. An article by Christina Fisanick (2019) speaks of the challenges of being a faculty member who struggles with their weight. For instance, when teaching she has struggled to manoeuvre around the classroom when desks are close together. She talks of wearing dark clothes so that her credentials are noticed as opposed to her body shape and size. Her comments were reiterated by two of my own female respondents who talked about experiencing anxiety that being defined as being overweight had perhaps negatively affected colleagues' perception of them, and their work. Issues like this only added to the social isolation that they felt.

Tattoos

While it's estimated that about one in five of the UK population is tattooed, there is still a stigma associated with tattoos. Martin and Dula (2010) found negative attitudes towards people with tattoos, with some believing those who have such adornments are academically unsuccessful. Seven of my respondents reported having tattoos, four of whom (three women) cited them as being a problematic image for an academic:

> *I've got full sleeve tattoos. I don't look like I am supposed to be here* [Katherine, a senior lecturer in Psychology at a post 1992 institution]

> *I was standing smoking outside one of our buildings and because it's summer, I had a lot of my tattoos on display. There was an open day going on and I got so many filthy looks from these parents who were coming in and I thought "How dare you! I'm here, I'm doing a PhD here. I've earned my place here" but that look that I saw reflected in so many people's faces was like "this isn't your space, this is my space for me and my children".* [Mary]

While the reaction this respondent faced could have also been related to the stigmatised social status those who smoke now experience, Elaine, who has five tattoos said she felt she should cover up her tattoos when in day-to-day settings such as work. Despite the prevalence of tattoos in modern culture, the consensus amongst my small number of 'inked' respondents was that tattoos are still viewed pejoratively.

Yet tattoos can also enable the academic to feel like an individual in a system that lacks individuality. As Professor Leonard argued in his article,

"The Inked Academic Body", tattoos challenge the academic stereotype of tweed jackets with patches on the elbows, and bookworm glasses (Leonard 2015). Tattoos also provide a way for students and teachers to connect on a more personal level. As Nick, a senior lecturer in Film Studies at a red brick institution, says:

> *Students ask me about the inspiration behind my tattoos. Others will tell me about their tattoos. The conversation is more relaxed that it normally would be between lecturer and student.*

Resisting Middle-Class Femininity

Returning to Professor Gannon, the 'Inked Professor', he acknowledged that it may be easier for him to have tattoos in comparison to female academics. For instance, in my interview with Liam he mentioned: "*standing there [in the lecture theatre] with an arm full of tattoos and a comedy t-shirt on"*. Tattoos are growing in popularity, but for women they are still linked with notions of promiscuity, heavy drinking and unattractiveness (Swami and Furnham 2007). From a young age, women are encouraged to think about the image they convey through their clothes and other forms of presentation. When Aaronovitch (2000) talks about white working-class women having tattooed shoulders (cited in Lawler 2005) this is not meant as a positive statement. The 'place' of tattoos is key to value for women. 'Tramp stamps' are lower-back tattoos which were popular in the late 1990s and early 2000s. They are most often found on women and would prove to be a "class-based risk" for middle-class women (Dann et al. 2016: 45). The social response is often a degrading one, women who have these are often seen as hyper-(hetero)sexual (as Skeggs 1997 would see it) or crass and vulgar. Women are expected to practice body supervision and portray a conservative aesthetic A respectable, middle class, femininity being a form of capital (Skeggs 1997) women are encouraged to seek.

However, Yosso (2005) reminds us that "resistance is the legacy of the minoritized" (p. 80), and this was true in my conversations with some female participants when discussing aspects of their presentation. They talked with pride about resisting the respectable femininity through their personal style which included piercings (n.3 respondents), tattoos (n. 6 respondents), buzz cut hair styles (n.2 respondents), and clothes that were "*not very academic*" [Clara]. A woman's dress is a "permanent revelation of her most secret thoughts, a language, and a symbol." (Balzac 1839

cited in Crane 1999: 241). Academics with their tattoos, piercings and shaved head, are at odds with a 'nice' middle-class femininity, (Kosut 2000).

Microagressions

But the 'problem' was more than just aspects of their presentation such as accent and the clothes they wore. Analysing the data, it was apparent that the academy is a hostile place for those from underprivileged backgrounds who become academics. Respondents referred to overt cues that made them feel unwelcome in academia. Behaviour otherwise known as micro-aggressions, a term coined by Chester Pierce (1970), is typically described as a subtle form of structural oppression that manifest as verbal, behavioural, or environmental indignities, (whether intentional or unintentional), that communicate derogatory, or negative slights (Sue et al. 2007: 271) toward minorities and other historically stigmatized groups (Lilienfeld 2017: 139). "Subtle" is perhaps an inappropriate descriptor here as some examples I outline are far from that. Bourdieu (1990) would describe this as symbolic violence, a "soft" violence that includes actions that have discriminatory or injurious meaning such as racism, sexism or classism. Lilienfeld (2017) argues that microaggressions may be callous as opposed to malicious, yet as Deb says, "*its like a dripping tap*".

Microaggressions appear to be a common ingredient of professional life both for women and for people of colour, but they are also found to be present in the experiences of professionals from disadvantaged social backgrounds. Warnock (2016) analysed the autoethnographic narratives of working-class academics and found academia was "unconsciously classist" (p. 150). For instance, as the communication patterns of the dominant group [middle class academics] are the norm, classed microaggressions may manifest when the dominant style is not adhered to. Evette, mentioned a time when some colleagues were talking about putting together an edited collection on a subject that she had written about

> *I suggest a chapter I could write. I get an email a few days later, it says I'm better "sitting out this one out as the book will have formal, scientific language, not my 'style'". This felt class based as ok yes, I do mispronounce the odd word, there is no difference in my writing ability.* [Lecturer in Biological Sciences at a Russell Group institution]

Some interviewees talked about feeling more confident with their written communication, in comparison to their oral skills.

> *There is time to craft sentences, I can edit my writing, I can do multiple drafts until it is perfect.* [Amy]

Although Ben commented that when speaking face to face, his lower levels of embodied cultural capital meant he was not always able to draw upon academic language as quickly as his middle-class peers. The difference in communication styles is also illustrated in this interview extract by Kate

> *The way I communicate with my family, friends, school is much more emotional, more direct. But in a middle-class sphere, like academia, those modes of expression are not acceptable.*

Sue (2010) describes three types of microaggressions that occur in everyday interactions: Microassaults, Microinsults and Microinvalidations.

Microassaults

The most visible form, microassaults are deliberate, conscious, and explicit verbal and/or nonverbal racist, sexist, or classist etc. acts, carried out with the intention to hurt, oppress, or discriminate. Due to the Equality Act 2010, they are the least common form of microaggression (Dovidio 2001), although hate crime statistics and the many stories from #Metoo indicate otherwise. Classism has been the hardest bias to reverse as it requires the redistribution of wealth, and opportunity and 'class' is not a protected characteristic under the equalities legislation. One could argue that argue that by virtue of having a PhD or being employed as a lecturer or researcher in the academy, this redistribution has been successful. Yet this chapter continues the argument that this is a simplistic view. While fewer respondents discussed overt microaggressions, there were examples that stood out. Jack talked of being at a formal dinner in an Oxbridge institution. Just as he felt comfortable a fellow diner said:

> *I bet this is the first time someone like you has been here. I had little choice but to laugh, and then I said, straight-faced, "no we are normally here to rob the place". I didn't hear from her again!*

While an obvious microaggression, it is to be expected as the salary and cost of living in the locality mean that only the wealthy have the financial resources to work at Oxbridge (Academics Anonymous, 2015). For those running these elite institutions who talk of boosting campus diversity, there is to be a while to go before they understand how to do this amongst the staff cohort. Luke, a Professor in Social History at a traditional institution, recounts the time he interviewed at Oxford.

> *One of the questions they asked me was, given the background you've come from, you know, how do you think you'd would fit in in Oxford?*

Not the most welcoming of questions! And it reflects an oppressive worldview that foster marginalization and devalues people on the basis of their social class (Smith and Redington 2010).

But microaggressions did not focus on class identity alone, racial and gendered microaggressions were commonplace, as where those based intersections of one's identity. Ant, an academic with Romani heritage, spoke of a number of racist microagressions. Sue et al. (2007) described microaggressions as the new face of racism, explaining that the nature of racism has shifted over time from overt expressions of racial hatred, towards more subtle forms that may be seen as ambiguous, and often unintentional. Gypsy Travellers are still amongst some of the most marginalised communities in Britain today, with negative and racist attitudes towards them being commonplace. Indeed, Coxhead (2007) asks if racism against the Traveller community is the last acceptable form of racism? Research by The Traveller Movement (2017) may provide some evidence towards this as it found that 77 percent of respondents were victims of hate speech/hate crime, while 91 percent reported experiencing discrimination because of their ethnicity—all of which is in clear breach of the Equality Act 2010. Ant said he could cope with the probing questions and the stereotyping about his Traveller lifestyle but was unable to hide his anger when slur words were used describe his community. The most recent time it happened was when a colleague introduced him to a new member of staff:

> *My colleague said oh don't worry he's not like the rest of the p****s. It was said so casually, like we were all having a laugh. I shouted at him saying that's fucking offensive. He apologised immediately and I explained it's like using the*

'n word'. I'm angry about explaining something I shouldn't have to in this day and age.

Afua Hirsch, author of Brit(ish), expands on this, in an article for the Guardian. She talks of the collective wound people of colour in Britain are nursing when they are expected to exert the emotional labour needed to explain the injustice of racism.

Microinsults

Microinsults are more difficult to 'prove', consisting of negative or demeaning behaviours. Rude comments were commonplace amongst my respondents. For instance, April said:

A pompous professor asked how was I 'allowed' to teach if I couldn't pronounce Foucault properly. Without thinking I told him I've been doing this for twenty years so email me if he needs some tips.

The respondent laughed when she said this, and for a moment I laughed with her. But then I considered the emotional labour this must take to deal with these issues, time and time again. And I considered that I only heard her response to one comment. I laughed only outwardly at her retort.

Seemingly innocuous, verbal/nonverbal communications convey insensitive messages about a person's identity. Gaining promotions seemed to trigger envy amongst their colleagues

A colleague was very interested in my promotion but was unable to go as far as to say congratulations. Instead she probed my credentials and expressed views on meritocratic hiring practices—the implication being that my promotion was due to unmeritocratic means, as if promotions were only being handed out to black guys. [Theo]

I overheard them say: "Athena Swan must be for working class women this year". I was heartbroken as I work bloody hard. My natural instinct was to confront her but decided not too as I would shout at her, rather than speak about it in a nice middle-class way. [Pat]

Again it felt sad to listen to this as here are people confined by a middle-class civility that meant she must train her emotions to not react, even when insulted. The interviews would often be spent talking about how they would handle the situation if they were 'at home'. The need to regulate emotion was something that these working-class scholars struggle to acclimate (Warnock 2016: 31). But what was particularly disheartening about listening to interviewees describe these incidents is that in the literature they would be typically described as being unintentional slights, whereas for my respondents they were upsetting examples of outright bigotry.

Microinsults are problematic as they reduce the individual to a stereotype. Over half of respondents discussed hearing the word chav in relation to students "*from the exact background I am from*" [Coleen]. This is perhaps no surprise as we know that the working-classes are spoken of in many different discriminatory ways: referred to as the underclass, as irresponsible and as passive, lacking in agency (Skeggs 2004: 94). But the term 'chav' has been criticised as being particularly offensive, an exemplar of class prejudice. Bennett (2011) refers to an article in a tabloid newspaper that defines the term: "Chavs are young louts who wear cheap gold jewellery and Burberry baseball caps … [chav] refers to someone who wears "prison white" trainers and heavily branded sportswear and appears on ITV1's Trisha, like the loutish lottery winner Michael Carroll" (The Mirror) (p. 96). Words like *chav* contain a message about the way these academics were perceived by their peers. As Amy said:

> *A colleague consistently described his research respondents as chavs—nice I know! Anyway, he could see that I looked shocked, but it seemed to trigger a 'memory' in him, and he said, oh I'm sorry, you come from that area too? I was shocked how easily he related me to the word chav.*

While microinsults demean a person's race, heritage, or identity, it is felt that perpetrators of microinsults are frequently unaware of the insulting implications of their behaviour. Amy wanted to be clear that her colleague wasn't aware that 'chav' was a term of abuse for the white working class. But what was noticeable was the when she tried talking to him afterwards, he seemed unwilling to discuss the implications of his language e.g. the unconscious message that both she and his research respondents are 'chavs'.

Microinvalidations

These are comments and behaviours that exclude, negate or nullify the experiences of marginalized group members. These may potentially represent the most damaging form of microaggressions because these actions undermine and invalidate individuals' thoughts and feelings (Sue et al. 2007). A common example was where numerous respondents mentioned that when they tried to discuss the micro and macro differences in relation to class, people would quote the words of John Prescott, the ex-Labour Deputy Leader, "We are all middle class now". Respondents talked of being told that they were being too "sensitive," and/or had taken offense when none was intended, or that they had "read too much into it" [Sophie] (what a strange comment to say to an academic!). It was difficult to speak to perpetrators about issues they experienced as:

> *I'm describing some uneasy feelings I've had as opposed to something concrete.* [Leah, a sociologist who has worked in various institutions]

When respondents took the issue further, on a more formal basis, they reported that their Heads of School, line managers, co-workers and friends found ways of 'explaining' the microaggressions. Theo reported his colleagues' comments about his promotion and was told, "oh you know she was joking", "you know what she is like". Leah, noted

> *I speak to friends and they tell me I am paranoid. That's a way of silencing me what I think is quite real and I'm not the only one. We forget this happens but we can usually find someone else who has had the same experience.*

The frequency and persistence of these experiences accumulate to create harmful messages and a hostile and unwelcoming environment (Fine et al. 2018).

The presence of classed microaggressions are no surprise as the university is an institution where the working class (alongside ethnic minorities and women) are a distant 'other' (Law 1995). Brandon an academic in Health Studies says:

> *I'm proud of my heritage, but it's hard to be at times as we are portrayed as stupid, obese, scroungers, who don't visit the doctors enough. I can't remember the last time I heard anything good about being working class, can you?*

Racial microaggressions were particularly common to all but a small number of BME interviewees. Gabriel and Tate (2017) note that racial microaggressions are an invisible feature of the black scholar's experience in academia. This was also a finding in a report by Rollock (2019) who interviewed 20 of the 25 Black female Professors in the UK. She found a culture of explicit and passive bullying persists across higher education along with racial stereotyping and racial microaggressions. My own respondents related a number of racialised microagressions. From being asked to show staff identity cards when entering university buildings with a white member of staff (who was not asked to show their identification), to experiencing sexualized comments in academic feedback from both students.

My teaching doesn't get commented on … but my physicality does. [Nicole]

BME respondents such as Theo and Nicole were often told they were articulate: "w*hat they meant was I am very articulate for a black guy*" [Theo]. These comments should be no surprise as a survey for the Guardian, of 240 BME staff and students found racism in universities is widespread and widely tolerated. As one respondent in the survey said: "the message is clear: assimilate and shut up—you're lucky to be here (Weale et al. 2019). My own respondents had similar examples:

> *I was in a meeting and the topic of racial bias in academia arose. Remember I'm the only person from a BME background there. The head of school brushes the comment aside, saying now was not the time or place to discuss this, but we should be certain that there are no issues with race in our school. And if anyone thinks there is, then they need to take better advantage of the resources on at the university. I sat there flabbergasted, knowing I should speak out, but I was one person. What a way of shutting down any discussion!* [Joy, a Senior Lecturer in Social Sciences at a Russell Group institution]

BME academics also reported that their 'working-classness' was not always acknowledged

If I'm 'here' I must be middle class because black people live in the hood. [Ann]

However, a study by Morales (2014) found that black students were perceived as being low-income regardless of their actual class status.

Dealing with Microaggressions

Disarming and Dismantling Microaggressions

Given the harm inflicted on those experiencing microaggressions it becomes imperative to attempt to disarm, disrupt, and dismantle these slights (Sue et al. 2019: 131). They outline four separate coping strategies. 'Making the invisible visible', was a key strategy used by Amy when she challenged her colleague over the use of the word chav.

A further method of dealing with microagressions, Sue et al. (2019) suggests, is to disarm the microaggression, for instance, indicating what has been said is offensive to you or others. Ant took this approach when he told his colleague that using a particular word to describe Travellers was offensive to him. He noted in the interview that this was hard to do but he felt he was representing not only himself but his community too.

A third method is to educate the perpetrator by encouraging the perpetrator to explore the origins of their beliefs and attitudes (ibid.). This was not a popular method of dealing with the issue because it meant spending more time engaging with the person [Lynn]. However, Theo, who was familiar with the theoretical tools of Bourdieu, felt able to do this.

> *I told this guy that one reason for the ignorant comments he made was that his upbringing [white, middle-class] was the dominant culture, the standard, and therefore all other forms and expressions of "culture" are judged negatively in comparison to this "norm." I'm not sure he listened but it was understood from an academic perspective.*

Sue et al. (2019) then states that those on the receiving end of microaggressions should seek external reinforcement or support. In short, dealing with microaggressions should go as follows: ask the perpetrator to clarify what they just said; express disagreement; point out the commonality between the two people then report the act.

Familial/Social Capital

Since the literature on Yosso's capital often shows an overlap between examples of social capital and familial capital, these two types of capital are often analysed together. Yosso (2005) depicts disadvantaged

communities as possessing "an array of knowledge, skills, peers and other social contacts" (p. 77) to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression. Hall and King (1982) highlight the kin-structured networks that helps in day-to-day living as well as in crises (p. 541). Respondents with familial capital cited their spouses and parents as providing support during difficult times, with mothers played an especially central role. Mothers used various strategies in which to help respondents cope with the microagressions they were experiencing. For instance, Coleen talked about how her mum would be on hand with motivational quotes, and little reminders of how far she had come. Zoe, who worked in professional services in the Sociology department of a red brick institution mentioned that her mum was always there at the end of the phone with "*lots of lovely comments about my work*". This familial capital meant there was less chance of respondents being isolated, and it gave them find comfort in knowing they are not alone.

Interviewees commented that university administrators were a vital support system. Ashley discussed how:

> *Admin are normally from my background, so are on hand to give a kind word.*

Respondents also accumulated familial/social capital through validation and advice from societies and clubs within their institution, for instance Afro-African society, and various sporting clubs, as well as nationwide organisations such as Disability Rights UK. Female respondents relied heavily on feminist associations although Amy commented that the group she was part of was not considerate of the impact of social class. As will be discussed in the next chapter, these atypical academics gained strength from the desire to give back to those in their communities.

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CHAPTER 5

Supporting Students

Fig. 5.1 'Role Models'

T. Crew, *Higher Education and Working-Class Academics*,
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Introduction

Universities have well-established student support systems to meet the personal and academic needs of their students. For instance, central university student departments provide career guidance, housing services, study skills, child care, financial aid, as well as advice regarding housing (Dhillon et al. 2008: 1). Alongside this, students are appointed a personal tutor for one-to-one guidance on personal issues, as well as academic support. When I asked respondents what they, as working-class academics, 'bring' to academia over three quarters of the interviewees (n. 75) referred to the pastoral care and academic support they were able to provide. Providing student support is of course not just particular to working-class academics, but their experiences of inhabiting "two distinct cultures" (Bridges 2017: 70), means that were particularly useful in helping students to navigate academia. Interviewees also gave examples of the navigational and social/familial they brought to academia.

Supporting Students into Higher Education (HE)

It's useful to pause here to place this discussion in the generation where attempts to tackle the eliteness of a university education have occupied a prominent position on the HE agenda (McDonough and Fann 2007). Since the publication of the 'Kennedy Report' in 1997, policies to widen participation have been adopted to address the under-representation of specific cohorts in higher education, e.g. those from disadvantaged backgrounds, some from ethnic minorities, people with a disability, and women. If we take the Access to HE route as an example of widening participation in action, we can see this policy has been successful. In 2018/19, nearly 24,000 students entered HE via this route: 56 per cent of these students were over the age of 25, 31 per cent were from an ethnic minority background while almost one quarter (23 percent) of Access to HE learners were from a disadvantaged area (The Quality Assurance Agency 2019). But for many, equitable opportunities remain restricted. For instance, while its important to not treat BME students as a homogenous group, those from BME backgrounds are more likely to be the first in family to access higher education, come from deprived areas and areas of low HE participation. And while more people from the most disadvantaged backgrounds than ever are entering university, levels are still low in comparison to people from advantaged backgrounds (Stevenson et al. 2019).

At the time of writing 57 per cent of all HE students were female in 2018/19 (Higher Education Statistics Agency 2019). Females are also more likely than men to enter university, across a range of subjects and institutions, but there remains a gender gap in terms of entry into STEM i.e. Science Technology, Engineering and Mathematics subjects (STEM Women 2019). To address these issues, respondents drew upon their social/familial (knowledge through kinship) and navigational (skills and abilities to navigate social institutions) capital to support potential students into HE.

Role Models

Studies have repeatedly shown that entry into STEM subjects is gendered (see Makarova et al. 2019; Botella et al. 2019). But a number of respondents, most notably Pat saw this was a class issue too:

> *My family were rather conservative. When I was a little girl I was discouraged from dressing up like a scientist in a white lab coat, and of course boys could not study nursing simply because they were boys. My friends from affluent backgrounds appeared to have less gender segregation, but working-class boys and girls, like me seemed to have their choices constrained. This meant I was pushed towards nursing as opposed to being the scientist I wanted to be. I didn't see anyone like me working as a scientist.*

Research supports this. For instance, a study by Gorard (2008) provided evidence that if a student received free school meals (FSM) (a measure of disadvantage based on students' family income) they were less likely to study STEM subjects post-16). Van de Werfhorst et al. (2003), using data from the British Birth Cohort Study, reported that a student's social class was a factor in entering the elite fields of medicine and law. Although Codiroli Mcmaster (2017) found that it was the educational level of parents that influenced subject studied. Those more likely to study STEM A Level had fathers with a degree, and mothers without a degree. While at degree level, students whose mothers have a degree were most likely to study arts and humanities. Women in Science, Technology and Engineering (WISE), a campaign group created to increase representation in STEM subject's state that one way to counter these attitudes is the use of appropriate role models to inspire young people to consider entry into STEM subjects (Macdonald 2018). Jane, a biological scientist agreed,

talking of how she would readily volunteer at primary schools in her community as a female STEM role model:

> *Having someone from my background would have been a source of motivation/inspiration and would have made it easier for me to consider a career in the Sciences. I love going to schools as girls especially will say I want to be like you.*

This example of a 'family member' serving as a role model or mentor, is an example of navigational capital as they can share personal experiences that provide insight into their own strategies for navigating academia. These kin relationships demonstrate a commitment to community well-being (familial/social capital),[1] and provides the critical inspiration and encouragement to persist (aspirational capital) needed for people from disadvantaged communities to consider such roles.

The need for STEM role models for BME cohorts was an additional point made by a number of respondents. While 2019 data shows that the percentage of BME undergraduates in STEM is generally similar to the national average, the physical sciences have a much lower proportion of BME undergraduates (16 percent). Statistics vary across individual UK HEIs, so much so that in some university departments, BME students maybe one of very few in their academic cohort (Pridmore and Lalemi 2019). This often continues into employment as statistics by The Campaign for Science & Engineering (CaSE) (2014) report that BME men are 28 per cent less likely to work in STEM compared with White men. Although interestingly, BME women are more likely, than white women, to be in STEM occupations. One way of encouraging higher BME participation in STEM is to increase the number of BME guest lecturers. Corinne reported being invited to contribute to a panel discussion on careers in stem

> *A number of women came up afterwards and said it was nice to see someone 'like me' on the panel.*

As many BME 'groups' are still underrepresented in academic and scientific professions (Chautard and Hann 2019), this is often reflected in the composition of keynote speakers or representation of conference panels. Bruce (2018) discussed her experience of being asked to speak at a panel discussion of 'minorities and justice'. This was problematic as while her ethnicity is Roma, the remaining panel members and audience were

white. She finished her conference presentation with questions for the audience: "Who is missing from the conference? Why are they missing? What is the action that you are going to take to contribute to the redesign?" (para 17). These are questions we should ask ourselves if we find ourselves in yet another all-white panel. But for BME respondents this was not just a 'STEM issue'. Casey, speaking from her experience as a student who, at times, felt a sense of isolation amongst their white peers, mentioned:

> *I know how important it is to have a visible presence of BME staff members so I am always happy to be that presence at open days, at school events.*

Two respondents with a disability saw disabled role models in HE as vital to create a sense of belonging, both for students and academics, but also to combat the "subtle bigotry of low expectation" (Nash 2014: 19). But both acknowledged that some may not want to emphasise their disability or be "shoe-horned into the disability champion role" (Martin 2017: 26).

Sources of Information

Despite substantial improvements in HE participation among students from disadvantaged backgrounds in recent years, Anders (2012), found that in comparison to students with higher incomes, students from economically disadvantaged families, apply to university less often, and to Russell Group universities even more so—this is after controlling for attainment. Statistics from UCAS (2016) demonstrate the latter most starkly, showing that over half (57 per cent) of young people from disadvantaged areas reported that they did not consider making an application to any of the higher tariff providers listed in the survey, with the most popular reason given was that they were concerned that the entry grades were too high.

Wyness (2017) noted that institutional barriers, such as the admissions process can be a deterrent for some students from disadvantaged backgrounds as they may lack the information, advice and guidance (IAG) needed in the university application process. Respondents had first-hand knowledge of this.

> *I went to the open day to support my friend. University wasn't for 'the likes of me!' But as I listened I realised I was interested in what the lecturer had to say.*

> *That was the extent of my understanding before I signed up to do my degree. Luckily it worked out, and I loved my degree but it makes me realise how some students know little about university and where to look for information.* [Amy]

UCAS reports there is a dissatisfaction with the generic IAG that is provided by schools and colleges, and the feeling remains that teachers target a narrow group of young people who are already considering HE (UCAS 2016). Middle-class families pass on their cultural, economic and social advantages to enable their children to succeed in the educational system, whereas working-class families, who face economic constraints, may not have this, more elite knowledge (Li and Qiu 2018). Wyness (2017) cites personal statements as being a barrier to entry for those from disadvantaged backgrounds as they may have less support in preparing these statements (p. 3). Lynn saw it as her 'role' to support students in this way:

> *I run a monthly drop in at a local community centre where I talk about university, help them choose courses and write personal statements. It's only right that I pass it on this knowledge.*

Here, working class academics such as Lynn are able to use their own resources and skills (Harper 2008; Liou et al. 2009 cited in Ako-Asare 2015) in order to help them to support potential students into their desired educational pathway (navigational capital). This was also an example of familial/social capital as it showed a commitment to community well-being. Emma also provided encouragement and emotional support to members of her community that were considering university. She reported that this 'hands on' guidance was the most effective means to help NTS manage the process of entering university (Wyness 2017: 4) as they could ask: "*what they think are stupid questions and talk about their concerns*" [Emma].

Having IAG is especially useful for those students considering entering elite institutions as data from the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) (2014) indicates that the most advantaged 20 per cent of young people were 6.3 times more likely to enter the more selective English HE institutions than the most disadvantaged 40 per cent. An important factor in supporting applications to HE, and in particular, elite universities, is knowing others of a similar background in HE e.g. social/familial capital. Joy, felt that one of the many advantages she brought to academia was the ability to provide helpful IAG to others "like her"

It can be difficult being a black woman in a very white institution, dealing with the microaggressions and it can be isolating it can be at times. But, I'm sorry to sound grand, I have a higher purpose. I'm not just here for myself, I can be a role model for the community but also be on hand to give useful information. I get asked questions about finance, about what job they can get, but sadly, if they are considering a top university, I'm constantly asked 'will I fit in here?

This is a common concern. Reay et al.'s (2010) case study of 27 working-class students across four UK higher education institutions found for some students, class differences remained "lurking in the background" (p. 113). My respondent Diane described how it was simple things like having a conversation with students at an open day that could help those from a working-class background feel like that they could fit in. Tim, mentioned an experience, also at an open day, that highlighted why an intersectional understanding of class was so vital:

I asked him was he ok as he seemed to hang back a bit. He, the student, said—I'm alright, I'm working out if this is 'me'. I told him I felt the same when at first. That seemed to put him at ease so I carried on describing how I came to the open day by myself as I didn't want anyone in my family that I was considering this until I had decided if I could do it. We then talked about what made him feel like this. He said—They are posh and white mate. I laughed at that and said that—yeah I got him, but there is so much a university can give you, and that it needed people like him so that it wasn't always posh and white.

Tim and Joy's examples are further reasons why when we discuss class, we should always take into account how other aspects of one's identity (e.g., ethnicity, gender, etc.) combine to create unique modes of exclusion. As Tim goes onto say:

We should be concerned if our programmes are only favoured by men, or if our open days are not well attended by people with disabilities.

Supporting Students Through Higher Education (HE)

In 2018 a new universities regulator the Office for Students (OfS), came into force. One aim of the OfS was to support students from underrepresented backgrounds while at university. Working class students can have a mixed experience (OfS 2020). Lehmann (2012) and Wong (2018)

found that working-class students can be highly successful. But others such as, Collier and Morgan (2008) noted that first-generation college students' lack of cultural capital meant they were 'unprepared' for university. Binns (2019) mentioned that some of her interviewees talked of their empathy for working-class learners, which "increased the rapport that they had with such students" (p. 113). One method of student support provided by interviewees, was to help students, not just those from non-traditional backgrounds, build a professional identity.

I pause briefly here as when analysing the data for this chapter, I was reminded of Le Court (2006) who asked whether we were pushing the 'alienation narrative' that suggests students of working class heritage can only succeed if they develop a middle-class habitus"? My thought then, as it is now, is can such students become 'professionals' without accepting the social hierarchies in which they developed these skills? O'Dair (2003) sees this as being a simple binary choice: "either assimilate or give up" (cited in Le Court 2006: 32). I disagree. The previous chapter has shown that the presence of the working classes in professional occupations means that students don't have to accept that there is only 'one way to be a professional'. As I will discuss in the next chapter, a working class academic pedagogy means that students can "explore their cultural conflicts, [and] question their subordinate social construction" (Ferretti 1999: 71). Anyway, I digress…

Constructing a Professional Identity

Identity is a dynamic construct, constantly negotiated as people engage with people and opportunities (Skott 2019). Throughout their time in university, it is assumed that students are embarking on a journey to become professionals. I say assumed as the Department of Education found that 22.3 per cent of English graduates were in low/medium paid employment. My respondents were very aware of both the pitfalls, and the transition from the 'uneducated working classes' to an academic.

> *Forming a professional identity is complex, full of challenges. But it is clearly an advantage, for some students, to have someone like me, working as a lecturer.* [Geoff: a teaching fellow in Criminology at a traditional institution]

Before the advent of widening participation, a degree would have been a symbol of the cultural competence and codified knowledge suitable for a professional qualification. But a degree no longer holds the same academic capital it used to, and holding such a qualification no longer entitles one to the same income possibilities previously afforded to graduates. Although other forms of capital are still useful for gaining graduate employment. For instance, a graduate of an elite institution (cultural capital) who cultivates their illustrious alumni network (social capital) is likely to find professional employment. Professional roles are prestigious, have a degree of privilege[2] (Slay and Smith 2011), and, in the main, are for the privileged. Some of my respondents, tired of this, saw themselves as agents of change, as Joy said:

> *We get educated, but the same people are the teachers, in the judiciary, civil servants etc. We need to be the example of change, and the support they need. Our students need the help we never got.*

I will expand on this some more in the next chapter.

Professional identities differ according to the profession, for instance social workers develop a professional identity as they internalize the knowledge, skills, values and mission of the social work profession (Holter 2018). As graduate professions have expanded from traditional graduate roles such as medicine, law and teaching to include niche, or new graduate roles such as physiotherapy or retail management (Elias and Purcell 2004), universities have been required to help students to develop employability skills as a way of developing a professional skillset. But the focus on employability skills is not politically neutral "The pressure on universities to deliver employable students perpetuates a market-based solution which does not sufficiently address fairness, affordability or labour market congestion" (Tholen and Brown 2017: 13). Respondents agreed, noting that employability skills alone are not enough when there are labour market inequalities:

> *A focus on the individual e.g. employability skills is fine if there was the same interest towards the very obvious inequalities faced among graduates.* [Cal]

Academics in my study used two key methods to support their students to construct a professional identity.

Fostering a Sense of Belonging

Baumeister and Leary (1995) talk of the 'belongingness hypothesis', where "human beings have a drive to form and maintain lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships" (p. 497). In higher education a sense of belonging is a key factor in student success. Goodenow (1993) described how in an educational environments this sense of belonging can mean that students are accepted, valued, included, and encouraged by others (teacher and peers) in the academic classroom setting (p. 25). As already discussed in this book, most academics who took part in this study had not always, or still did not feel a sense of belonging as academics, as their family background (or classed intersections of their identities) differed from many of those already in the academy. As such, many respondents talked of wanting to be as welcoming as possible to students who might not traditionally 'fit in':

> *I almost left academia on a number of occasions. Simple things would have changed that, so if I can help other students I will.* [Jessie]

Most of the methods advocated by my respondents were fairly mainstream: weekly meet ups, extensive childcare, IAG sessions. But comments from two respondents stood out:

> *Once a term I arrange for us to have cake and coffee in the class and we chat. It brings up lots of different areas of interest and also gives the students a chance to talk to me on a different level. My evaluation is fantastic as one thing they always say is they get to know me a little in that one lesson.* [Elaine]

> *I have quite a supportive and caring learning environment as I hold one-off coffee mornings with my students. This is not part of the module, but I run it when I can see there is a gap in the timetable … we (about 20 students) go for a coffee, my treat.* [Jane]

On a personal level I know how well these initiatives can work. I often meet students in the café for pastoral care issues as my office is near a corridor and I worry about the student being heard talking about something personal. But also, I'm known to be around for a coffee before my lecture starts. This has been a great opportunity to chat with students about what they love about the courses they are doing, but more importantly, about the things that they hate. It was over one of these chats in a café that the idea for this book was born!

Promoting Role Models for Their Students

This section links back to the discussion earlier in this chapter where my respondents mentioned that a 'visible' presence can encourage students to consider university, or to study typically male-dominated subjects such as STEM, or even be useful for students feeling out of place at open days. Respondents went onto to note the importance of class visibility and its intersections among academic staff members. Kaziboni and Uys (2015) supports this, noting that adult role models sharing the same class, sex, ethnicity etc. with their students can boost their academic performance. The main message from my respondents was that they were very visible role models.

> *I see my job now as trying to transform the lives of those who are like me, so first-generation students, students who don't have social capital to get the better turn out of life.* [Pamela, a senior lecturer in English Literature at a post 1992 institution]

> *We've got to smash the cycle of new students from disadvantaged backgrounds coming here, particularly to my institution [Oxford], and not seeing a reflection of who they are. We must stand out as being working class academics.* [Jeremy, a postdoctoral researcher in Geography at a traditional institution]

Discussions about class visibility, and therefore being role models, did not just focus on members of staff, respondents also talked of how they would ensure that invited speakers included people from a variety of backgrounds.

> *I organise the employability seminars. I thought here is a chance to make sure we hear from diverse voices. I've brought in Kerry Hudson, Akala, Darren McGarvey, Kit de Waal. But also, importantly, local people in professional employment.* [Jane, a researcher in Biological Science at a Russell Group institution]

Joy, a Senior Lecturer in Social Sciences at a Russell Group institution, talked of a more overt way of supporting working-class students, and other disadvantaged groups. She designed a module that gave the students the opportunity to be a role model in poor-performing schools or local community centres in deprived areas felt that this took the notion of employability further as it could not only help students from disadvantaged backgrounds to develop skills, but it may also pay dividends for the

young students who come into contact with these student role models. As Burgess et al. (2017) found, an inspirational talk or interaction from a current student can increase the chance of applications to university.

Supporting Students Beyond Higher Education (HE)

Widening participation goes far beyond ensuring non-traditional student 'get-in' and 'stay-in' higher education. The 'third phase' of widening participation (Gaskell and Lingwood 2019: 2) is about ensuring students are not limited by further hurdles beyond graduation, and about reducing uneven opportunities for graduates from non-traditional academic backgrounds. Different institutions offer different services. The Careers Service at the University of Oxford offers careers guidance, access to careers events for alumni throughout their careers. Whereas the University of Reading provides a service for up to 18 months after graduation. Whereas the University of Liverpool offers support such as discounts on hotels and holiday accommodation and access to free online journals and library access for an unspecified time. Beyond providing references, only one respondent, Paula mentioned trying to provide additional support, beyond graduation:

> *As Head of School I set aside money in the budget for a few simple but effective measures, for instance we have a separate school only website that keeps graduates in contact with us, and we regularly advertise jobs and we have an autumn term drop in where lecturers meet up with former students. But I know I should be doing more.*

The lack of support for graduates beyond graduation opens up a conversation regarding what can working class academics do to support their students? A discussion for the final chapter.

Notes

1. As like Ako-Asare (2015), the literature shows a deep overlap between examples of social capital and familial capital, so throughout these two types of capital are analysed together.
2. Although, we should note Witz's (1992) feminist analysis that professions are key features of patriarchal societies where the gendered activities of caring and support, originally intra-familial roles, developed last century into paid occupations in health and social care, but also underpin the nature of

academic administration roles such as pastoral care, student support etc. Those professions without that gendered element tend to be more prestigious.

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CHAPTER 6

A Working-Class Academic Pedagogy

Fig. 6.1 'Pedagogy'

T. Crew, *Higher Education and Working-Class Academics*,
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Introduction

While universities are expected to be theatres of intellectual enquiry, they are now largely institutions that provide the skills, and credentials, for the neoliberal economy. Paulo Freire (1921–1997) whose pedagogy has influenced people working in fields such as sociology, politics and community development (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller 2014) instead viewed "education not as a means to prepare students for the world of subordinated labour but as 'preparation for a self-managed life'" (cited in Giroux 2010: ix). Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), a major social and political theorist of the twentieth century, has similarly been influential in a variety of fields, including social sciences, cultural studies and education. Gramsci (1971) perceived there to be two types of intellectuals—the traditional intellectual being a function of the state, serving the principles of a neo-liberal society (cited in Merli 2013), for example, local and national government. And the organic intellectuals who, on the other hand, emerged from their own culture and could act as change agents.

> *Personally, I feel I'm an organic intellectual, but by being in a middle-class space I think our very existence means we are transformative intellectuals whether we want to be or not.* [Melanie]

Class Solidarity

Discussions with a small number of respondents added to a theme I had observed throughout the research process, that of class solidarity. John, a head of a department in English at a traditional institution, saw Gramsci and Girouz's categories as "*attractive*", but belonging to an ideal world.

As you may remember from Chap. 1, straddlers are blue-collar workers who have become upwardly mobile, someone with a duality of consciousness that means they can navigate both worlds, but do not easily inhabit either. While this respondent may not immediately see himself as an example of class solidarity, his interview revealed an academic who has supported a number of working-class women in academia, including myself. Others referred to their own deep connection with fellow working-class academics:

If you find other working-class academics … you are drawn to each other. [Katherine]

I … bond the most immediately and most affectionately (sentimentally … you might say) with people from commensurate backgrounds … I do feel immediate deep affinity with other working-class people—especially those now in "intellectual" life. I grab onto them for dear life—to help keep me sane—to give me someone to share alienation with! [John]

For some, this connection with working-class peers led to acts of institutional solidarity. For instance, Pat and Saira talked of working towards ending the reimbursement culture that made academia difficult for their current ECRs. Saira reported an incident when PhD student came to her office as her supervisor was insisting that she attend a conference.

She was crying not just because she had no money, but also because she was waiting to be paid for some teaching she had done for her supervisor. I gave her money for the teaching myself, I can wait for it, and then sent an email to a number of Heads of Departments telling them that expecting our PhD students to pay upfront is impossibly unfair. After meetings a new system was set up where conference costs (fee, hotels, travel etc.) are all booked via the school credit card. I had to do this as we will lose more disadvantaged ECRs.

My first change was to ensure conference fees and travel are paid upfront alongside an advance of £100 for any other costs.

This 'advocating for need', and challenging obvious inequities in the 'system' are examples of what Yosso (2005) describes as resistance capital. A further way my respondents attempted to enact change was through their pedagogy.

A Working-Class Academic Pedagogy

Zandy (1995), in her introduction to her text on working-class studies considers: "Let us imagine what it would be like if the history and culture of working-class people were at the centre of educational practices. What would students learn?" In Paulo Freire's highly influential book 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' he argued that traditional methods of education meant that students were being 'dehumanized', and asked to memorize and repeat ideas, phrases and formulas without understanding

the meaning behind them (p. 71). Freire (1970) sees this process as oppressive, equating teachers (who consider themselves knowledgeable) with bank clerks, 'depositing' information into students, who are supposed to know nothing. Otherwise known as the "banking of education" (ibid). Freire (1970) was critical of this model arguing that the more students work at storing deposits, the less they [the teachers] develop critical consciousness. Instead Freire (2008) argued that teachers should reject the 'banking' approach and replace it with one of 'problem-posing' (pp. 61–62). The more students discuss social problems, the more they will feel challenged 'and obliged to respond to that challenge' (ibid. 62). Girouz (2014), examining the issue from the point of view of academic staff, argued that academics "must avoid the drive to become gated intellectuals … as they become walled off from growing impoverished populations….cut loose from any ethical mooring or sense of social responsibility" (p. 89; cited in Speirs 2019: 6).

Two academic texts in particular have addressed the impact class heritage has on one's pedagogy. 'Teaching Working Class', edited by Sherry Lee Linkon, explores the possibilities and problems that arise from teaching working-class students. The volume brings together 19 essays from several fields, including English, history, labour studies, literature, and American studies which offer guidance, encouragement and insight for those wishing to incorporate class into their courses. Greenwald and Grant (1999) draw upon an area particular to working class academics, the bridging between 'educated' middle-class life to the 'real' world of our social backgrounds (p. 28). While Pari (1999), on the intersection of immigration and language, discusses the experience of learning the correct academic discourse (p. 124). A chapter by Bruno and Jordan (1999) discusses teaching historical content by referring to working class labour history (p. 145). 'Coming to Class: Pedagogy and the Social Class of Teachers' by Shepard et al. (1998) presents twenty-one original essays on the relationship of pedagogical practice to instructors' social class histories. The academics, who were economically disadvantaged students themselves, reflect on how their social class shapes their pedagogical practice. For instance, Daniels (1998) talks about making poetry acessible to working class students as he notes that it has traditionally been a medium for the leisure classes (p. 3). Faulkner (1998) uses her English classes to "connect reading and writing with political participation

and power" (p. 39). A chapter by Moss on 'Intersections of Race and Class in the Academy' aims to make space for others who are not the norm in academia (p. 157).

The question of a working-class pedagogy has been raised before. Russo and Linkon (2005) cite the Freire inspired organisation 'Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed' whose aim was/is to challenge oppressive systems. The organisations include educators, activists, artists to link academic work with political organising by working-class communities and groups. But Tate (1998) argues that just as there is not one feminist pedagogy, there is no single working-class pedagogy (cited in cited Shepard et al. 1998). Tate reminds us that working-class lives intersect with gender, race, religion and age (and other intersections) so much that there cannot be a single working-class approach to teaching (ibid.). I agree. But Zandy (1995) remarks that most working-class educators 'bring … their students pedagogical gifts forged from lived experience' (p. 592). Around 80 per cent of my respondents agreed that their social biography brings pedagogical advantages. However, before I discuss these in further detail, I should note that interviewees from STEM subjects were much less likely, in comparison to academics in the Arts and Humanities, to give examples of how their class background influenced their teaching. This was somewhat expected as there are subject differences between these two very broad approaches. Arts and humanities have no single, defined, method of inquiry, whereas the 'hard' sciences typically investigate phenomena by means of hypotheses and experiments. Less than 10 per cent of life science professionals and 6 per cent of doctors are from working-class backgrounds (Social Mobility Commission 2017). These low numbers might be a further indicator that personal characteristics such as social class (a complex concept even for a social scientist), is less likely to be incorporated into teaching. As such, the majority of STEM respondents tended not to give examples of ways that they brought their class background into either their teaching or research. But two STEM working class academics mentioned how class influenced their teaching. For instance, Ben, a graduate teaching assistant in Biological Sciences at a Russell Group institution and Paul, a Teaching Fellow, in Engineering, also in a Russell Group institution, felt that their class backgrounds led them to give clearer explanations when teaching. In later sections I mention how other respondents from Maths and Health Care Sciences also drew upon their class heritage

in their teaching. But overall, it was much easier for academic from the Arts and Humanities to draw upon their class heritage in more overt ways when teaching. Interview data revealed the following key elements that formed a working-class academic pedagogy.

Engaging with Students from a Strength's Perspective

For many years a deficit perspective has persisted in shaping how educators interact with students from marginalized backgrounds (Volk and Long 2005). Svoboda (2012), a faculty member, who was a former non-traditional student (NTS), talked of how on a daily basis, she would notice colleagues making assumptions about students like her. Deb echoed this when discussing non-traditional students:

> *The presumption was they would be hard work because they didn't have an academic background.*

A cohort with an imprecise definition, NTS tend to have at least one of the following identifying criteria: are at least 25 years old and above, attend university part-time, work full-time, have children (Macdonald 2018), are first-generation attendees from working-class or minority backgrounds (Holton 2018), have a disability, and are predominantly female (Wong and Chiu 2019). Research on NTS suggest they are less likely to access or possess academic resources, knowledge, and dispositions (Wong 2018). While there are elements of truth to this, respondents commented on the excellence of some NTS:

> *Many of my best students are from disadvantaged communities, just like mine!* [Jeremy]

> *Contrary to popular portrayals of working-class students, if I need someone to contribute in my class its always them.* [Sophie]

There is evidence that supports this. Lehmann (2009) for instance, found that approximately 75 per cent of his working-class participants performed at or above average in their first year (p. 639). While Wong (2018), who interviewed 30 final-year high-achieving NTS, found it family support and the desire to prove oneself that were key ingredients in academic success.

When I analysed the data, half of my cohort (including n.1 STEM academic) gave examples of 'teaching from a strengths-based perspective'. This perspective links well with 'funds of knowledge' (FoK), an anthropological term originally coined by Wolf (1966) and expanded on by Moll et al. (1992) to define the resources and knowledge gained through cultural interactions that are essential for individuals to function appropriately in his/her community (Hogg 2011: 667). FoK include household skills such as sewing and cooking and social skills such as helping neighbours, the telling of stories related to one's culture (Stone-MacDonald 2012). FoK are an underappreciated resource in academia as the deficit status of some students is so entrenched. Households (not just universities) can be "repositories of knowledge" (Gonzalez 2005: 26). Velez-Ibanez's (1988) ethnographic study of economically vulnerable Mexican communities had FoK, which included: "information and formulas containing the mathematics, architecture and engineering for the construction homes, being able to repair most mechanical devices as well as cultural methods for planting and gardening, cooking, and of 'making things' in general" (p. 38). While 'poor' in monetary resources, their FoK meant they were self-sufficient. Teachers can use FoK to engage with students based on their resources rather than their deficits (Upadhyay 2005: 96). Mark a lecturer in Engineering found that some of the working-class students he encountered had an innate understanding of how objects worked. Similar to Velez-Ibanez (1988) his students were well versed in repairing old washing machines, or upgrading motorcycles using cheap parts.

A skillset that is useful on an engineering degree.

Brandon a lecturer in Political and Policy Studies found that by recognising FoK, he was able to discuss welfare benefits with students more effectively.

I used monopoly money to demonstrate the amounts given for various welfare benefits. Mature students help move the seminar from the theoretical to the applied, reminding me that while you may have x amount of £'s, unexpected bills scupper you.

Zipin (2009) refers to the dark' or hidden FoK that students would not 'normally' share (p. 321) e.g. domestic violence, mental illness, and drug

addiction. Zipin argues that these 'dark funds of knowledge' are not deficit attributes to be avoided in the curriculum, but instead be seen as rich assets for learning (ibid.: 325). Amy, a Teaching Fellow in English at a Russell Group institution, discussed how her students submitted a journal as part of the assessment to reflect the dark themes they had discussed in fiction covered that year.

> *The students have produced some wonderful pieces of writing that touch upon their personal experiences of poverty and mental health.* [Lucy]

Ann, a lecturer in Health Science from a post 1992 institution asks her students to write an anonymous journal to record aspects of their health, and to link it with health policies.

> *The students, love this type of assessment as it links theory with the practice but recognises them.*

These assignments tapped into students' skills and experiences just as the funds of knowledge literature recommends.

Shared Lived Experiences

Learning doesn't occur in a vacuum. Our prior experiences shape our interactions with new knowledge (Stuart et al. 2011). For students this may influence their choice of course, but for my interviewees, lived experience permeated their course content and methodology.

> *Teaching is a performance. You bring the texts alive, drawing upon your own experience.* [Finn: Reader in Literature at an Oxbridge institution]

> *When I'm explaining concepts to people … I can strip it down to very simple understanding which is helpful for students, I can explain concepts in much more simpler terms.* [Samantha: PhD student in Geography at a Post 1992 institution]

There is research that connect the themes of teaching material with students' everyday life. Nash and Walker (2018) conducted a piece of ethnographic research on the experience of international students living in the private rented sector. The results provided recommendations to support students to meet the challenges that international students face when

renting. This was similar to the approach taken by Theo, a Politics research fellow talked of how he introduced the 'Windrush generation' to his module a few years ago, not just because he had relatives that this had directly affected, but because he was aware that two students had personal experience of the scandal:

> *I gave students the assignment of keeping a diary of the experiences of a fictional character from travelling over to England on Empire Windrush, to the first few months settling down. Due their own experiences of this issue, the writing was nuanced, with understandings of class and racism.*

This approach was used by other lecturers. For instance:

> *My family would talk about the Battle of Orgreave, so I worked with second year undergraduate class, alongside their local historical society to discuss this historical event. The wealth of information was a two-way process as students had family members who had been involved.* [Jamie]

Luke expanded on the theme of shared experiences:

> *What you tend to find particularly in history and I'm guessing it's similar in sociology, is people from working classes tend to do research on related areas. Their whole experiences and what they're really driven by in terms of politics and … intellectual endeavour … gives a richness to the curriculum … it's hard enough anyway to get … content in the curriculum that reflects a kind of broader variety of human experience than what there is in elite institutions.*

While not connected with teaching, Ian, a researcher at an elite institution mentioned that the first research project he worked on for the university was one that helped disadvantaged communities get internet access. His research focus, like many I interviewed for this book was to help the 'underdog'.

Brandon, a working-class academic with a disability, who teaches an introductory humanities module, talks of how he addresses the intersection of class and disability. The classed/disabled body is one of the last frontiers to be addressed in education (Anderson 2006). Ann Firor Scott asks "How do we make the historically invisible, visible?" (1984, 19 cited in ibid.: 376). Brandon used the industrial revolution as an example because as Snyder and Mitchell (2006) notes that period of rapid economic and societal change, meant that disabled people from poorer

backgrounds were commonly sent away to asylums and poor houses. Returning to Brandon:

> *I illustrate that I, as a person with disabilities, would have lived a very different life if I had lived in another era. I use pictures to demonstrate my current life and contrast it with the evidence we have on Disabled people during this time period. It's a session that gets the most complimentary feedback.*

I mentioned this pedagogical approach to another respondent with disabilities, Tina who is blind:

> *Yeah, same here, I do this when talking to PGCE students. Its important they remember that we are not all starting from a level playing field. This sparks a discussion on what elements of their own lived experience they should consider in their teaching.*

This shared lived experience (students and working-class academics) goes beyond pedagogy, it is also about understanding what it is like to start university as the first in your family. My respondents understood the journey these students were on:

> *We've been there. Not understanding the lecturer. In awe of students who seemingly did.* [Elaine]

My respondents remembered the intensity of keeping up with their classes, of the complexity of the reading (and having no one to discuss them with), and their worries about asking lecturers questions.

Co-creators of Knowledge

Traditional pedagogy focuses on knowledge and understanding (what teachers know) (Husbands and Pearce 2012: 5). Freire (1970), critical of such approaches, argued that knowledge must be 'co-created' as students were not blank slates. When students contribute to a learning experience, the teacher is not "the one who teaches" but someone who learns with and from the students (p. 80). Teachers and students as learners in joint

inquiry (Freire 1993), where "nobody is superior to anyone else" (Freire 1998: 108). Respondents agreed:

> *'We' know our subject areas but co-creating with students shows respect for their knowledge.* [Unity]

Co-creation can take a variety of forms: evaluating and redesigning course content; redesigning course content; designing essay questions or choosing between different assessment methods; and grading their own and others' work (Bovill et al. 2016). My interview data demonstrated examples of respondents utilising students for course redesign and choosing between different assessment methods.

Course Redesign

Willis and Gregory (2016) found that co-creation was perceived by students as being an innovative pedagogical approach, commenting that 'it didn't feel like the usual chalk and talk'. Research by Hubbard and Dunbar (2017) is a further example of co-production. The researchers set up a student partnership initiative entitled 'Bridging the Gap', a project to improve first-year biology practical class teaching at the University of Cambridge. The aim being to give students an alternative perspective on their theoretical knowledge as well as to develop technical skills (p. 59). The project lead to benefits for both academics and students. The academics gained an insight into student needs, while the students enrolled in the courses received new materials that consolidate understanding in the practical sessions (ibid: 75). Ten of my own respondents talked of using co-design for their modules. For instance, Amy was involved in a project that used student 'consultants' to re-design a module so that it had employability embedded throughout. While Jack co-designed an academic module so that it had an accompanying website with guides to specific maths problems that students had struggled with over the course of the module. Every August Catrin and the student representatives get together in one room to redesign the module.

> *Its an open, collaborative, creative atmosphere where everyone contributes to course content.*

Choosing Between Different Assessment Methods

Giving student choices regarding their assignments can help with student engagement but also equity. Patall et al. (2008) found that by allowing a student to have choice in an assignment, the student can affirm his/her sense of autonomy and is thus more willing to partake in the assignment (p. 25). Hudd (2003) designed an exercise where students developed assignments to test their sociology skills. Students commented that this enhanced their understanding of the course. Six respondents discussed various ways they worked with students over their assignments. Deb gave students an assignment to design an essay question that matched the learning outcomes.

> *This worked very well as it made students take ownership of their learning.*

Co-production was also used by Jeremy to incorporate the views of local people regarding a new housing development.

Embedding Social Justice

A concern typically cited by respondents working in the Arts and Humanities, social justice is an important feature of the working-class academic pedagogy. This form of education encourages teachers to create empowering, democratic, and critical educational environments" (Hackman 2005: 103). In 'Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom and Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope', bell hooks (1994) states that the educator needs to be critically self-reflective. Respondents discussed a number of ways that they did this. For instance, James used reflective writing and debating the opposing opinion, while Tina asked students to keep weekly journals focusing on their privilege. As all teaching is political (Roberts 2016), respondents aimed to increase student consciousness and capacity for addressing social justice issues. Lecourt (2006) suggests that central to any social justice approach is to help students reflect and understand the inequalities in their lives. Although she reflects that it's important to avoid communicating that there is a "static identity", something that can only be "lost" or "replaced." (p. 33). The main way that respondents referred to social justice in their teaching was through their attempts to decolonise the classroom.

Calls to decolonise education, the curriculum, and universities system have grown louder in recent years. Rhodes must fall in Oxford (RMFiO),

a movement with aim of decolonising the space, the curriculum, and the institutional memory at, and to fight intersectional oppression. Joy said her aim to decolonize her classroom was "*not a tickbox exercise, but a long-term approach*". RMFiO's aims to tackle the plague of colonial iconography, reform the euro-centric curriculum and to address the underrepresentation of BME academics and students (Rhodes Must Fall in Oxford n.d.), set a clear standard for other institutions to emulate. Respondents described three ways of embedding social justice: curriculum, pedagogy, and social action.

Curriculum

Similar to that reported by Hytten and Bettez (2011), a number of Black academics reported being expected to bear the brunt of efforts to ensure their academic programme is diverse:

> *I'm expected to organise Black History Month but everyone should be considering the lack of black writers as standard on the curriculum.* [Theo]

Ann took the radical decision to ensure that her reading list was reflective of only two 'groups'—working class writers and writers from ethnic minorities. While the head of her school was supportive, citing academic freedom, Ann faced resistance she faced from higher management.

> *I was called in front of what appeared to be a Teaching and Learning meeting, but what was like a disciplinary meeting. In the end, I kept my reading list as I intended, only because I identified a number of colleagues who had 'all white' reading lists.*

Tina took a similar approach and reviewed her teaching resources, and lecture subjects to ensure that multiple viewpoints and perspectives were represented. Ashley focused on creating spaces whereby students could bring their own culture into an inclusive sociological space. She held weekly student presentations where students would discuss a 'problem' from their own culture or tradition.

> *This has been the most interesting year that this module has ran. We heard from international students and the expectations they face; a presentation on being disabled, the presentation was held in the reception area to demonstrate that she could go no further. A twin presentation from someone who chose to wear the burka and from someone who has chosen not too.*

Interviewees reported a satisfaction in interrogating the structures that had produced and reproduced some of the inequalities that they had also faced.

Pedagogy

Bell (2016) suggests that 'the process of social justice should involve dialogue, enabled by opportunities to critically examine institutional, cultural and individual oppression. Goals for social justice include empowerment, equal distribution of resources, and social responsibility'. Social justice education means to be attentive to social norms and the ways in which these norms sustain oppression and marginalization (Hart 2016). Asking simple questions such as "What is taught?" "How is it taught?" and "What is left out?" are some preliminary questions that will help develop one's social justice approach to teaching (Breunig 2019). An example assessment for students on Emma's module is the '5 day challenge to live on £1 per day'. Joy, at the time of the interview, was working on a project considering how her institution had benefitted from slavery.

Social Action

Teaching based on social justice prepares students for social action engagement. Nelson Laird et al. (2005) refer to the need for students' willingness to "take actions in their communities in order to end social injustice" (p. 468). The academics I interviewed did this with a local partner, based on the issue that they were focusing on e.g. working with MIND if focusing on mental health etc. Theo and Jeremy used activist strategies such as raising money for the organisation, social media campaigns to raise awareness of an issue as well as connecting their assignments with the aim for social change. In its entirely, a working-class academic pedagogy becomes more than teaching exercises, but a political statement against a neo-liberal institution that some may feel is long overdue. The next chapter summarises the findings of the book, before asking, where next for working class intellectuals?

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CHAPTER 7

Looking Back and Moving Forward

Fig. 7.1 'Staff'

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Looking Back

This book draws upon the experiences of 89 UK academics from working class backgrounds. Due to the current HE fees regime in UK, this is a cohort that, Luke, one of my respondents, suggests "*may be more difficult to locate in ten years' time*". This book acknowledges the complications with the term 'working-class academic', but to 'remove' a preferred class identifier once someone gains professional employment diminishes their agency and obscures any difficulties they may have experienced in comparison to someone with advantaged forms of capital. This first section reports the main findings in relation to the three research questions.

What Makes an Academic 'Working Class'?

Almost all respondents embraced the descriptor 'working-class academic' as "it describes people like us, on the margins of academia" [Sal, a Lecturer in Social Studies at a traditional institution]. Chapter Two identified and described the four elements that comprise a working-class academic identity:

Family Background
This was not a uniform experience. Some had the typical markers of a working class upbringing e.g. free school meals, council housing (60 per cent of interviewees), and poverty (65 per cent of interviewees). The remaining respondents had a childhood that was more financially stable, but all lacked the large social networks useful for employment opportunities. Their cultural capital was varied and had been largely influenced by their family's financial resources.

An Uneven Access to Capital
Compared to their advantaged colleagues, working class academics were always playing 'catch up' with their cultural capital. Any financial advantages were delayed due to large debts accrued as students or patchy economic capital as almost half (41%) were on precarious contracts, with no savings or family support. While their cultural capital increased this had mainly been developed during their time in academia. Cultural biases meant their social networks remained small.

A Lack of a Safety Net to 'Manage' Academic Precarity
Over half of respondents earned more than £35k per annum, yet 90 per cent of respondents did not have financial support from their family. One third of interviewees said they were in debt and 20 per cent did not own their own home. Just under half that were on precarious contracts did not have the economic capital to take time out to write the articles/funding applications needed for permanency.

A 'Habitus War' (Bentley 2020: 27)
There was not one dominant form of habitus among the respondents, but all were conflicted in some manner. One third noted that the reconciliation process between their class heritage and the preferred middle-class habitus had been painful. This had led to difficult relationships with their family and friends. A further third were able to 'pass' as being an elite or middle-class academic but wondered if it was worth it. The final third had a chameleon like habitus—'one person for work, another for home'. Whatever their experience, being "one of only a few was very isolating" (Svoboda 2012).

Broad Experiences of the Academy

One of two overarching themes were found in most interviews:

Precarity
Just under half of respondents were on fixed term contracts. Twenty per cent of these had visited foodbanks within the last 12 months, and 15 per cent had struggled to pay their mortgage/rent, to the point that they had been on the verge of homelessness. Precarity had a classed impact:

- Income insecurity was especially difficult as 20 per cent of my respondents provided financial support to their parents or siblings. Other were only able to sustain their employment as their partner earned a high income.
- Work-life balance—male respondents were open about the fact that the stress they experienced from these precarious contracts was negatively affecting their relationships.
- Ill health—Three quarters of those on fixed-term contracts reported poor mental and physical health. Mainly female academics reported these health issues.

Respondents with disabilities were able to draw upon their familial/social capital from their families and friends e.g. parents would read research papers out loud, and wait for them to drive them home if they were unwell. Online communities were sources of moral support.

Hostility

There were feelings of inadequacy among my interviewees, with many reporting that they did not 'fit in' due to the following:

- Acenteeism—a particular issue for those with regional accents and from Russell group institutions. An accent can be welcoming for students from similar backgrounds
- Humour—respondents saw their sense of humour as a marker of class distinction. Some, feeling cautious, 'toned down' their sense of humour in order to fit in with their surroundings, others used it as part of their pedagogy
- Clothing—female respondents worried about the 'rules of the game' regarding academic attire. Male respondents faced direct comments from colleagues about their clothes, for example, being critiqued if they did not wear a suit
- Food—respondents, mainly from elite institutions, were concerned about their food literacy and their lack of ease at formals
- Tattoos—10 per cent of respondents had tattoos. While potentially problematic for their image as an academic, some saw them as a way of resisting middle-class femininity.

Microaggressions were a key feature of academia. Class-based hostility included lazy stereotypes about disadvantaged communities, for example 'chavs'. Male respondents appeared to experience fewer, but more direct examples, while female, and BME respondents, received less direct, but more frequent examples of microagressions. Racial microaggressions were reported frequently. Anecdotal data suggested that BME respondents experienced more racially motivated microaggressions because the assumption was that they were middle class. Anecdotal data suggests that the longer someone is in the academy, the less microaggressions they experienced.

The Qualities Working Class Academics Bring to Academia

Two key themes were found: student support, and a working-class pedagogy.

Student Support
Respondents supported students in higher education by:

- Providing advice and guidance regarding HE in informal community settings.
- Being a visible presence of class differences at open days, especially for those considering STEM subjects.

They also supported students through higher education by:

- Helping them to construct a professional identity by fostering a sense of belonging in the academy (especially useful for students from disadvantaged backgrounds)
- Bringing in professional, working-class role models from outside the academy. Little was discussed about supporting students after higher education apart from attempts to hold graduate events.

The sheer exhaustion of providing this care work should not be underestimated. A paper by Wilson et al. (2020) in part talks of the "guilty burden of pastoral care" (p. 5), where mainly female academics are "overworked…pressurised and over-burdened by the volume of pastoral cases" (ibid.). While this book has found that working-class men are very supportive to students, students will often opt for female academics as they are deemed to be approachable (Heijstra et al. 2017).

A Working-Class Academic Pedagogy
Interview data also identified a 'working-class academic pedagogy'. A teaching approach with social justice at its heart, it engaged with students from a strength's perspective, embraced shared experiences and encouraged students as co-creators of knowledge.

Forms of Working-Class Academic Capital
Respondents had various forms of capital according to the framework by Yosso (2005).

Aspirational Capital
Aspirational capital referred to the ability to aspire and dream despite challenges. For instance:

- Respondents persisted with their aim of working in academia despite challenging times
- Being role models in academia meant that they provided the critical encouragement for students so that they, in turn, would persist despite the barriers they may face.

Familial/social Capital
Familial/social capital is focused on community well-being that can manifest as caring and nurturing. For instance:

- Respondents with disabilities on fixed term contracts received practical and emotional support from their families and friends and online communities (that focused on disability)
- BME academics were able to draw upon this capital to help them cope with racially motivated microagressions
- Being a visible presence of class differences at open days and for those considering entry into STEM subjects
- Demonstrating a commitment to community well-being by bringing in professional, working-class role models from outside the academy

Linguistic Capital
This type of capital relates to the ability for students to develop communication skills through various experiences. While accent was a site of various microaggressions, one's style of speaking was also referred to being a very visible example of the diversity needed in academia.

Navigational Capital
This form of capital related to the various strategies used in navigating social institutions. These strategies were used to support students. For instance:

- By providing IAG in informal community settings
- Sharing personal experiences that provide insight into their own strategies for navigating academia

Resistance Capital
This means to challenge inequity and subordination.

There are a number of examples given, some of which had clear practical impact.

- Recognising their 'working-classness' as an asset
- Overhauling the reimbursement culture in their institution
- Rejecting a middle-class, academic femininity by dressing in ways where they would 'stand out', and displaying 'rebellious' markers such as tattoos, nose rings and buzz cut hair styles.

Moving Forward

We have more students from disadvantaged backgrounds entering higher education than ever before.[1] The working-class academic has an especially important role to play in this era. "Like never before, there is a need to show the public that intellectual enquiry is not the sole preserve of the middle and upper classes …" (Stiles 2017 cited in Binns 2019: 115). Based on my findings, I have the following recommendations for working-class academics to take into their pedagogy and research.

Recognise Class Inequalities

This book has outlined many class based inequalities, but as Ardoin and martinez (2019) highlight, there are more:

- *As individuals*—assumptions about intelligence and professionalism, expectations regarding attire, language and communication style, mentoring and discussions about housing, dinner and vacations (p. 182). *For instance, don't presume that all students from disadvantaged back-grounds will have rusty study skills.*
- *In departments*—recruitment and hiring practices, membership of professional organisations, reimbursements (ibid.). *For instance, consider how the reimbursement culture stops people on fixed term contracts from being able to access opportunities such as going to their first conference or to be a key note speaker.*
- *On campus*—deposits for registrations and housing, welcome week, family weekends, internships, student engagement (ibid.). *For instance some working-class academics may be ideal for student engagement and retention.*

Recognising class inequalities is vital as it "creates moments for learning, allows us to consider ways to be inclusive and encourages action". A form of action could be a co-created research project (with students) to

examine class inequalities in their institution. But this is an area that ultimately institutions need to address in their policies. While not a protected characteristic, the Equality Act includes the 'Socioeconomic Duty', which requires government and all public bodies to have due regard for 'reducing the inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage'. Currently only the Welsh government has enacted the Socioeconomic Duty. As mentioned by Friedman and Laurison (2019), I would ask readers to put pressure on the UK Government to support this by writing to their MP and asking them to support the Early Day Motion. #1forequality, a campaign led by Just Fair and The Equality Trust (https://www.equalitytrust.org.uk) has a link to a template letter that you can use.

Challenge Stereotypes about Working Class Communities

Too often, "working class" is an offensive caricature e.g. a racist hooligan, an alcoholic thug; sexually available (for females), or brainless, feckless scroungers (Ginsburgh 2012). I have listed other stereotypes in earlier chapters of this book which are just as derogatory. There are rarely ever positive representations of working-class communities in the media (remember Benefits Street?). As an applied sociologist, I see the curriculum as being the ideal place to root out damaging stereotypes. Reflect on your own teaching and consider:

- Does class diversity feature in your module material?
- Do you challenge the ways students think about class, or;
- Do you (unintentionally) perpetuate the myth that there are no class distinctions?

For those outside of arts and humanities subjects, how culturally diverse are your classes? Research into this area may find that like Van de Werfhorst et al. (2003), a student's social class is a factor in entering the elite fields of medicine and law (see p. 169). Are your subject areas the same? We need to know more about this so I encourage research in these areas. The next step is to consider what can be done to address any underlying issues.

Show Solidarity to Others on the Margins of Academia

My book has shown examples of solidarity between working class academics for instance, their attempts to reverse the reimbursement culture, and support via the HE strikes over the last few years. We need to be allies for our colleagues employed on exploitative contracts as acts of resistance are easier to do if in a settled position. But we can go further. Like Freidman and Laurison (2019) I recommend that academics use an intersectional analysis when researching working class identities (and any subject for that matter). DiAngelo noted in Chap. 1, that while she faced classism and sexism her white privilege insulated her from the racism faced by BME women from working class backgrounds. Examples of racial microagressions in this book are too numerous to ignore. Our solidarity needs to extend to BME academics from *any* background as they remain under-represented and are far more likely to occupy entry level and junior roles in universities (Bhopal and Jackson 2013; Equality Challenge Unit, 2014 cited in Miller 2016) for what can only be discrimination. A 2019 UCU analysis found that while one in nine white academic staff (11 per cent) are professors, compared to one in 15 (7 per cent) of Asian academic staff are professors, and just one in 33 (3 per cent) black academic staff. Alongside this, 93 per cent of professors are white, as are 91 percent of academic-related managers. There is also an ethnicity pay gap of 9 per cent between white and BME staff. Although black academic staff are paid 14 per cent less than white academic staff. Academics with disabilities also need our support as they work in a field where capacity is conflated with quality (Walsh 2017). In Brown and Leigh's (2018) article on ableism in academia, they talk of how a support group for female academics with disability had more than 60 members within 24 hours. Inckle (2018) reports there being a battle to get the reasonable adjustments which are a requirement under the Equality Act (2010)—something mentioned by two of my own respondents. This is "additional unpaid labour which has significant mental health and career impacts as well as violating principles of equality" (Inckle 2018: 1372).

Reach out to Likeminded Academics

I urge you to reach out to other working class academics. They might not be doing as well as you are. This could be done by raising the issue of class (although be careful, a small group of my respondents received a negative reaction when they did this). You might want to 'reach out' by reading texts

by like-minded academics. I recommend the work of Diane Reay, Beverley Skeggs, Lisa McKenzie, Sam Friedman and Daniel Laurison, and a collection by Thatcher et al. (2018). *Bourdieu: The Next Generation. The Development of Bourdieu's Intellectual Heritage in Contemporary UK Sociology.*

There are also societies and associations relating to working class academics:

- Working-Class Academics (WCA) advocates for students and faculty of poverty and working-class origins, strives to implement reforms designed to assure greater class equity within colleges and universities (For more details: https://wcstudiesassociation.wordpress.com/working-class-academics-section/). I was fortunate to attend and speak at their inaugural conference. The excitement of being able to speak without fear of critique of one's regional accent, or supposed lack of cultural capital, was palpable.
- *Association of Working Class Academics*—an international collection of academics who have formed the association in order to support the working class in academia. Their aims are: to helping academic colleagues overcome the barriers throughout their careers, amassing data on the challenges facing working class academics, provide advice; support the sector in recognising and removing the barriers and collecting good practice. (For more details https://workingclassacademics.com)

Remember the Capital You Bring to Academia

Throughout this book I have drawn upon the excellent work by Professor Tara Yosso to discuss the various forms of capital working-class academics bring to the academy. At times it is too easy for scholars from the margins to focus on where they are supposedly in deficit, what they lack. So, consider the following:

- What is your cultural wealth?
- What do you bring to academia?
- What are your funds of knowledge?

Concluding Remarks

Throughout this book I have never forgotten my readers. Whether they be a working-class academic who has questions, perhaps unsure of why they do not feel as if they 'fit in', or a student who has recently entered

higher education and is maybe feeling bewildered. I hope that this book defies any notion that the working class have inferior norms, values, skills and knowledge. As Shukie (2020) so beautifully reminds us, "Working Class is not an accent to be lost … a savagery to be civilised … a roughness to be polished … [or] a background to be assimilated" (para. 24).

Instead we sparkle with pedagogical gifts, represent a bridge between "'educated' middle-class life to the 'real' world" (Greenwald and Grant 1999: 28) and are armed with an immense cultural wealth that challenges academia. To paraphrase Shukie (2020), working class is achievement. Working class is a space of philosophy, art, science. Working class are active creators of knowledge not the passive subject of other people's. Working Class as Academics (para. 24).

Note

1. Participation of Local Areas (POLAR) was developed by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and classifies small areas across the UK into five groups according to their level of young participation in HE. Each of these groups represents around 20 per cent of young people and are ranked from quintile 1 (Q1) (areas with the lowest young participation rates, considered as the most disadvantaged) to quintile 5 (Q5) (highest young participation rates, considered most advantaged). Pupils in the most advantaged quintile are more than twice as likely to progress to HE as those from the most disadvantaged quintile at 57.9% compared to 26.4% in 2017/18. There has been some narrowing of the gap over time with the progression rate for the most advantaged increasing by 6.6 percentage points since 2009/10 compared to 8.4 percentage points for the most disadvantaged.

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Appendix

Gender	
M	**27**
F	**62**
Ethnicity	
White	77
BME	**12**
Disability	
No disability	**84**
Disability	**5**
Subject area	
Health Sciences	**9**
Politics	**1**
Law	**2**
History	**9**
Social Sciences	**17**
Professional services	**2**
Biological Science	6
Engineering	1
Mathematics	3
Business studies	6
Gender	2
Geography	11

(*continued*)

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(continued)

	1
Drama	5
Psychology	3
Literature	3
Economics	2
Classics	3
Film Studies	1
Education	1
Linguistics	1
Computer Sciences	
Position	
PhD Student	**2**
Graduate Teaching Assistant/Associate Lecturer	**20**
Guest Lecturer	**1**
Teaching Fellow	**10**
Lecturer	**22**
Senior Lecturer	**12**
Researcher	**9**
Assistant Professor	**2**
Professional services	**2**
Professor	**4**
Post Doc	**4**
Independent researcher	**1**
Contract type	
Permanent	**48**
Precarious	**41**
Location	
England	**62**
Wales	**18**
Scotland	**7**
Ireland	**2**
Type	
Oxbridge	**6**
Red brick	**21**
Russell Group	**12**
Traditional	**20**
Post 1992	**21**
Various	**3**
Independent	**5**

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[1] Note: Page numbers followed by 'n' refer to notes.

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