An Interdisciplinary Framework for Understanding the Multidimensionality of Social
Class

by

Melissa Robin Sanders

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(Psychology)
In the University of Michigan
2012

Doctoral Committee:

Associate Professor Ramaswami Mahalingam, Chair
Professor Elizabeth Cole
Professor Fiona Lee
Lecturer Adrienne Dessel

To Zadie

Acknowledgments

      I would like to thank the family I have created for their emotional support while I pursued this degree. Without the rallying and patience from Jon Seid, Dani Indovino, Samantha Cantu, Leila Sanders and Van Parker I would not have completed this dissertation. I thank my friends and collaborators for their support and enthusiasm with my projects; Melanie Henderson and Cathleen Clerkin were particular sources of inspiration to me. Finally, the guidance and thoughtful input of my chair and committee helped me write the best quality dissertation I am capable of writing.

Table of Contents

Chapter

List of Figures

Figure

List of Tables

Tables

Abstract

This dissertation explores the multidimensional aspects of social class - as a representation as well as a practice embedded in a network of beliefs and expectations – using qualitative and quantitative methods. Social class identity in higher educational settings is explored, and the ways in which social class identity relates to perceptions of hierarchy and privilege are examined. Innovative multimodal methodological approaches to the measurement of social class are presented.

Aspects of social class were tested in a series of studies. A set of studies explored measurement issues regarding social class. The interchangeability of objective, subjective, and projective measurements of class was examined, as was the impact of context-level variables on individuals' perceptions of how objective and subjective operationalizations of social class converged. Qualitative analysis showed that individuals use contextual mechanisms to establish their own class location. Qualitative analysis also showed that though class is felt and salient to American college students, there is little formal discourse about class due to existing linguistic taboos and stereotypes.

A second set of studies examined how intersections of race and class in higher educational settings related to the endorsement of system legitimizing or system challenging beliefs. Across two studies, Social Dominance Orientation (SDO; a system legitimizing ideology) and John Henryism (JH; a measure of active personal coping) were predicted by Race x Class. Findings showed that class privileged people of color

endorsed SDO most strongly and JH least strongly. Qualitative investigation showed that class privileged students of color naturalized and legitimized social hierarchy with greater frequency than class targeted students of color.

The remaining studies explored the relationships between ideological perspectives on social hierarchy, awareness of privilege and marginalization, and intersectional consciousness. Those from privileged background had the highest levels of SDO. SDO negatively correlated with privilege awareness and intersectional consciousness, but the relationship between SDO and intersectional consciousness was mediated by privilege awareness. Thus, social class in part may shape whether we see economic disparities as fair, which is related to differences in beliefs about privilege and different levels of understanding of how social identities simultaneously function and mutually reinforce each other.

Key words: social class, intersectionality, identity, privilege

Chapter I. Intersectional Approaches to Social Class and Privilege

Broadly speaking, social class has been overlooked by psychologists. Though it

is recognized as an important element of our lives, the psychological effects of social

class are not always clear or evident. As a result, social class has been generally

understudied in the field of social psychology (Ostrove & Cole, 2003). The majority of

psychological research that includes social class as a variable of interest does so in a

limited way – often as purely descriptive information or as a control variable (Mueller &

Parcell, 1981; Weeden & Grusky, 2005). In doing so, the full impact of social class on

individuals' attitudes and beliefs has gone largely unexplored. Previous researchers have

criticized psychologists' approach to social class as reductive and overly reliant on

simplistic and flawed measurement techniques (Eysenck, 1960).

Social class is a multidimensional, highly complex construct. Social class,

because of its roots in material economic conditions, can be conceptualized as a set of

practices and beliefs drawn from one's lived experience know as *habitus* (Bourdieu,

1977). Habitus informs our implicit understandings of class, and may lead to essentialist

representations of class that replicate positions of class-based privilege or marginalization

(Mahalingam & Leu, 2005). Given the embeddedness of habitus, an intersectional

framework which seeks to explore the links between classed experiences and racialized

experiences is necessary. An intersectional approach to the study of class provides

insight into the ways in which social class interacts with and is mutually reinforced by

other social identities, such as race and gender (Crenshaw, 1995). Because a thorough understanding of social class framed in this way requires acknowledgement of both the objective contextual factors surrounding an individual and the way s/he internalizes and construes those factors, a multi-method approach is required to fully explore the implications of class-based identity.

Studying social class in an American context poses particular difficulties. While social class is a visible and salient aspect of identity and criteria for grouping other individuals in many other contexts, in the United States the impact and relevance of social class is masked. Protestant Work Ethic (PWE) and American Dream ideology serve to establish perceptions of class mobility and personal responsibility that essentially render class as a structural element of social location invisible (Hochschild, 1995). PWE requires some belief in a just world or fair play, essentially arguing that the link between hard work and success is clear and stable (Christopher, Zabel, Jones & Marek, 2008). Such a belief leads to attitudes that life outcomes are the result of personal talent and drive (or a lack thereof), and are not related to structural obstacles or disparities in opportunities. American Dream ideology takes this a step further: it erases the impact of structure at all by claiming that individuals have a reasonable expectation of success regardless of context (Hochschild, 1995). In a culture where class mobility is assumed to be possible and is dependent on personal attributes, it makes sense that discussions of social class would be greatly limited: those who are economically disadvantaged may not wish to disclose an identity which suggests they have somehow failed, while those who are economically advantaged may resist 'bragging'. Unsurprisingly, 'middle class' emerges in America as a default class identity category that cuts across objective markers

of social class (Hooper, 1976). The work presented in this dissertation uses intersectionality theory and the concept of habitus to unpack why these class-masking ideologies exist and persist in America.

Measurement of Social Class

Currently, two broad approaches to the measurement of social class are commonly used: researchers tend to either examine the objective markers of social class or the subjective self-identification with a particular class grouping. Objective markers of social class reflect the material basis of one's social class. These markers represent one's socioeconomic position in society and are typically demographic in nature. The subjective elements of class, in contrast, reflect how social class is construed and interpreted by an individual. Below, I describe how objective and subjective aspects of class are typically measured and the particular measurement issues related to each.

Marx and Engels' (1962) defined class as one's relation to the means of production. An understanding of social class as one's position in economically-based social hierarchies is clearly influenced by Marxist lines of thought (Hooper, 1976; Kamieniecki & O'Brien, 1984). Objective markers of class are rooted in these Marxist and neo-Marxist formulations of social class. Objective markers of class are often treated as stable demographic aspects of a person that reflect the particular economically-associated skill sets and opportunities an individual has. As such, objective markers of class describe the context of an individual, but are less useful in understanding his psychological experience within a certain class.

Typical objective measures of social class are income, occupational prestige, and educational attainment. It is easy to see why objective measures are popular among

3

social scientists – they tend to be face valid and easy to collect (Kamieniecki & O'Brien, 1984; Schooler & Schoenbach, 1994). Each of the three gives one a broad sense of an individual's economic social location. Given their overlap and similarity, one might assume that measures of income, occupational prestige, and educational attainment would be largely interchangeable. Sociometric analysis of these objective markers of class, however, suggests that they are not. While various measures within a domain – two different measures of occupational prestige, for example – are often correlated, it is not always the case that objective measures across domains are correlated (Kamieniecki & O'Brien, 1984; Schooler & Schoenbach, 1994). In other words, a measure of educational attainment may predict a number of measures of educational attainment, but may not predict measures of the same individual's income. Kamieniecki and O'Brien (1984) also found that income, occupational prestige, and educational attainment do not always predict the same attitudes or beliefs. Taken together, these findings suggest that there is no single best objective measure of social class. The tendency among psychologists to include one objective indicator of social class may have more measurement error and less predictive value than many researchers realize. It should be noted that the work presented in the following chapters focuses on measures of income and educational attainment as objective measures of social class. Given that the research conducted here was gathered from college students, measures of occupational prestige potentially had low validity and reliability, since students may report their parent(s)' occupational prestige and not their own.

Measurements of the subjective elements of social class carry their own pitfalls. Social class is one of the most fundamental and ubiquitous social hierarchies into which

people are organized. Using processes like social comparison and relative deprivation (Tajfel, 1981), individuals are able to recognize which class they are most closely aligned with and where their class falls within the broader class-based hierarchy. There is evidence to suggest that, indeed, individuals are aware of these class-based hierarchies (Gordon, 1951; Sims, 1951) and are able to place themselves within them (Surridge, 2007).

Subjective class identification is typically measured by asking an individual to align themselves with a specific class-based label – for example, asking them to choose between working, middle, or upper class (Surridge, 2007). The chosen class label is usually congruent with objective markers of social class (Surridge, 2007; Sims, 1951), but studies looking at instances of social mobility suggest that there can be discrepancies between one's subjective perceptions of one's class and one's material conditions (Bullock & Limpert, 2003; Jones, 2003). In these cases, people tend to hold onto the subjective class identification they grew up with even when their economic circumstances change over time. This can be interpreted as evidence that one's subjective class identity, like other important social identities, may solidify in adolescence (Arnett, 2004; Morash, 1980). If this is the case, the relatively inflexible subjective experience of class should be recognized as a lens through which we understand and construe the objective aspects of our socioeconomic position.

The Lived Experience of Social Class

In order to understand how our subjective identification with a particular class develops, it is helpful to think of social class as a lived experience embedded in a network of practices. Doing so allows us to examine the processes and mechanisms

through which we internalize representations of social class. It also allows us to examine the ways in which we are simultaneously shaped by and reconstrue the objective facets of our socioeconomic position. As such, treating class as a lived experience gives us a way to see how objective and subjective aspects of class relate to each other.

Habitus, a concept originally formulated by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1977), is particularly useful in understanding class as a lived experience. Habitus, loosely defined, is the norms, values, and expectations derived from a set of material conditions. Habitus functions as a reflexive and dynamic worldview that is context-dependent. Class-based norms and values are perpetuated and reproduced across generations constituting a habitus: parents socialize their children to understand and relate to their context in a certain way, one that typically results in their children embodying those values true to their social milieu. Bourdieu (1977) suggests that this process of early socialization may difficult to adjust later in life, which may explain why studies on social mobility find that subjective class identification remains stable (Bullock & Limbert, 2003; Jones, 2003).

Bourdieu (1977) further suggests that a lack of explicit discourse around social class is a fundamental aspect of habitus. Habitus, then, can be understood as an invisible framework that outlines and, to some extent, determines which topics and aspects of our day-to-day lives are taken for granted and which are open to discussion. He argues that this delineation between normal and unexpected discourse reflects asymmetries in power and privilege, an insight also found in seminal works on privilege, such as *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack* (McIntosh, 2003). The conventional vernacular language surrounding American class structures reflects this lack of explicit, critical discourse about social class. Overall, there seems to be little direct discourse

about social class within American society explicitly. In part, this is due to a tendency to reframe class-based issues and topics in terms of other identities, most often race (Gordon, 1951; Hooper, 1976; Surridge, 2007). There is also evidence that taboos against open discussions of financial and economic matters exist (Argyle, 1994; Sims, 1951). The class-based language which does exist, most commonly in the form of class-related group names, is often valenced and carries with it judgmental connotations (Hooper, 1976).

The linguistic obstacles outlined above highlight the potential usefulness of projective, nonverbal measures of social class. Projective tasks are linguistically neutral and ask the participant to place themselves on unlabeled scales. In doing so, they are able to disclose their class status without having to associate themselves with potentially shame-inducing labels. The primarily nonverbal nature of projective tasks also gives individuals the ability to consider and engage with class despite the lack of openly critical discourse around it. Unfortunately, projective measures are relatively uncommon in psychological research on social class. Therefore, the psychometric aspects of them – what they predict and how they relate to subjective and objective measures of class – are still largely unexplored.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality theory argues that the values, expectations, and beliefs of an individual are shaped by the simultaneous impact of the multiple social identities s/he embodies (Cole 2009; Mahalingam & Leu, 2005). Intersectionality represents a complex and thorough approach to recognizing the impact of an individual's unique social location. This framework, drawing as it does on a long line of feminist thought,

highlights issues of marginality and privilege posited by interlocking identities (Crenshaw, 1995).

Often, social class or socioeconomic status is cited as an important and relevant identity by those employing an intersectional framework, so it is a natural extension to use it to redefine psychological approaches to class. The interrelationships between multiple social identities are at the heart of intersectionality, and there is evidence that social class as a subjective identity interacts with other identities in different ways. Several studies have shown that social class can be eclipsed by other, more culturally visible identities, like race or gender (Gordon, 1951; Hooper, 1976; Surridge, 2007). Although social class intersects with these other identities, and is often conflated with race and ethnicity to a large extent, class itself remains invisible and may not be viewed as a source of social identity by women and ethnic minorities. White working class men, in contrast, actively construct their class identity by emphasizing their lack of minority status in other domains (Fine et al, 1997; Weis, 2006).

Adopting an intersectional framework helps to contextualize social class. Class has been seen as a stable, static characteristic, and the metrics of class have been presumed to operate similarly across contexts (Bullock & Limpert, 2003). Schooler and Schoenbach (1994), however, found that there were cross-national differences in how social class was constructed and the degree to which it converged with income. Other researchers have emphasized that measures of social class, especially objective indices, must be contextualized within nations as well, given wide variability in cost of living, wages, and types of jobs available (Lazarsfeld, 1939; Weeden & Grusky, 2005). The comparative nature of social class needs to be accounted for by taking steps to determine

an individual's relative social class within a given context before comparing across contexts.

Intersectionality also serves as a useful lens for understanding how people approach sources of class-related privilege and marginalization. John Jost (Jost & Banaji, 1994) proposed a theory of system justification to explain why subordinate group members internalize hegemony of the dominant group and, by consensus, participate in the perpetuation of existing social structures. According to Pratto, Sidanius, and Levin (2006), individuals who belong to privileged social positions have high levels of social dominance orientation (SDO), and they tend to see social hierarchies as natural and acceptable. The essentialist notions underlying these forms of system justification can justify privileged group members' discriminatory attitudes toward marginalized group members. However, there is evidence to suggest that the development of an intersectional consciousness leads one to challenge these legitimizing myths and socially dominant outlooks (Case, 2007; Sabnani & Ponterotto, 1992). Those with higher levels of intersectional consciousness tend to be more aware of the reductive nature of essentialist representations and are more likely to resist them (Mahalingam, 2007).

The Current Research

The research presented here seeks to explore how multiple levels of social are reproduced in higher educational contexts, and how the lived experience of social class contributes to the development of attitudes and beliefs about the legitimacy of existing social hierarchies. My approach to social class draws together the concept of habitus and intersectionality theory in order to fully explore the multidimensional nature of social class. I pay particular attention to the measurement issues which currently plague the

literature on social class. By employing a mixed methods approach that uses innovative

techniques like projective measurement, I am able to examine many aspects of social

class. Below, I outline the research questions presented and tested in each of the

following chapters.

In Chapter II, research on the measurement of social class is presented. Using

both qualitative and quantitative methods, the impact of social context on class awareness

and identification is explored. This chapter also examines the sociological findings

regarding the lack of interchangeability of objective measures of class. My work in this

area replicates and extends that finding: subjective and projective measures of class were

evaluated along with objective measures of class.

In Chapter III, research on the relationship between social location and

endorsement of legitimizing myths is presented. An intersectional framework is used to

investigate the simultaneous and interactive impact of class, race, and gender on the

endorsement of social dominance orientation (SDO) and John Henryism (JH). Drawing

on bodies of research on these opposing ideologies, I hypothesized and found that class

privileged people of color would be higher in SDO and lower in JH than any other

comparable group. Results from a qualitative study included in this chapter found that

class privileged people of color described their social class positions in ways highly

consistent with SDO, whereas class targeted people of color described their experiences

in ways consistent with JH.

In Chapter IV, research which examines the relationship between essentialist

beliefs about class, social dominance orientation, intersectional consciousness and

awareness of privilege is presented. I explored three main issues: first, essentialist

thinking will positively relate to ideological beliefs which legitimize existing social

hierarchies and economic inequalities. Second, social location plays an important role in

the construction of beliefs about class. Third, I empirically examine how beliefs about

privilege relate to intersectional consciousness. The results from two studies suggest that

social identities impacts SDO, and that the relationship between SDO and intersectional

consciousness is mediate by beliefs about privilege.

Chapter V summarizes the findings from Chapters II, II, and IV. In this chapter,

the main themes across all presented research are discussed. Important implications for

future research on social class, as well as innovative future lines of research, are outlined.

References

Argyle, M. (1994). *The psychology of social class*. New York: Routledge.

Arnett, J. (2004). *Emerging adulthood: The winding road from the late teens through the twenties.* Oxford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice.* Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Bullock, H. E., & Limbert, W. M. (2003). Scaling the socioeconomic ladder: Low-income women's perceptions of class status and opportunity. *Journal of Social Issues, 59,* 693-709.

Case, K. A. (2007). Raising male privilege awareness and reducing sexism: An evaluation of diversity courses. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 31,* 426-435.

Christopher, A. N., Zabel, K. L., Jones, J. R., & Marek, P. (2008). Protestant ethic ideology: Its multifaceted relationships with just world beliefs, social dominance orientation, and right-wing authoritarianism. *Personality and Individual Differences, 45,* 473-477.

Cole, E. R. (2009). Intersectionality and research in psychology. *American Psychologist, 64,* 170-180.

Crenshaw, K. W. (1995). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. In K. Crenshaw, N. Gotanda, G. Peller, &. K. Thomas (Eds.), *Critical race theory: The key writings that formed the movement.* (pp. 357-383). New York: The New Press.

Eysenck, S. (1960). Social class, sex, and responses to a five-part personality inventory. *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 20,* 47-54.

Fine, M., Weis, L., Addelston, J. & Marusza, J. (1997). (In)secure times: Constructing

    white working-class masculinities in the late 20th century. *Gender and Society, 11,*

    52-68.

Gordon, M. (1951). A system of social class analysis. *Drew University Bulletin, 39,* 3-19.

Hochschild, J. L. (1995). *Race, class, and the soul of the nation: Facing up to the*

    American Dream. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Hooper, M. (1976). The structure and measurement of social identity. *The Public Opinion*

    Quarterly, 40, 154-164.

Jones, S. J. (2003). Embodying working-class subjectivity and narrating self: "We were

    the hired help". In D.L. Tolman & M. Brydon-Miller (Eds.), *From subjects to*

    subjectivities: A handbook of interpretive and participatory methods (pp. 145-

    162). NY: NYU Press.

Jost, J. T., & Banaji, M. R. (1994). The role of stereotyping in system justification and

    the production of false consciousness. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 33,* 1-

    27.

Kamieniecki, S. & O'Brien, R. (1984). Are social class measures interchangeable?

    Political Behavior, 6, 41-59.

Larzarsfeld, P. (1939). Interchangeability in the indices in the measurement of economic

    influences. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 23,* 33-45.

Mahalingam, R. (2007). Essentialism, power, and the representation of social categories:

    A folk sociology perspective. *Human Development, 50,* 300-319.

Mahalingam, R., & Leu, J. (2005). Culture, essentialism, immigration and representations

    of gender. *Theory & Psychology, 15*, 841-862.

Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1962). Manifesto of the Communist Party, section I ("Bourgeois and proletarians"). In *Selected works [of] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels* (Vol. 2, pp. 33-43). Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House.

McIntosh, P. (2003). White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack. In S. Plous (Ed.), *Understanding prejudice and discrimination* (pp. 191-196). Boston: McGraw-Hill.

Morash, M. (1980). Working class membership and the adolescent identity crisis. *Adolescence, 15,* 313-320.

Mueller, C. & Parcel, T. (1981). Measures of socioeconomic status: Alternatives and recommendations. *Child Development, 52,* 13-30.

Ostrove, J. M., & Cole, E. R. (2003). Privileging class: Toward a critical psychology of social class in the context of education. *Journal of Social Issues, 59,* 977-692.

Pratto, F., Sidanius, J., & Levin, S. (2006). Social dominance theory and the dynamics of intergroup relations: Taking stock and looking forward. *European Review of Social Psychology, 17,* 271-320.

Sabnani, H., & Ponterotto, J. G. (1992). Racial/ethnic minority-specific instrumentation in counseling research: A review, critique, and recommendations. *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development, 24,* 161-187.

Schooler, C. & Schoenbach, C. (1994). Social class, occupational status, occupational self-definition, and job income: A cross-national examination. *Sociological Forum, 9,* 431-458.

Sims, V. (1951). A technique for measuring social class identification. *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 11,* 541-548.

Surridge, P. (2007). Class belonging: a quantitative exploration of identity and

    consciousness. *British Journal of Sociology, 58*, 207-226.

Tajfel, H. (1981). *Human groups and social categories*. New York: Cambridge

    University Press.

Weeden, K., & Grusky, D. (2005). The case for a new class map. *The American Journal*

    of Sociology, 111, 141-212.

Weis, L. (2006). Masculinity, whiteness, and the new economy: An exploration of

    privilege and loss. *Men and Masculinities, 8,* 262-272.

Chapter II. The Impact of Social Context on the Emergence of Class Awareness: A

Multidimensional Approach

In 1960, Eysenck chastised the field of psychology for its lack of interest in social

class. Since then, others have criticized the discipline's tendency to use class as a control

variable with little attempt to investigate the direct effect it may have on dependent

variables of interest (Mueller & Parcell, 1981; Weeden & Grusky, 2005). Unfortunately,

there are few, if any, established guidelines within psychological research that delineate

how best to measure social class. Like other important demographic characteristics, such

as race and gender, social class has a dynamic and subjective nature above and beyond

the tangible, objective markers of one's social class position. Not only does the "heavy

reliance on impressionistic criteria" (Mueller & Parcell, 1981, pp. 13) psychologists tend

to use to measure social class limit our ability to investigate the direct impact of these

objective aspects of social class one individuals' lives, they also provide no insight into

how these objective conditions are internalized and subjectively experienced by

individuals. My research investigates different psychometric methods of measuring class

and also explores how different measures of social class are related to the process of

developing an awareness of social class an important and relevant social identity.

Theoretical Perspectives

Objective Indicators of Social Class

Arguably, *The Communist Manifesto* (Marx & Engels, 1962) has been the most pervasive and influential work regarding the theoretical construction of social class. Marx and Engel's positioning of individuals according to their relation of the means of production – resulting, roughly, in the proletariat, managerial, petit bourgeoisie, and capitalist classes – was later adopted and implemented by sociologists (Kamieniecki & O'Brien, 1984). Sociologists have used Marxist and neo-Marxist frameworks to study both the subjective identification with a particular class and to locate an individual in a certain class given his/her objective means (Hooper, 1976; Kamieniecki & O'Brien, 1984). In this paper, I adopt a definition of class informed by Marxist formulations; namely that one's social class is essentially economic in nature and describes his/her relative conditions and future opportunities on the basis of his/her income, occupation, and level of education. As a result, class is embedded in a network of practices, beliefs and privileges that codetermine one's access to social mobility.

These three visible markers of class – income or wealth, occupational prestige, and level of education – are widely considered to be face valid, since each of them have an intuitive and direct link to one's economic conditions or sites of employment and production (Schooler & Schoenbach, 1994). Additionally, these markers are some of the easiest and clearest ways to measure social class, which makes them particularly useful for social scientists studying class (Kamieniecki & O'Brien, 1984). Some researchers advocate creating indices based on some or all of these possible markers, reasoning that they may work synergistically across domains to give a more accurate picture of an individual's social class. For example, the Hollingshead 2-Factor Index is a weighted

measure that includes both educational attainment and occupational prestige (Cirino, et al., 2002).

The relationship between various markers of social class suggests that they are not interchangeable. Measures of the same domain of social class tend to correlate, but are not consistently related to measures of other domains of social class. For example, two different measures of occupational prestige are likely to correlate, but those measures may not correlate with a measure of income (Schooler & Schoenbach, 1994). Kamieniecki and O'Brien (1984) found that different objective markers of social class were related to different social and political attitudes. Specifically, income was not related to any attitudes, occupational prestige was related to individuals' attitudes towards unions, and educational attainment was related to attitudes towards the poor and political orientation. Overall, these findings suggest that social class is a much more complex construct than how it has typically been treated by psychologists.

There is no doubt that objective markers of social class are useful and informative. However, we need to consider carefully what exactly we are measuring when we use them. Objective markers alone are useful to impose social categories on different populations, but it should be noted that these categorizations are assigned by the researchers and may not reflect the categorized individuals' own understanding of social class or the ways in which they draw lines between social classes. For studies seeking to compare the direct impact of tangible material conditions on certain phenomena this approach is appropriate. For studies in which these objective markers are acting as a proxy for individuals' class-based identity, values, or expectations, on the other hand, reliance solely on objective markers can be problematic.

Subjective Class-Based Identity

Research has found that most individuals are aware of class-based hierarchies and are able to locate themselves in them, disclosing their personal class identification in the process (Argyle, 1994; Gordon, 1951; Surridge 2007). Social class, then, becomes a relevant way to identify others and be identified in turn. Typically, quantitative studies find that class identity is congruent with objective markers of social class. Those with working class identities, for example, have been found to have the levels of income, occupational prestige, and educational attainment typical of those objectively placed in the working class (Surridge, 2007; Sims, 1951).

Qualitative research, however, suggests that one's class identity is not always congruent with one's material conditions. Bullock and Limpert (2003) found that one-third of low-income women enrolled in an educational training program identified as lower middle class or higher despite their objective conditions. Similarly, Jones (2003) found that professors from a low-income background retained the class identities forged in their childhood, often actively rejecting the upper middle class status their career and income afforded them. It is important to note that both studies which found divergences between individuals' objective and subjective class status involved some form of mobility (Argyle, 1994). This suggests that subjective class identification internalized and adopted in childhood or young adulthood may be less flexible than objective class status, and that subjective class identification is a powerful, pervasive part of one's self-concept that can cause one to reconstruct objective realities.

I argue that a willingness to self-identify with a class label, especially a label beyond the overly used and broadly generic "middle class" (Kelley & Evans, 1995),

represents an awareness of one's position within class-based hierarchies. Taken together, the findings described above suggest that the material conditions represented by objective indicators of social class impact the development of one's subjective class identity in nuanced ways.

Social Class as a Lived Experience

Despite the use of social class as an explanatory control variable and qualitative explorations into how one's subjective class identity may shift across one's life, little psychological work has been done on the underpinnings of class awareness and class identification. Specifically, the process by which material conditions are internalized and abstracted into social identities that impact how we approach the world and what expectations we hold are unclear. Bourdieu's (1977) concept of *habitus* is particularly useful for gaining insight into this process. Habitus can be understood as the aggregated and largely unspoken values, norms, expectations, and privileges that are derived from a particular set of material conditions. Bourdieu (1977) argues that class-based differential access to resources and opportunities leads to externally produced necessities, which in turn cause members of a particular class to behave in certain ways, make certain interpretations about their place in society and the way the world functions, and adjust their expectations of their future opportunities accordingly. The flexible worldview that develops as a result of these externally imposed limitations, then, becomes a lens which guides individuals' behavior. The resulting behavior socializes their children, which then reproduces and strengthens the habitus. Thus, habitus is linked very closely to socialization and emphasizes the role of lived experience in the development of class awareness and identity.

Much of the psychological work on the subjective element of social class has focused on the lived experience of class and lends credence to the concept of habitus. A common theme of such studies is describing how the values associated with a particular class are socialized and transmitted across generations (Gordon, 1951). Differences have been found in the values and expectations held by members of different classes (Bettie, 2003), but it has also been pointed out that the members within a particular class negotiate values and expectations differently as well (Weis, 2006). The development of particular values is often linked directly to objective factors. In the case of parenting styles, Gillies (2005) found that parents' expectations of their children's academic achievement were related to their class-based experiences with teachers and the school system.

The transmission of class-based values is also linked to particular institutions which socialize members of a particular class to function in the roles their status expects them to take on. Bourdieu suggests that higher education is one such institution (Swartz, 1997). Qualitative studies have explored how low-income students in college grapple with issues of 'fit,' often trying to juggle more and varied demands than their middle-class counterparts (Bergerson, 2007; Kuriloff & Reichert, 2003). Many low-income students begin to feel marginalized as the differences between them and better-off students become more and more obvious, which often fosters the subjective consolidation of their childhood class identity (Bergerson, 2007; Jones, 2003; Stewart & Ostrove, 1993).

Bourdieu (1977) also emphasizes the role that critical discourse (or, more specifically, the lack of it) plays in the perpetuation and reproduction of habitus. He

argues that habitus functions as an invisible framework – that the impact of it leads us to believe that certain aspects of life are self-evident, can be taken for granted, and need no discussion. The existence of taboos around discussions of finances and open disclosures of class in the United States underscores the salience of class identities, and also suggests that such identities may be especially hard to measure (Argyle, 1994; Sims, 1951). Class-based identity terms have a value-laden character, with middle and upper but not working or lower classes being associated with "respectable citizens," which may be internalized by individuals of particular classes (Bullock & Limbert, 2003; Hooper, 1976).

Using habitus as a guiding concept, we can begin to understand exactly how tangible markers of class are converted into cultural capital and also gain insight into the richness and complexity of the subjective side of class. One particular feature of habitus, its lack of explicitness and the way it minimizes critical discourse, has particularly interesting implications for the study of social class. It suggests that the lived experience of class leads to certain values, expectations, and hopes – which are clearly distinct and not easily captured by objective markers of social class – but may not lead to subjective identification or class awareness. Projective measures of social class which allow individuals to indicate their place in a hierarchy without having to adopt specific class-based labels (Bullock & Limpert, 2003), may be worth using in research conducted on social class. In summary, social context plays a critical role in shaping beliefs about what constitutes a particular social class, sociocultural practices enable and constrain how we discuss social class and privilege, and objective, subjective and projective measures of class will relate to our attitudes toward various outgroups.

The Current Research

It is clear that social class is a highly complex multimodal construct that simultaneously shapes the opportunities one is given and one's reaction to them. I propose that class is multidimensional, as well. The current research investigates the following two hypotheses in regards to the measurement of social class and the development of class awareness:

Hypothesis 1: One's level of class awareness and resulting class identity is highly contextually based. I expect to find differences in the way social class is understood and perceived across different social contexts. Additionally, I argue that class is able to be renegotiated and that entering a new social context can cause reexamination of one's social class.

Hypothesis 2: Due to its multi-faceted structure, different types of measures of social class should be correlated with one another but not interchangeable. Specifically, objective, subjective and projective measures of class, each of which may represent different levels of class awareness, may correlate with different attitudes towards outgroups.

I tested the first hypothesis in Studies 1 and 2. Study 1 looked at the construction of class across economically disparate contexts. Study 2 used qualitative methods to explore how social class is renegotiated and reexamined by college students. Study 3 tested the second hypothesis using a quantitative survey-based methodology.

Study 1

In this study, I explored how objective so-called 'objective' markers of social class truly are. Although it is clear that participants draw on objective elements of class

22

when determining what subjective class label to identify with, it is unclear is participants also used subjective processes, such as social comparison, to evaluate their objective class as well.

This study was conducted in two research sites that differed on a number of class-relevant dimensions: prestige of the school, wealth of the surrounding area, and the wealth of the students themselves. One sample was collected at the authors' home institution in the Midwest, using the psychology subject pool. Students at this high-ranking, highly selective university tend to be White and wealthy. The median income was over $200,000 and the majority of students identified as upper middle class or upper class. Of this sample, 73% of participants reported an annual family income of over $100,000 (see Figure 2.2) and 56% identified themselves as upper middle class or upper class. Additionally, 87% of participants' mothers held a Bachelor's degree or higher.

The second sample was collected at a small community college located in a working class town of approximately 30,000 people located twenty miles east of Houston, TX. The same indicators of social class were collected at this research site: mother's highest level of education, annual family income, and subjectively identified class status. Of this sample, 24% of participants reported an annual family income of over $100,000 (see Figure 2.1). No participants identified as upper class, and only 29% identified as upper middle class. Of this sample, 60% of participants' mothers held a Bachelor's degree or higher. This community college in East Texas serves a population that is generally less educated and less economically advantaged.

Measures of income and self-identified class are predicted to be highly positively correlated in both research sites. Class label by income distributions are also predicted to be different across research sites given their different economic contexts.

Methods

Participants. A total of 265 undergraduates enrolled in an introductory psychology course at a large Midwestern university participated and received partial course credit compensation for the study. Gender was fairly evenly distributed (109 men, 152 women, and 4 participants who chose not to disclose their gender), but race was not (197 White participants, 28 Asian Americans, 9 African Americans, 6 Latino/as, and 25 participants who described their race or ethnicity as 'other'). This university is a highly selective, highly prestigious institution that attracts students interested in pursuing competitive careers in field such as medicine and law. Although it is a public university, the student body here is disproportionately White and well-off.

An additional 77 students (31 men, 46 women) enrolled in psychology courses at a community college in East Texas participated in this study, but received no compensation for their participation. Of the sample, 45 participants identified as White, 6 as African American, 3 as Asian American, 13 as Latino/a, and 4 as 'other'. This community college serves an economically depressed area with a large Mexican-American community. It is used by a wide variety of people, from comparatively better-off college-bound high school students who are dual-enrolled, to young adults hoping to transition to a 4-year institution, to working adults taking night courses.

Materials and procedures. Participants completed a short demographic questionnaire which asked them to disclose their family's annual income, their age,

gender, and race/ethnicity. They were also asked to identify with one of the following subjective social class identity labels: *lower working class, working class, lower middle class, middle class, upper middle class, upper class.* Midwestern participants completed an online version of the form. East Texan participants completed a pen-and-paper version of the form.

Results

Bivariate correlations run separately within each sample showed that income and self-identified class was significantly positively correlated among both Midwesterners ($r(265) = .73$, $p < .001$) and East Texans ($r(77) = .31$, $p = .01$). A meta-analytic comparison of the effect sizes showed that the relationship between income and self-identified class was stronger among Midwesterners than East Texans, $Z = 4.62$, $p < .001$.[1]

To explore how participants construed the relationship between income and self-identified class in greater detail, Income x Class crosstabulations were run within each sample. The test showed that East Texans had a non-normal Income x Class distribution, $\chi^2(16) = 29.36$, $p = .02$. While income was fairly evenly distributed, participants were much more likely to identify as middle class or upper middle class than as lower middle class, working class, or lower working class. Close inspection of the crosstabulations (see Figure 2.1) shows that those making less than \$75,000 tended to identify as middle class or below, and that those making more than \$75,000 were more likely to identify as upper middle class. Interestingly, none of the East Texans classified themselves as upper class. For East Texans, \$75,000 seems to serve as a bright line between upper middle class people and everyone else.

The test showed that Midwestern participants, as well, had a non-normal Income x Class distribution, $\chi^2(15) = 2.08$, $p < .001$. In contrast to East Texans, both the income and the class distributions were positively skewed (see Figure 2.2). The crosstabulations suggests that Midwesterners, like East Texans, tend to classify people making less $75,000 as lower middle class, working class, or lower working class. Differences between the research sites emerged with Midwesterner's classification of the middle class and upper middle class/upper class. Midwesterners were highly unlikely to classify themselves as upper middle class or upper class unless they were making greater than $100,000, whereas East Texans used such classifications starting at $75,000. Additionally, formulations of the middle class were much more diffused among Midwesterners, falling under both cutoffs.

Discussion

As predicted, I found that objective and subjective markers of social class were positively correlated in both research contexts. This suggests that for most individuals, there is a high level of congruence between their objective conditions and their subjective awareness of social class. However, this relationship was significantly stronger among the Midwestern participants than East Texans. This may be because the Midwestern context was more homogenized along class lines.

These results suggest that the coherence between subjective and objective aspects of class is affected by contextual factors. Differences in the number of class labels employed and in the heuristic cutoff points used by participants to classify themselves were found from site to site. Specifically, Midwesterners, who were in a very wealthy environment both in terms of financial considerations and educational resources, had a

narrower, higher-income conceptualization of what qualified one as upper middle class than East Texans.

Study 2

In Study 2, thematic content analysis was used to explore what processes individuals employed to construct their ideas about their own social class. I hypothesized that given the nature of habitus in the development of class awareness and class identity, most students would have difficulty discussing social class, either due to taboos or a lack of language. I expected that this would be especially pronounced among the upper class students. I also hypothesized that students used contextual and relational cues to construct their current understanding of their own social class.

Method

Archival analysis was conducted on a set of 102 final papers from participants who were enrolled in a semester long intergroup dialogue course which specifically focused on social class and class-based inequalities. The final paper required participants to reflect on what they had learned about social class in general and what they had discovered about their own social class identity throughout the course. In order to protect participants' anonymity, I did not have access to any identifying or demographic information about the students. All demographic information was gathered as disclosed within the paper by the student themselves: 44 participants self-identified as women, 28 self-identified as men, 31 participants did not disclose their gender; 47 participants self-identified as White, 55 self-identified as people of color; and 37 participants self-identified as class targeted (lower and working class), 56 participants self-identified as

class privileged (middle, upper middle, and upper class), 10 participants did not disclose their social class.

Intergroup dialogue program as research context. Undergraduate students apply to join the intergroup dialogue program. Once enrolled, the student is assigned to one of that semester's ongoing intergroup dialogues. The student usually, but not always, self-selects into the type of dialogue. The dialogues typically include sections on gender, race and ethnicity, socioeconomic class, and religion but have also included sections on sexual orientation, international students and domestic students, and White racial identity.

The dialogue sections are courses worth two credit hours, usually cross-listed under psychology and sociology. The courses are structured to introduce dialogue as a particular technique for breaking through communication barriers in a meaningful and respectful way, with a focus on social justice. The sections are small (usually no more than 12-14 students) and have equal numbers of students from each relevant identity group (in the case of the socioeconomic dialogues, equal numbers of class targeted and class privileged). The course is led by two trained undergraduate facilitators, one from each identity group. These facilitators have previously participated in dialogues before and have undergone a rigorous training procedure with the program's staff. The participants in the dialogue are assigned readings, but much of the course is devoted to weekly two-hour long discussions in which all are expected to participate. At the end of the course, each student writes a 10-page paper reflecting on their experience throughout the semester.

Coding Procedure. A coding scheme for this project was developed using the following multi-step process. First, deductive content analysis was conducted on an

initial set of ten papers, which were read closely for themes by the author and the author's adviser. These initial 10 papers were excluded from any further analysis (between these papers and the papers by participants who did not disclose their class, a total of 82 papers were left to code). We discussed which themes to pursue and how to identify the presence of those themes in the text of subsequent papers. Based on comparisons of our notes, we developed a coding scheme for the *invisibility of class discourse* (see Table 2.1). We also coded for *contextuality in class identity construction* (Table 2.2). This coding scheme to analyze all other papers written by participants who disclosed their socioeconomic status. Each paper was coded for the presence or absence of relevant themes. Codings were compared, and the developing coding scheme was revised.

When the coding scheme was sufficiently clarified and revised, two blind coders were trained independently to use it. They analyzed all the papers in isolation from the author and from each other's. Once all coding was complete, the agreement of their codes was compared with one another and with the first author. The coders were highly reliable (see Tables 2.1 and 2.2 for agreement by theme). This established the reliability of the coding scheme used in the following analyses. The analysis reported below is drawn from the first author's codes.

Results

Theme 1 – Class as a hidden/invisible construct. One major theme that emerged from the students' papers is that, for a variety of reasons, social class was not a clear or visible identity for most of them. Both class targeted and class privileged students reported a general lack of salience regarding their class identity, and analysis

29

suggests two possible explanations for this. First, class issues are embedded in racialized language, both by the students themselves and by the media at large. Often, class issues – such as low-income housing, lack of healthcare, welfare – are more strongly associated with low-income minorities than low-income Whites. While this is based in very real trends in society, often such issues are completely recoded as a race issue, obscuring the classed nature of it and the complicated relationship between class and race in American society. One student described the nested nature of race and class this way:

> I was always aware of differences in income and class, but I thought of them as something outside of the basic systems of oppression. I viewed systems of oppression primarily as race or gender, but race was always the primary system of oppression. (student 57; class privileged)

Furthermore, within some sections of the dialogue, class and race became inextricably linked with each other. Some students wrote of how the nearly all of the students in the class targeted group were students of color, while the class privileged group was made up primarily of Whites. These students tended to use the terms 'race' and 'class' somewhat interchangeably in their papers and reported engaging in discussions or activities that were as race-focused as they were class-focused during the course.

A second aspect of this theme centered on the existence of taboos which prevent explicit discussion of social class or income. Students described frank discussions of financial matters or concerns as "rude" or things one "is never supposed to discuss…outside your immediate family" (both quotes from student 123; class privileged). Some students, beyond just acknowledging that such a taboo exists, would employ it in their papers, stating that "there is no need to point out" (student 36; class privileged White woman) differences between the class targeted and class privileged

groups, effectively downplaying the impact of social class even within the dialogue itself. The quote below, from a young woman with class privilege, discussed the taboo:

> Everyone in my group, including myself, kept stating that we never talked about money or our class growing up and so we never considered it and never connected certain things we were able to do with our wealth and socioeconomic status. (student 60; White, class privileged)

Her statement illustrates the impediment such a taboo poses for the development of class awareness or class identification. The taboo, in addition to being a mechanism one can use to minimize class differences, renders individuals mute on the issue of social class. By preventing discussion about these matters, individuals do not have the language or terms to effectively describe their own social class. Her statement also suggests that when such labels are elusive, the topic itself may become decoupled from the experiential aspects of social class.

Analysis further revealed that the language which does exist to describe and discuss social class – above and beyond the vague and overly applied term "middle class" (Kelley & Evans, 1995) – tends to be inherently valenced and often stereotypical. Despite the low salience of their individual level of class, students of both class groupings were aware of negative stereotypes regarding low-income and poor people coming in to the dialogues. Members of the class targeted group expressed hesitancy identifying themselves as low-income, poor, working class, etc., because of the implication that by doing so they "would not measure up to others" (student 62; class targeted man of color) and that they "did not want anyone to feel sorry" (student 58; class targeted woman of color) for them.

> I will never forget the day she said that those who belong to the low class do have proper etiquette and that they do not know how to act in public. This statement

made me so angry, at that moment I wanted to scream at her. I belong to the low-middle class and I am well mannered. (student 39; class targeted)

Many of the wealthy students in my dialogue never consciously tried to distinguish themselves as superior…society said they were superior. (student 44; class privileged Black woman)

The quotes above illustrate the pervasiveness and explicitness with which these negative stereotypes are communicated. The first quote, from a class targeted student, describes an interaction where the student is openly discriminated against along class lines. It is notable that the reported badly mannered group was describes as 'low class', and that the student – while tacitly identifying with the targeted group and understandably upset by the statement – goes on to describe him/herself as 'low-middle class,' which suggests some level of ambivalence with identifying fully with the low-income group. The second quote, from a young Black woman from the class privileged group, emphasizes the starkly valenced nature of the divide between low class individuals and everyone else, and emphasizes the pervasive nature of these beliefs.

Interestingly, class privileged students also sought to distance themselves from the other end of the continuum, as well. These comparatively better-off students tried to emphasize that they were not wasteful, or thoughtless, or simply skating by on the basis of their more privileged position.

We've had to work just as hard, and even though we might have access to money and opportunities, we have all been taught the valuable lesson of hard work and therefore have to achieve success on our own. It is bothersome that we are stereotyped because of our wealth because everyone can have the same internal values and desires regardless of one's class. (student 45; class privileged White woman)

Thus, although I by no means would compare my part time jobs to someone who has gotten in to this university from a life of extreme poverty, I also do not wish to be written off as the spoiled kid from New Jersey simply because my family is

probably within the top 10% of wealthy America yet nowhere near the top 1-3%. (student 102; class privileged man)

The above quotations reveal that class privileged students are eager to dispel the idea that their privilege means that they are spoiled or slackers. They were quick to point out that they, like the class targeted group members, had to work hard to gain entrance to this prestigious university and have to work hard to excel academically. However, the character of these stereotypes is different than the stereotypes faced by the class targeted students. Instead of clear, externally communicated stereotypes, these statements about the stereotypes of the wealthy are more personally connected and are largely a reaction against recognizing their own class privilege.

Theme 2 – Subjective class shifts as the context shifts. The second major theme that emerged in my qualitative analysis was that students constructed their social class using upward and downward social comparison with those around them. Because of this, students reevaluate and shift their subjective social class when they move into a new and different socio-economic context. Many students described their hometowns as economically homogenous, and they adopted a 'normal' or 'middle class' conception of their social standing as a result. However, exposure to those from other class backgrounds – often as a result of coming to college – slowly revealed differences between opportunities, experiences, and outlooks that allowed students to understand their own social class in greater detail.

> Among my peers in high school, my family would probably have been considered the wealthiest. For that reason, I looked at myself as coming from a reasonable wealthy family. It wasn't until I began dating my current girlfriend that I realize what wealthy truly meant. Upon entering her gated estate just outside of New York City, I was thoroughly amazed by the sheer size of her 12,000 square foot house. The garage full of over half a million dollars worth of automobiles put me over the edge. (student 111; class targeted White man)

33

The above quotation was drawn from a young man from the class targeted group and very clearly describes the process of context shift – from considering himself in the upper class to somewhat below it, a label he has continued to employ since entering college. It should be noted that the markers he used to reconstrue his social class were tangible ones, and that his comparison was conducted implicitly, not through explicit discussion with his girlfriend.

The process of downward social comparison has a similar character that emphasizes the tangible, obvious class-based differences without any sort of direct discussion about social class with members of the other group.

> I knew outside there was a group of us who had such luxurious lives, and inside there was whole other group, whose lives were so different and most likely full of resentment for people like us. I remember how I had reflected out loud, "Wow! We are so spoiled!" But then I was quickly reassured by surrounding members of my group because they explained to me that my "life of luxury" was all I have ever known. (student 45; class privileged White woman)

Like the class targeted student quoted above, this class privileged student had a homogenous background that didn't seem to throw her into one side of the socioeconomic spectrum or the other, and her own class-based privilege was not evident to her until she was exposed to a group of people to whom the things she took as normative were not available.

It should be made clear that both of these themes likely interact and influence each other in complex ways. The quote below, from a White woman identifying herself as class targeted, shows how the process of context shifting can be informed and complicated by the hidden and invisible nature of social class.

> We were in a relatively very low economic status, but were much more cultured and socially active than most kids at my school. The structural oppression that

exists in many parts of the world simply did not exist where I live, mainly because being "poor" was a normal occurrence. Now that I have come to the this university, it is startling and offensive to hear the stereotypes and prejudices people have about people of lower classes, and people who live in rural areas. "Poor" people are seen to be lazy, and to not value education. (student 15; class targeted White woman)

She discusses the normality of her socio-economic location and the obstacles to reformulating her social class identity once she entered a university with a median family income substantially higher than her own. While it was clear to her where she lies in relation to others – perhaps, specifically because she is aware of how they would categorize her if they knew her socio-economic background – she is still struggling with the valenced, stereotypical terms associated with her social class and having difficulty integrating herself with labels that may be objectively accurate but do not accurately reflect her beliefs and values.

Discussion

Strong support was found for both hypotheses: qualitative analysis of these final papers showed that students had difficulty articulating and discussing issues related to social class and that they used their immediate social context to construct their subjective understanding of their social class identity. The qualitative data discussed here supports findings from Study 1 that social context and subjective experience play a critical role in how we objectively categorize social class groupings. In their final papers, students give us great insight into the processes they used to determine their own social class identity, which were highly contextualized and relativistic, and the unique difficulties they faced in naming their own social class.

Study 3

Study 2 explored the lack of explicit and critical discourse surrounding class and how such a lack of critical discourse impacts class privilege. Results from the class-based intergroup dialogues showed that the discourse of class is difficult for participants to articulate and engage with. However, given the nature of this qualitative study, I was unable to directly investigate specific ways this lack of critical discourse may manifest itself. Of particular interest is what effect the internalization of this lack of critical discourse might have on attitudes towards other groups.

Study 3 investigated the relationship between different aspects of social class (objective, subjective, and projective), and whether these measures differentially relate to attitudes toward groups. This study specifically examines how these aspects of social class identity would correlate with feelings of warmth toward socially marginalized groups. A projective measure of class was included in this study because of its relationship to a lack of critical discourse – whereas objective and subjective measures require a level of explicit identification with a social grouping, projective measures do not. For this reason, a projective measure provides a unique insight into social class, since the results from Study 2 showed that class tends to be masked, not salient, and hard for participants to describe. However, this research was exploratory. Therefore, no formal hypotheses are presented for how attitudes towards marginalized groups differed by aspect of class measured.

Methods

Participants. A total of 122 undergraduates (72 men, 50 women; 17-21 years old) at a large Midwestern university enrolled in an introductory psychology course participated in the study for partial course credit. Of the sample, 82 participants identified

themselves as White, 18 as African American, 10 as Latino/a, 6 as Asian American, and 9 identified as 'other.' The sample was relatively economically advantaged according to self-reported income: 13 participants reported an annual family income less than $50,000, 17 participants reported between $50,000 and $75,000, 22 participants reported between $75,000 and $100,000, 30 participants reported between $100,000 and $150,000, 11 participants reported between $150,000 and $200,000, and 25 participants reported over $200,000 (4 participants did not provide their income).

Materials and procedures. All portions of this study were conducted via computer as part of an online survey. Participants signed up to participate through the psychology subject pool's website and received access to a link to the survey. Participants completed a scale with items from the Modern Racism scale towards Blacks (MR-B) (McConahay, 1986; $\alpha = .82$) and a version of the Modern Racism scale the authors adapted to measure attitudes towards Hispanics (MR-H) ("Hispanics are getting too demanding in their push for equal rights," "It is easy to understand the anger of Hispanic people in America (R)," "Hispanics should have to use English as their primary language," "Hispanics have a negative influence on the current job market," and "More respect should be paid to Hispanics because of past contributions in the development of the United States (R)"; $\alpha = .73$) randomly mixed in with unrelated items using a 5-point Likert scale where 1 was *strongly disagree* and 5 was *strongly agree*. Participants then completed a feeling thermometer (Croll, 2007; Wilcox, Sigelman, & Cook, 1989) which required them to rate how warmly they felt towards a number of different groups (ex: immigrants, racial and ethnic minorities) from 1 to 100, with 100 being *warmest*.

Participants also completed a modified Ziller task (1973), a projective measure of social class. Participants were presented with two boxes: the box on the right was labeled 'wealthy' and the box on the left was labeled 'poor'. They were then asked to use a row of five buttons below the boxes to indicate where they felt they best fit in relation to the boxes, which were labeled 1-5 going from left to right. Selecting one of the rightmost buttons suggests that the participant identified more strongly with the 'wealthy' box, while selecting one of the leftmost buttons suggests that the participant more strongly identified with the 'poor' box. Selection of higher value buttons reflected greater association with the 'wealthy' label, indicating a higher socioeconomic class (see Appendix 2.1).

After the projective task, participants completed a demographic questionnaire that included gender, race or ethnicity, an objective marker of social class (annual family income), and a subjective marker of social class. The subjective measure of social class asked participants to indicate which of the following labels they most strongly identified with: *working class, lower middle class, middle class, upper middle class,* and *upper class.*

Results

Bivariate correlations between income, self-identified class, and the Ziller task showed that all measures of class were positively correlated with each other (see Table 2.3). Bivariate correlations were run between all measures of class, the groups from the feeling thermometer, and the MR-B and MR-H. Any variables found to have a significant correlation with one or more of the social class measures were investigated further using regressions (see Table 2.4 for all significant correlations).

A series of regressions were run on any item from the feeling thermometer and the MR-H and MR-B which significantly correlated with one or more measure of class. The objective measures of class (income) were entered in the first block and the projective (Ziller task) and subjective (self-identified class label) measures were entered in the second block in all regressions. Interestingly, the results showed that none of the dependent variables were correlated with more than one measure of class. Income marginally predicted levels of MR-H ($B = .12$, $SE(B) = .07$, $\beta = .27$, $p = .08$, $f^2 = .03$) only, suggesting that those who reported higher family incomes held more racist attitudes towards Hispanics. Self-identified class significantly predicted feelings towards immigrants ($B = -4.58$, $SE(B) = 1.67$, $\beta = -.25$, $p = .01$, $f^2 = .06$), which suggests that those who identify themselves with a lower class label (working class, lower middle class) held warmer attitudes towards immigrants. The Ziller task significantly predicted participants' feelings of warmth towards the unemployed ($B = -5.31$, $SE(B) = 2.51$, $\beta = -.19$, $p = .04$, $f^2 = .04$) and marginally predicted scores on the MR-B scale ($B = -.15$, $SE(B) = .08$, $\beta = -.17$, $p = .07$, $f^2 = .03$). These results suggest that those who identify more strongly with the wealthy than the poor tend to dislike the unemployed and hold more racist attitudes towards Blacks than those who identified more with the poor than the wealthy.

Discussion

Objective, subjective, and projective types of social class measurement related to attitudes towards different groups. Results showed little overlap between types of measurement – that is, no dependent variable was correlated with more than one kind of class measurement. This suggests that objective, subjective, and projective measures of class, while related to one another, are not interchangeable. Additionally, the Ziller task, a

projective measure of social class, was a more significant predictor of attitudes toward various social groups than any other form of class measurement. Projective measures of social class appear to be robust and useful, and should be included in future research on social class.

The results from this study suggest that projective measures may be particularly useful for exploring 'unacceptable' stigmas or stereotypes held by privileged groups. Projective measures by design do not require explicit identification with any one group. In essence, these measures may borrow from aspects of the limited discourse and its veiling effects of unearned advantages explored in Study 2. Objective and subjective measures correlated with attitudes where explicit distaste may be more acceptable – towards Latino/as and immigrants, which participants may have conflated. The projective measure, in contrast, was especially useful for tapping into attitudes that are less socially acceptable: the Ziller task correlated with attitudes towards the unemployed, a group that is typically regarded with pity more often than open dislike, and the MR-B. Both of these are groups toward which it may be considered generally 'impolite' to express outright dislike, distaste, or coldness. Projective measures may provide insight into the existing lines of discourse which Bourdieu (1977) suggests we take for granted – those ways of thinking and constructing the world which we do not initially think to critique. By allowing the participant the illusion that they are not marking themselves out as one group or another, and therefore in some sense side-stepping having to meet the issue of unearned class privileges directly, projective measures may spur less reactance than objective or subjective measures of class.

General Discussion

40

The research presented in this paper highlights the role of social context in the development of social class awareness and social class identity. Comparison of the Income x Class distributions among Midwestern students in a privileged setting and East Texan students in an economically disadvantaged setting suggested that these contextual differences played a role in how individuals categorized their class on the basis of their income. For example, the results suggest that East Texans making $100,000 identify with different class labels than Midwesterners making the same amount. This finding was clarified by the results of Study 2, which suggests that individuals derive their own class identity relativistically from those around them. My findings from Study 1 and Study 2 suggest that individuals' subjective understandings of what their objective status means varies from context to context and is established through a process of social comparison. The resulting differences in the subjective interpretation of one's social class may cause individuals with the same objective profile to behave and act in different ways. Awareness of possibly confounding contextual impacts on objective measures of social class will improve the quality of psychological research in the future.

I also proposed that social class is a multidimensional construct which requires the use of multiple measures and mixed methods to capture the complex dimensions of class awareness. My results highlight the multifaceted and multimodal nature of social class as a construct. It can be measured using objective, material qualities, by asking someone to identify with a particular class label, or by having them complete a projective task. These measures are highly related, but because they relate to different outcome variables cannot be said to be interchangeable. This suggests that there is no single-item 'one-size-fits-all' measure of social class and that researchers need to think carefully

41

about what type of measurement of social class is most likely to impact a construct of interest. My findings from Study 3 also suggested that projective measures, which are not frequently used to measure social class, were correlated with both objective and subjective measurements of class, but not interchangeable with either. Furthermore, the Ziller task, a projective measure of class, was found to correlate with attitudes towards more groups on the feeling thermometer task than the subjective and objective measures combined. These findings suggest that this projective measure of social class will be a very useful measure to study the relationship between social class and feelings towards various outgroups.

The potential importance of projective measures of social class is underscored by the qualitative findings regarding the taboos surrounding open discussions of class-related topics that still remain in America. Students had difficulty naming their class, and in practice, a common heuristic used by Americans is to conflate class with race and make such discussion heavily racialized. The combination of these factors may explain why the projective measure was a stronger and broader predictor of attitudes towards other groups than objective or subjective measures in Study 3. Given the robustness and appropriateness of projective class measures for American samples, such measures should be better incorporated into future social psychological research on prejudice and stereotyping.

Bourdieu (1977; Swartz, 1997) argued that the lack of critical discourse around existing hierarchical structures naturalizes the habitus experienced by various class groups (i.e., the naturalization of the correspondence between the social position and personal disposition). Simply put, it is not until we are able to articulate and discuss the

various aspects of our lived experience that we understand our own levels of marginalization and privilege as a result of that habitus. I found that participating in a program like the intergroup dialogues facilitates such a discourse and opens the possibility of a reflexive understanding of self and the "other." Participating in a program like the intergroup dialogues helped students develop a language to discuss the aspects of marginalization and privilege associated with their social class identity. Providing opportunities to participate in a dialogue course gives students the opportunity to critically engage with assumptions about social class that implicitly naturalizes existing class positions (Mahalingam, 2003; Mahalingam 2007).

Limitations and Future Directions

A major limitation of this research is that all three studies were conducted on college students, the majority of whom were White and upper middle class. It is reasonable to assume that age, generation, and level of education all play an important role in the development of ideas about one's social class and one's reactions to class more broadly. Thus, the findings here should not be generalized to other populations, and more research is needed to uncover the role such differences play in the measurement of social class.

A second limitation is that I only assessed attitudes towards groups in Study 3 and no other variables of interest. While this gave me a rough sense of how class measurements of various kinds work, there is still much psychometric research to be done. Research comparing the predictive validity of direct and projective measures across various domains is necessary in order to understand what aspects of class projective measures are tapping into, as well as when it is most appropriate to use them.

Incorporating all three types of measures of social class would be a step forward, but the bulk of current research on subjective class identification has been qualitative in nature. Developing valid and reliable measures of subjective class identification that are more accessible to quantitative researchers would make it more likely for a better developed understanding of class to be adopted and implemented by more mainstream psychologists (Sims, 1951; Surridge, 2007).

Moving past the measurement explorations alone, future research on social class would be greatly benefited by a better theoretical grounding from an intersectional approach. According to intersectionality, one's beliefs, values, and behaviors are shaped at the intersections of multiple salient social identities (Mahalingam & Leu, 2005). For example, an individual's position on abortion may be simultaneously shaped by gender, political orientation, and religious background, and each combination of these three identities may produce different stances on this issue. The relationships between multiple social identities are at the heart of intersectionality, and there is evidence that social class as a subjective identity interacts with other identities in different ways. Several studies have shown that social class can be eclipsed by other, more culturally visible identities, like race or gender (Gordon, 1951; Hooper, 1976; Surridge, 2007). While social class underpins these other identities, and is often conflated with race and ethnicity to a large extent, class itself remains invisible and may not be viewed as a source of social identity by women and ethnic minorities. White working class men, in contrast, actively construct their class identity by emphasizing their lack of minority status in other domains (Fine, Weis, Addelston, & Maruscza, 1997; Weis, 2006).

Conclusions

Class is a highly complex multidimensional construct. We need to use a variety of measurements and mixed methods to capture the full impact of social class. My research suggests that social context plays a very important role in shaping class awareness, and that this process is flexible and reflexive. I also found that engaging in an intergroup dialogue with people from different class positions will foster a critical level of class awareness which has the potential to disrupt the naturalization of social class hierarchies. In conclusion, a more careful and thorough psychometric exploration of social class, including objective, subjective and projective measures, will improve social science research. Despite the fact that most researchers agree that social class is an important and influential variable for most areas of interest, it has and continues to be plagued by measurement issues. The research presented here represents a strong starting point for the development of more valid measures of social class, but future research is needed to achieve this.

References

Argyle, M. (1994). *The psychology of social class*. New York: Routledge.

Bergerson, A. A. (2007). Exploring the impact of social class on adjustment to college: Anna's story. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 20,* 99-119.

Bettie, J. (2003). *Women without class: Girls, race, and identity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice.* Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Bullock, H. E., & Limbert, W. M. (2003). Scaling the socioeconomic ladder: Low-income women's perceptions of class status and opportunity. *Journal of Social Issues, 59,* 693-709.

Cirino, P. T., Chin, C. E., Sevcik, R. A., Wolf, M., Lovett, M., & Morris, R. D. (2002). Measuring socioeconomic status: Reliability and preliminary validity for different approaches. *Assessment, 9,* 145-155.

Croll, P. R. (2007). Modeling determinants of White racial identity: Results from a new national survey. *Social Forces, 86,* 613-642.

Eysenck, S. (1960). Social class, sex, and responses to a five-part personality inventory. *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 20,* 47-54.

Fine, M., Weis, L., Addelston, J. & Marusza, J. (1997). (In)secure times: Constructing white working-class masculinities in the late 20th century. *Gender and Society, 11,* 52-68.

Gillies, V. (2005). Raising the meritocracy: Parenting and the individualization of social

    class. *Sociology, 39*, 835-853.

Gordon, M. (1951). A system of social class analysis. *Drew University Bulletin, 39,* 3-19.

Hooper, M. (1976). The structure and measurement of social identity. *The Public Opinion*

    Quarterly, 40, 154-164.

Jones, S. J. (2003). Embodying working-class subjectivity and narrating self: "We were

    the hired help". In D.L. Tolman & M. Brydon-Miller (Eds.), *From subjects to*

    subjectivities: A handbook of interpretive and participatory methods (pp. 145-

    162). NY: NYU Press.

Kamieniecki, S., & O'Brien, R. (1984). Are social class measures interchangeable?

    Political Behavior, 6, 41-59.

Kelley, J., & Evans, M. D. R. (1995). Class and conflict in six western nations. *American*

    Sociological Review, 60, 157-178.

Kuriloff, P., & Reichert, M. C. (2003). Boys of class, boys of color: Negotiating the

    academic and social geography of an elite independent school. *Journal of Social*

    Issues, 59, 751-769.

Lazarsfeld, P. (1939). Interchangeability in the indices in the measurement of economic

    influences. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 23,* 33-45.

Mahalingam, R. (2003). Essentialism, culture, and power: Representations of social class.

    Journal of Social Issues, 59, 733-749.

Mahalingam, R. (2007). Essentialism, power, and the representation of social categories:

    A folk sociology perspective. *Human Development, 50,* 300-319.

Mahalingam, R., & Leu, J. (2005). Culture, essentialism, immigration and representations

      of gender. *Theory & Psychology, 15*, 841-862.

Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1962). Manifesto of the Communist Party, section I ("Bourgeois

      and proletarians"). In *Selected works [of] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels* (Vol.

      2, pp. 33-43). Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House.

McConahay, J. B. (1986). Modern racism, ambivalence, and the modern racism scale. In

      J. F. Dovidio & S. L. Gaertner (Eds.), *Prejudice, discrimination and racism* (pp.

      91-126). New York: Academic.

Mueller, C., & Parcel, T. (1981). Measures of socioeconomic status: Alternatives and

      recommendations. *Child Development, 52,* 13-30.

Rosenthal, R., & Rosnow, R. (1991). *Essentials of Behavioral Research: Methods and

      Data Analysis*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Schooler, C., & Schoenbach, C. (1994). Social class, occupational status, occupational

      self-definition, and job income: A cross-national examination. *Sociological

      Forum, 9,* 431-458.

Sims, V. (1951). A technique for measuring social class identification. *Educational and

      Psychological Measurement, 11,* 541-548.

Stewart, A. J., & Ostrove, J. M. (1993). Social class, social change, and gender: Working-

      class women at Radcliffe and after. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 17*, 475-

      497.

Surridge, P. (2007). Class belonging: A quantitative exploration of identity and

      consciousness. *The British Journal of Sociology, 58*, 207-226.

Swartz, D. (1997). *Culture and power: The sociology of Pierre Bourdieu.* Chicago: The

    University of Chicago Press.

Weeden, K., & Grusky, D. (2005). The case for a new class map. *The American Journal*

    of Sociology, 111, 141-212.

Weis, L. (2006). Masculinity, whiteness, and the new economy: An exploration of

    privilege and loss. *Men and Masculinities, 8,* 262-272.

Wilcox, C., Sigelman, L., & Cook, E. (1989). Some like it hot: Individual differences in

    responses to group feeling thermometers. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 53,* 246-257.

Ziller, R. C. (1973). *The social self.* New York: Pergamon Press Inc.

Footnotes

[1] The meta-analytic comparisons were computed using Rosenthal and Rosnow's (1991) procedures for comparing the effect sizes from two independent samples. Briefly, the effect sizes (r) were converted to Fisher z's and used in the following formula to find the Z of the difference between the two effect sizes:

$$\frac{z_{r1} - z_{r2}}{[1/(N_1 - 3) + 1/(N_2 - 3)]^{1/2}}$$

Table 2.1

Study 2: Coding scheme for Theme 1

Coding Sub-theme	Theme content	Example codes	Inter-rater agreement
Class is racialized	Participant discusses economic differences as racial differences.	"The results of the privilege walk showed all of the minorities at the back of the classroom and all of the whites at the front."	98%
Discussing class is taboo	Participant discusses or acknowledges societal taboos about class-based discourse.	"I believe that in society, people are taught that discussing money in public is rude and that you are never supposed to discuss your income or the taxes you pay, with the people outside of your immediate family."	92%
Class-based stereotypes	Participant discusses valenced perceptions of class groupings.	"Poor people are seen to be lazy, and to not value education."	95%

Note. All themes listed above were coded for presence or absence in a given paper.

Table 2.2

Study 2: Coding scheme for Theme 2

Coding Sub-theme	Theme content	Example codes	Inter-rater agreement
Downward social comparison	Participant constructs their social class identity based on comparisons to comparatively economically disadvantaged people.	"I first became aware of my class identification when I came to college. Even as an instate student, I realized how expensive tuition is and how important an everyday job would be in making ends meet."	93%
Upward social comparison	Participant constructs their social class identity based on comparisons to comparatively economically advantaged people.	"The stories of annual vacations to the Hamptons, shopping without even glancing at the price tags and the resources that were available at some of their private schools were incredible. It also shed light on the fact the upper class students wished that the other members of the class could have experienced some of the lavish privileges they received due to their social class."	95%

Note. All themes listed above were coded for presence or absence in a given paper.

Table 2.3

Study 3: Bivariate Correlations Between Class Measures

	Income	Self-identified class
Self-identified class	.74**	
Ziller task	.65**	.78**

**$p < .001$

Table 2.4

Study 3: Significant correlations between class measures, attitudes, and prejudice measures

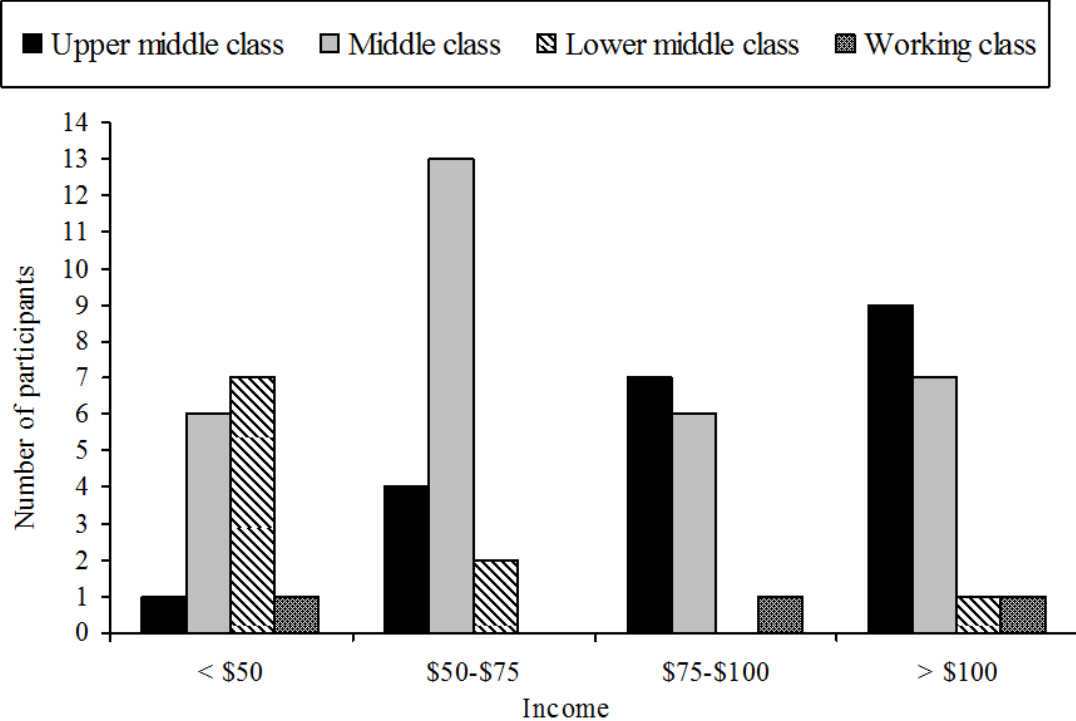|	Income	Self-identified class	Ziller task
Unemployed people	-.13	-.20*	-.20*
Immigrants	-.20*	-.22*	-.14
Modern racism toward Hispanics	.18*	.02	.002
Modern racism toward Blacks	-.07	-.15	-.17

p < .05

Figure 2.1. Income x Class distributions among East Texans in Study 1.
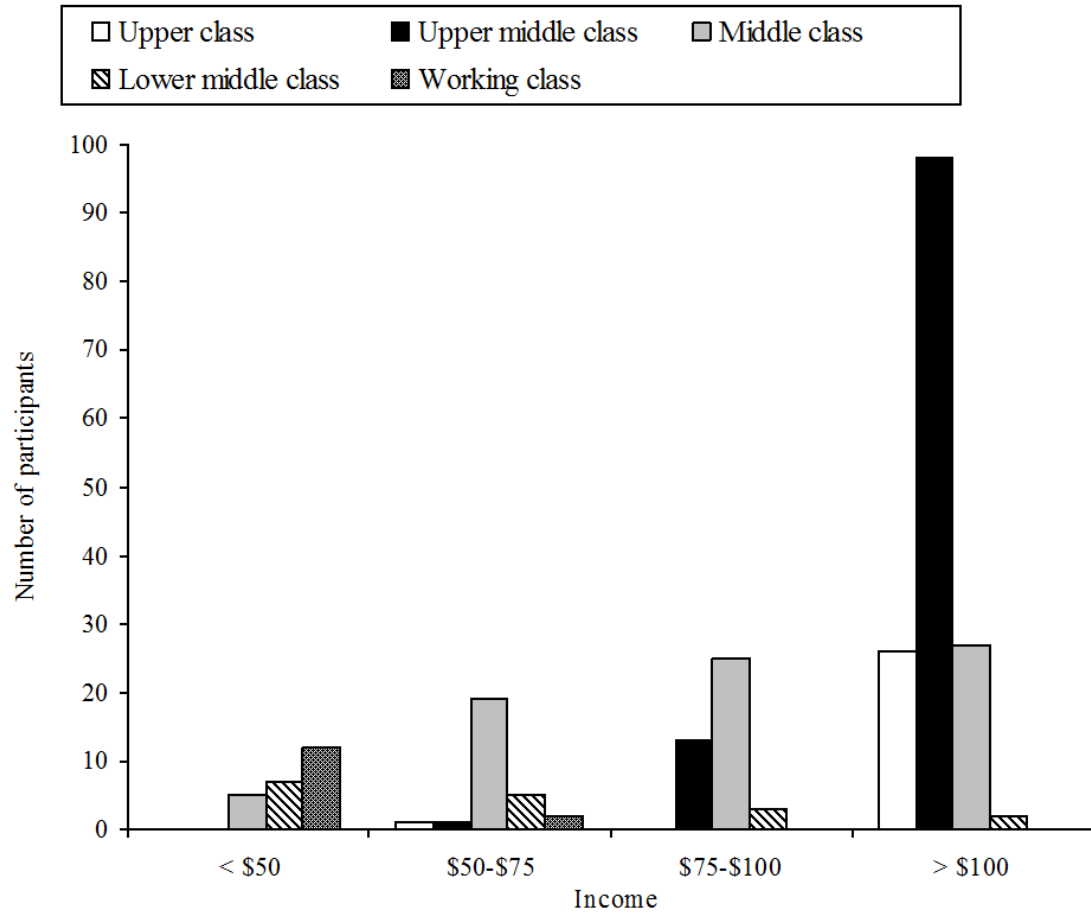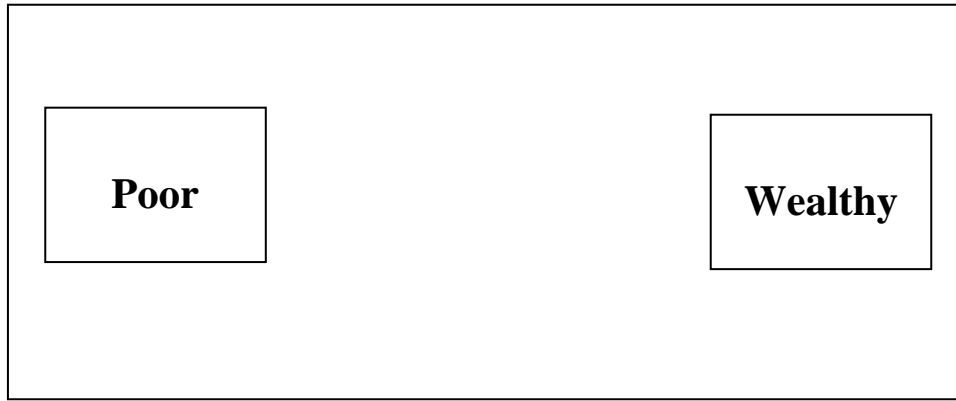
Figure 2.2. Income x Class distributions among Midwesterners in Study 1.

Appendix 2.1 – Modified Ziller Task

Please indicate where you think you would be best represented in the diagram below.

Poor		**Wealthy**

Chapter III. Social Dominance Orientation and John Henryism at the Intersection of

Race and Class

Social location plays a critical role in how we view and interpret the social

structures that shape various aspects of our lives. Sociologists like Bourdieu (1977)

theorized the notion of *habitus*, where there is a correspondence between a social position

and personal disposition which shapes the implicit beliefs that are embedded in various

social practices and discourses. Social psychologists interested in delineating the

relationship between power and psychological disposition have focused on how

privileged social locations shape beliefs about social hierarchies (Jost & Banaji, 1994;

Mahalingam, 2007; Pratto, Liu, Levin, Sidanius, Shih, Bachrach & et al, 2000). The

converging evidence from these studies indicate that those who are in positions of

privilege tend to view social hierarchies as a natural part of our social world, as measured

by social dominance orientation (SDO), and tend to have a lower awareness of various

privileges (Sanders & Mahalingam, 2010). SDO, however, gives us little insight into

how those in marginalized social locations cope with the naturalization of existing social

hierarchies. Research on John Henryism (JH), has examined how marginalized group

members, such as African Americans, cope with discrimination. This line of research has

demonstrated that specific interactions between race and class play a critical role in

moderating the beneficial effects of JH on physical health. So far, no studies have looked

at the relationship between JH and SDO, two of the dominant constructs in the psychological research on privilege and social marginality.

Using an intersectional framework (Cole, 2009; Stewart & McDermott, 2004), I investigated the relationship between SDO and JH. I adopted an intersectional framework to explore how demographic social identities interact to shape the endorsement of these ways of thinking. Specifically, the studies presented here focus on three main issues: first, how SDO and JH relate to one another. Second, whether intersections of specific social identities impact the endorsement of these constructs in unique ways which would not be accounted for by looking at those identities separately. Third, whether individuals describe their social location in ways that converged with findings on SDO and JH.

Theoretical Perspectives

Social dominance theory was originally conceptualized and developed as a framework to understand how social hierarchies are formed and maintained, and has been a vibrant line of research for over two decades (Pratto, Sidanius & Levin, 2006). Social dominance orientation (SDO) can be described as a general orientation or outlook that shapes how an individual understands social hierarchies. It has been found to be stable across time and situations and functions like a dispositional personality variable (Pratto, Sidanius & Levin, 2006). It correlates strongly with political conservatism, modern racism, and right-wing authoritarianism (Jost & Thompson, 2000; Miller, Smith & Mackie, 2004; Pratto, Sidanius & Levin, 2006).

Pratto, Sidanius, and Levin (2006) argue that those in privileged positions develop a stronger SDO in order to preserve their privileged position. Members of dominant

groups are more likely to endorse ideologies which legitimize and support inequalities that favor them. A long body of research finds that men and Whites tend to score higher on measures of SDO than women and ethnic/racial minorities. SDO also predicts privileged group members' political orientation, and their attitudes toward race, and their attitudes toward immigration policies (Miller, Smith & Mackie, 2004; Pratto, Sidanius & Levin, 2006). SDO has been one of the most robust cognitive measures of privileged group members' political views and attitudes toward marginalized group members. However, studies of SDO with marginalized group members tend to have lower reliability, possibly because this particular worldview does not reflect their lived experience (Pratto, Sidanius & Levin, 2006). In addition, research on SDO does not fully explore the interaction between social class and race or how class itself shapes attitudes towards social hierarchies.

In contrast, JH focuses on the experience of marginalized group members. James (1994) developed a theory of active coping specific to the Black community using the American folk tale of John Henry as a touchstone of racially shared experience. This famous story focused on the attempts of a Black railroad worker to prove his skill (and by extension keep his job) against the threat of mechanization. In the end, John Henry wins the race against the machine, proving his skill and his effectiveness, but at the cost of his life. John Henry, though victorious, drives himself too far too quickly and dies moments after the close of the race. James saw this story as the crystallization of a coping strategy employed by Blacks in response to overt racism and structural discrimination. James argued that in the face of these chronic life-stressors, Blacks adopt a high-effort coping

strategy (termed John Henryism) where they locate their success or failure in their ability to work hard enough to overcome obstacles.

Although John Henryism (JH) is conceptualized as a coping strategy and SDO is seen as a general orientation toward privilege which shape our worldview, I argue that they may be conceptually related. Both, for example, are focused on responses to inequality and social hierarchies. JH is essentially one way of coping with the knowledge that inequality exists, while SDO focuses on whether we think such an inequality is appropriate and natural. Like SDO, there is evidence that JH is a dispositional variable. Twin studies show that 35% of the variability of JH may be related to genetic factors (Bennett, Merritt, Edwards, Whitfield, Brandon, & Tucker, 2004). Thus, we argue that in many ways JH and SDO can be seen as two sides of the same coin.

In keeping with James' initial framing of the concept, much of the research on JH has been conducted in the realm of health psychology. James (1994) presented the John Henryism hypothesis, which argued that a high-effort coping strategy like JH would increase physiological reactivity, which would in turn lead to higher health risks. Active coping strategies like this one, which require an individual to invest a large amount of emotional, behavioral, and cognitive effort and resources, may have a particularly vicious backlash if they are not successful. Although such a focus on self-efficacy and self-reliance can be quite positive if one is successful, he found that those who aren't – those whose conditions never changed no matter how hard they worked – suffered health complications as a result. Low-income Blacks high in JH have been found to have dangerously high blood pressure and are at a high risk for heart disease. Similarly,

Duijkers and colleagues (1988) found that Dutch men high in JH also had high blood pressure.

There is also evidence that in some circumstances, high levels of JH can be beneficial. When the active coping strategy succeeds, it can become a protective factor against those same health risks it seems to exacerbate – high SES Blacks high in JH have been show to have lower blood pressure (Bennett, et al., 2004). Dutch people in smoking cessation courses high in JH were found to be more successful in their attempts to stop smoking than those low in JH (Van Loon, Tijhuis, Surtees & Ormel , 2001), suggesting that adopting this strategy can galvanize one mentally for undertaking a long-term and difficult problem. Haritatos, Mahalingam, & Jackson (2007) also found that higher SES Chinese immigrants high in JH had lower perceived stress and better health outcomes. Higher levels of JH have also been found to facilitate more perseverance and achievement among women in engineering school, graduate students of color, and lower-income students in higher education (Cheng, Sanders, Sanchez-Burks, Molina, Lee, Darling, et al, 2008; Darling, Molina, Sanders, Lee, & Zhao, 2008). The emerging body of research on JH underscores the importance of the interaction between race and class.

Intersectionality

Social identities, such as race, are ever-present and important elements of the long lines of research for both SDO and JH. SDO, as described above, posits explanations for ubiquitous social phenomena such as racism and sexual double standards. JH was originally conceptualized specifically to investigate the negative health effects that disproportionately plague racial and ethnic minorities. However, very little research has

investigated whether the intersections of these social identities affect JH and SDO in unique ways.

Intersectionality theory argues that individuals' beliefs, self-concepts, and behaviors must be understood as product of the intersection of socio-psychological processes related to race, gender, and class (Mahalingam & Leu, 2005). As such, the individual's gender, class, and ethnic identity are omnirelevant and always present. Because these social experiences are so intertwined and entangled, the intersectionality perspective argues for a nonadditive understanding of identity: a working-class Latina understands her educational experiences as a working-class Latina, not simply as a Latina who is working-class or as a working class woman who happens to be Latina (Yoder & Aniakudo, 1997). Intersectionality researchers also argue that we need to use mixed methods to study how intersecting identities simultaneously affect our lives. Combining quantitative and qualitative methods will help us explore how social context shapes our perceptions of privilege and social hierarchies.

The interrelationships between multiple social identities are at the heart of intersectionality and there is evidence that social class as a subjective identity interacts with other identities in different ways. Much of the qualitative work on social class has focused on the lived experience of class. Differences have been found in the values and expectations held by members of different classes (Bettie, 2003), but it has also been pointed out that the members within a particular class negotiate values and expectations differently, as well (Fine, Weis, Addelston, & Marusza, 1997).

In sum, I argue that SDO and JH represent two different perspectives adopted by those living in a class-based hierarchical society. SDO focuses on ideological beliefs that

justify existing power hierarchies whereas JH captures the spirit of resilience and coping of those who are at the marginalized locations. SDO measures legitimizing beliefs that naturalize existing social hierarchies, whereas JH captures the agency and resilience of those who resist such naturalization of social hierarchies. These two belief systems typify how dominant and marginalized group members' respond to issues related to power and marginalization. Hence those who are high on JH will be low on SDO.

The American Dream, Mobility and Education

In order to best understand how race and class intersect to shape levels of SDO and JH, it is necessary to discuss the role of education as an institution in class mobility and the perpetuation of American Dream ideology. The American Dream has its roots in the Protestant Work Ethic (PWE). PWE is described as having the following components: centrality of work, avoidance of wasting time, delay of gratification, morality/ethics, hard work leads to desirable outcomes, and self-reliance (Christopher, Zabel, Jones & Marek, 2008). PWE requires some belief in a just world or fair play, essentially arguing that the link between hard work and success is clear and stable (Christopher, Zabel, Jones & Marek, 2008). In the United States, PWE has become entrenched and crystallized as a very common ideology: the American Dream. According to Hochshild (1995), American Dream ideology has four tenets: 1) everyone has a fair starting place, 2) everyone can reasonable anticipate success, 3) success is born of innate talents and abilities, and 4) success is a marker of virtue.

American Dream ideology provides status quo enhancing explanations for both class and race disparities. American Dream ideology posits that class mobility is a matter of effort, perseverance, and decency. The implication, then, is that low-income people –

who are disproportionately people of color – do not have the talent or values necessary to succeed. American Dream ideology is especially prevalent in educational institutions, which are regularly touted as the best and surest routes to upward class mobility (Bullock & Limbert, 2003). Public education serve as sites where American Dream ideology are directly and explicitly reproduced – Hochschild (2003) discusses how Americans want their children to learn a certain core of knowledge and a certain set of values and practices. Thus, education is a context which promotes a certain framing of why class and race disparities exist; furthermore, education as a context reproduces these inequalities.

Stewart and Ostrove (1993) have argued that higher education is a site of class-based socialization, one that strives to prepare economically advantaged students to adopt and function in the roles those of their status are expected to take on in the future. For class privileged students of color, their privileged class identity may serve as a buffer when they enter higher education. They may find that due to their class identity their transition is much easier than it is for class targeted students. Class privileged students of color's class identity, unlike their racial or ethnic identity, is congruous with the goals and values of the institution in which they find themselves (Bourdieu, 1977). As a protective measure, it makes sense that they would adhere to this identity as closely as they could and endorse a perhaps exaggerated version of the worldview endorsed by class privileged Whites. That is, class privileged students of color will score high on SDO and low on JH.

In contrast, based on previous research regarding race and class, class targeted Whites are not expected to show the same pattern despite their comparative race-based privilege. Weis (2003) found that working-class gender ideologies emerge through a

process of sexist and racist "othering" used by White working-class men to differentiate

themselves from women and people of color. Women are seen as vulnerable, domestic,

and dependent, leading working-class men to construct masculinity in terms of the ability

to hold down a job, to be the primary or sole economic provider for the household, and

also to protect white women from racial and ethnic minority men. Additionally, the

categorization of mental labor as feminine leads White working-class men to become

academically disengaged and seek occupations that emphasize physical strength or

manual dexterity (Argyle, 1994). In essence, these men are emphasizing their maleness

and Whiteness for the same reason that we suggest class privileged people of color would

emphasize their class identity: doing so enables them to fashion an identity which

highlights the ways they best fit with their context and downplays the ways in which they

don't. Thus, an intersectionality perspective enables us to look at the interaction between

social class and race in novel ways.

The Current Research

I conducted three studies to explore the relationship between SDO and JH and the

ways these psychological constructs are shaped by social location. I employed both

quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: SDO and JH will be negatively correlated with each other.

Hypothesis 2: In addition to replicating the main effects of class, race and gender

previously established in the literature, I hypothesize that intersecting identities will have

multiplicative (not additive) effects on the endorsement of SDO and JH. Specifically, I

hypothesize that class privileged people of color will score higher on SDO and lower on

JH than any other group.

Hypothesis 3: Analyses of intergroup dialogue class papers will show class privileged students of color tacitly accept the hierarchies (i.e., their class status) that privilege them. By contrast, class targeted students of color will emphasize hard work as means to overcome social marginalization. They will also challenge the status-quo and be more critical of social hierarchies.

Study 1

In Study 1, I explored the relationship between SDO and JH using a quantitative survey methodology. I also investigated how various demographic social identities (race, class, and gender) impacted and shaped individuals' endorsement of JH and SDO.

Methods

Participants. A total of 387 undergraduates from a large Midwestern university participated in this study. The sample was composed of 181 men, 202 women, and 4 participants who chose not to disclose their gender. The sample was predominantly White (277 participants), but also contained 45 Asian Americans, 15 Blacks, 13 Latino/as, 24 individuals who identified as 'other', 11 multiracial individuals, and 2 participants who chose not to provide an answer. Participants were drawn from the psychology subject pool and were given course credit for their participation.

Materials.

Social dominance orientation. Participants completed Sidanius and Pratto's (2001) social dominance orientation (SDO) scale, a 16-item scale that measures an individual's tendency to see inequality and social hierarchies as natural and acceptable ("It is okay if some groups have more of a chance in life than others."; "Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups."). Participants rated the items using a 7-point

Likert scale where 1 was *strongly disagree* and 7 was *strongly disagree*. This scale was found to be reliable ($\alpha = .82$), and higher scores suggest a more socially dominant outlook.

John Henryism. Participants also completed James' (1994) John Henryism (JH) scale, a twelve item scale which measures active coping in response to long-term stressors ("I've always felt that I could make my life pretty much what I wanted it to make of it."; "When things don't go the way I want them to, that just makes me work even harder."). Participants rated how well the items reflected their lives using a 5-point Likert scale where 1 was *completely false* and 5 was *completely true*. This scale was highly reliable ($\alpha = .93$) and higher scores suggested stronger endorsement of John Henryism.

Procedure. Participants signed up for the study using the subject pool's online system. Once they signed up, participants were emailed a link to a web survey. After completing the consent form, participants completed a measure of SDO, a measure of JH, and a set of demographic questions (gender, age, race, parental income, and subjective class identification). They were then presented with a debrief form and given course credit.

Results

Preliminary analyses. An initial ANOVA was conducted on SDO and JH with race and class entered as fixed factors. To test whether there were differences between minority racial/ethnic groups, only participants of color were included in this analysis. The full range of class labels was included (working class, lower middle class, middle class, upper middle class, and upper class) for this analysis in case there were substantial

differences between them. No significant main effects or interactions on the ANOVA conducted in this manner were found for either SDO or JH.

Since the ANOVAs reported above found no differences between racial and ethnic minority groups, I created a binary categorical variable for race, which resulted in 277 White participants and 110 participants of color. Likewise, a binary categorical variable was created for class. Median splits showed that roughly half of the participants identified as either upper class or upper middle class. These two labels were collapsed into a class privileged ($n = 219$) and all other labels were collapsed to form a class targeted group ($n = 168$). These binary variables are used throughout the analyses.

Main analyses. As predicted, JH and SDO were found to be negatively correlated with one another, $r(387) = -.24, p < .001$. An ANOVA on SDO was run including gender, race, and class as fixed factors. Main effects for gender and class emerged in the hypothesized directions. Men ($M = 2.85, SD = .97$) had higher levels of SDO than women ($M = 2.36, SD = .86$), $F(1, 375) = 25.31, p < .001$. Class privileged individuals ($M = 2.75, SD = .97$) endorsed SDO more strongly than class targeted individuals ($M = 2.39, SD = .88$), $F(1, 375) = 22.88, p < .001$.

People of color ($M = 2.69, SD = .99$) reported significantly higher levels of SDO than White participants ($M = 2.55, SD = .93$), $F(1, 375) = 4.24, p = .04$. This was qualified by the hypothesized Class x Race interaction, which was also significant, $F(1, 375) = 4.76, p = .03$ (see Figure 3.1). A post-hoc contrast[1] showed that class privileged participants of color ($M = 3.10, SD = .94$) had significantly higher levels of SDO than all other groups ($M = 2.65, SD = .95$ for class privileged Whites; $M = 2.42, SD = .88$ for class targeted Whites; $M = 2.38, SD = .91$ for class targeted people of color), $F(1, 375) =$

4.14, $p = .04$. Post-hoc pairwise comparisons revealed no differences in SDO between class privileged Whites, class targeted Whites, and class targeted participants of color.

An ANOVA was also run on JH with gender, race, and class included as fixed factors. Once again, main effects for gender and class were found in the expected directions. Women ($M = 3.99$, $SD = .45$) were higher in JH than men ($M = 3.84$, $SD = .55$), $F(1, 375) = 9.17$, $p = .003$. Class targeted participants ($M = 3.94$, $SD = .49$) reported marginally higher levels of JH than class privileged participants ($M = 3.90$, $SD = .51$), $F(1, 375) = 3.37$, $p = .07$.

No main effect for race was found. Once again, a significant Class x Race interaction emerged, $F(1, 375) = 4.59$, $p = .033$ (see Figure 3.2). A post-hoc contrast[1] showed that class privileged people of color ($M = 3.73$, $SD = .56$) had significantly lower levels of JH than any other group ($M = 3.93$, $SD = .49$ for class privileged Whites; $M = 3.93$, $SD = .52$ for class targeted Whites; $M = 3.96$, $SD = .43$ for class targeted people of color), $F(1, 375) = 4.59$, $p = .03$. Post-hoc pairwise comparisons revealed that there were no differences in the endorsement of JH between class privileged Whites, class targeted Whites, and class targeted people of color.

Discussion

As predicted, I found that SDO and JH are negatively correlated (hypothesis 1). I also found that social location does influence the degree to which SDO or JH is adopted. Those coming from privileged backgrounds (both along lines of gender and class) tended to be higher in SDO and lower in JH than those coming from marginalized/targeted positions. For both variables, the hypothesized Class x Race interaction emerged, and the analysis revealed that class privileged people of color were highest in SDO and lowest in

JH compared to the other groups. These findings provide further support to hypothesis 2, that the endorsement of these differing ideologies are influenced in unique and nuanced ways by the intersections of particular social identities.

<div align="center">**Study 2**</div>

In Study 2, I replicated the findings from Study 1. I also wanted to broaden the scope of my approach and take into account not only the influence of an individual's subjective class identification, but also the broader social class of the individual's context.

One sample was collected at the author's home institution, using the same psychology subject pool used in Study 1. Income and subjective class data from Study 1 established that students at this high-ranking, highly selective university tend to be White and wealthy. The median income was over $200,000 and the majority of students identified as upper middle class or upper class.

The second sample was collected at a small community college located in a working class town of approximately 30,000 people located about 20 miles east of Houston, TX. Census data from 2000 shows that 63% of the population is White and 29.5% of the population is of Mexican descent. Additionally, 12% of families in this town are living below the poverty line compared to the national average of 9%. This East Texas town is predominantly working-class in terms of overall educational attainment as well. Most people (32.4%) received their high school diploma, but did not go on to higher education. Almost a third (31.3%) of those living here dropped out before graduating high school, compared to a national average of 19.6%.

Methods

Participants. A total of 263 undergraduates from a large Midwestern university participated in this study. The composition of the sample was balanced in terms of gender (108 men, 151 women, 4 chose not to answer) but not in terms of race (195 Whites, 68 people of color). Participants' ages ranged from 17 to 27 years old. As in Study 1, participants were drawn from the psychology subject pool and given course credit for participation.

Additionally, 77 students from a community college in East Texas participated in this study. This sample included 31 men and 46 women, and 45 of the participants identified themselves as White and 32 participants identified themselves as some other ethnic/racial label. Ages for this sample ranged from 16 to 47 years old. These participants completed a paper and pencil version of the survey in psychology classes at the community college. They were given no compensation for their participation.

Materials and procedures. The materials and procedures used for the Midwestern sample were identical to those used in Study 1. Materials were modified to accommodate administering paper-and-pencil versions of the survey for the East Texas sample and references to compensation were removed from the consent form. All participants completed the SDO measure ($\alpha = .93$ for the Midwestern sample and $\alpha = .70$ for the East Texas sample[2]), the JH measure ($\alpha = .77$ for the Midwestern sample and $\alpha = .70$ for the East Texas sample), and the demographics questionnaire used in Study 1.

Results

As in Study 1, an initial set of ANOVAs on SDO and JH with race and class entered as fixed factors were conducted on any participants identifying themselves as anything other than White. I also kept the full range of class labels for this analysis in

case there were substantial differences between them. I found no significant main effects or interactions on the ANOVA conducted in this manner for either SDO or JH.

Binary categorical variables were created for race and class using the same procedures used in Study 1. Social class was evenly distributed in the Midwestern sample ($n = 115$ for the class targeted group; $n = 148$ for the class privileged group) but not in the East Texas sample ($n = 52$ for the class targeted group; $n = 25$ for the class privileged group).

Bivariate correlations revealed that SDO and JH were negatively correlated, $r(340) = -.20$, $p < .001$. An ANOVA was run on SDO with gender, race, class, and research site included as fixed factors. Main effects for gender and class emerged in the expected directions. Men ($M = 2.90$, $SD = 1.13$) had higher levels of SDO than women ($M = 2.53$, $SD = .97$), $F(1, 316) = 9.04$, $p = .003$. Class privileged participants ($M = 2.76$, $SD = 1.10$) scored higher on SDO than class targeted participants ($M = 2.40$, $SD = .91$), $F(1, 316) = 4.63$, $p = .03$. No main effects emerged for race or research site.

In addition, I found a significant Class x Research Site interaction, $F(1, 316) = 6.07$, $p = .01$ (see Figure 3.3). A post-hoc contrast[3] showed that class targeted Midwesterners ($M = 2.25$, $SD = .90$) reported significantly lower levels of SDO than any other group ($M = 2.77$, $SD = 1.05$ for class privileged Midwesterners; $M = 2.73$, $SD = .85$ for class targeted East Texans; $M = 2.69$, $SD = 1.39$ for class privileged East Texans), $F(1, 316) = 5.96$, $p = .02$. Post-hoc pairwise comparisons revealed no differences in SDO between the class privileged Midwesterners, class targeted East Texans, and class privileged East Texans.

As hypothesized, a marginal Class x Race interaction also emerged for SDO, $F(1, 316) = 2.76$, $p = .09$ (see Figure 3.4). Post-hoc pairwise comparisons revealed that class privileged people of color ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 1.36$) endorsed SDO more strongly than either class targeted people of color ($M = 2.37$, $SD = .88$) or class privileged Whites ($M = 2.66$, $SD = 1.00$), $t(97) = 3.40$, $p = .001$ and $t(167) = 2.28$, $p = .02$ respectively. Class privileged Whites were marginally higher in SDO than class targeted Whites ($M = 2.42$, $SD = .93$), $t(232) = 1.89$, $p = .06$. No differences were found between class targeted Whites and class targeted people of color.

An ANOVA on JH was run with gender, race, class, and research site included as fixed factors. Main effects for gender and research site emerged in the expected directions. Women ($M = 4.05$, $SD = .45$) scored higher on JH than men ($M = 3.89$, $SD = .50$), $F(1, 316) = 10.01$, $p = .002$. East Texans ($M = 4.10$, $SD = .43$) scored higher on JH than Midwesterners ($M = 3.95$, $SD = .48$), $F(1, 316) = 3.76$, $p = .02$.

No significant main effects for race or class were found, but the hypothesized Class x Race interaction emerged, $F(1, 316) = 9.02$, $p = .003$ (see Figure 3.5). A post-hoc contrast[4] showed that class privileged people of color ($M = 3.85$, $SD = .50$) again had the lowest endorsement of JH across all groups ($M = 4.10$, $SD = .44$ for class targeted people of color; $M = 3.97$, $SD = .48$ for class privileged Whites; $M = 3.96$, $SD = .47$ for class targeted Whites), $F(1, 316) = 5.51$, $p = .02$. An additional post-hoc contrast[5] showed that class targeted people of color had the highest level of JH across all groups, $F(1, 316) = 6.47$, $p = .01$.

Discussion

The findings from Study 2 replicate and expand the findings from Study 1. Once again, SDO and JH were negatively correlated (hypothesis 1). In Study 2, the same pattern of Class x Race interactions emerged as in Study 1, suggesting that the finding that class privileged people of color are high in SDO and low in JH compared to other class/race groups is stable and is found across different contexts (hypothesis 2).

The findings from Study 2 also showed that the class level of a participant's context does shape his/her endorsement of JH and SDO in ways that cannot be accounted for by his/her own individual level of class alone. I found that participants from East Texas, a comparatively low-income context than the large Midwestern university context, had significantly higher levels of JH overall. However, I found that the East Texan participants had levels of SDO that were similar to those of upper class Midwesterners. Middle/working class Midwesterners, or those students whose personal class level was lower than the class level of their broader educational context, showed lower levels of SDO than all other groups, suggesting a dynamic interplay between individual and context class levels.

In Studies 1 and 2, I did not measure the strength of class identity. As social identity theory researchers have found, levels of SDO are influenced in part by one's perceived ingroup and strength of identification to that ingroup (Schmitt, Branscombe & Kappen, 2003). Thus, it is unclear in Studies 1 and 2 if the effect predicted and found – namely that class privileged people of color are higher in SDO and lower in JH than comparison groups – occurs because they find themselves in a context in which their class status is more salient than their racial or ethnic status.

I decided to explore the salience and strength of class identity in an intergroup context where social class was the focus of intergroup dialogue over a semester. There is evidence that institutes of higher education serve as class-based sites of socialization and have a highly classed culture (Bergerson, 2007; Bourdieu, 1977), and I propose that enrollment in a prestigious and selective university will highlight students' class status. Participation in a dialogue course at a prestigious, selective university should result in a context where social class is highly salient and apparent to students. Qualitative methods were used to explore the salience of intergroup dialogue on class differences within a sample of people of color.

Study 3

In order to more fully understand why class privileged people of color adopt a cognitive framework that is highly consistent with SDO and not JH, I conducted a qualitative study. I investigated how class privileged and class targeted students of color in a semester-long intergroup dialogue course on socioeconomic status constructed and articulated their perceptions of hierarchy and social mobility. Based on the findings from Studies 1 and 2, I expected class targeted students of color to cite hard work as the primary mechanism through which upward mobility can be achieved. Such narrative accounts of selfhood illustrate the basic tenets of John Henryism (James, 1994). Class privileged students of color are hypothesized to take a more reductionist or naturalistic perspective of social hierarchy than class targeted students of color.

The findings from Studies 1 and 2 showed that the most extreme differences in endorsement of JH and SDO occurred between people of color. Since it was this

difference between the people of color that seemed to be driving the interaction, I focused only on class targeted and class privileged people of color in this study.

Method

      Participants. Archival analysis was conducted on a set of 23 final papers from students who were enrolled in a semester long inter-group dialogue process specifically focusing on social class. Students self-selected into the intergroup program, but were not always able to choose the focus of their dialogue course. Thus, the students included here range from those excited by a dialogue course about social class to those who began the course uninterested in these issues. The final paper required students to reflect on what they had learned about social class in general and what they had discovered about their own social class identity throughout the course. As such, these papers provided a unique opportunity to get an in-depth look at how individuals process social class from multiple angles and in great detail.

      In order to protect participants' anonymity, the researchers did not have access to any identifying or demographic information about the students. All demographic information, therefore, had to be disclosed within the paper by the student themselves. The analysis for this project was limited to those students who self-identified both their race or ethnicity as anything other than White and provided information about their socioeconomic status. The final sample of papers included 16 class targeted students of color and 7 class privileged students of color.

Coding

      Thematic content analysis was conducted on this set of 23 papers. A coding scheme for this project was created using the following multi-step process. First, the

author and her primary adviser of this dissertation read a subset of 10 papers and identified possible themes of interest. We then discussed which themes to pursue and how to identify the presence of those themes in the text of subsequent papers. These initial 10 papers were excluded from any further analysis.

In the second step, the authors used this coding scheme to analyze all other papers which fit the criteria listed above: the student writing the paper had to disclose their class status and their race/ethnicity, and their race/ethnicity had to be described as something other than White. Multiracial individuals were included in the analysis. Each paper was coded for the presence or absence of relevant themes. We compared codings and revised the developing coding scheme.

When the coding scheme was sufficiently clarified and revised, two blind coders were trained independently to use it. They analyzed all the papers in isolation from the authors and from each others. Once all coding had been completed, we compared the agreement of their codes with one another and with the first author. Both coders were highly reliable with each other (agreement in 96% of cases) and with the first author (agreement in 97% of cases). This established the reliability of the coding scheme used in the following analyses. The analysis reported below is drawn from the first author's codes.

Results

   Theme 1 – Explanations for social inequality. In many of the papers, students grappled with questions of inequality and hierarchies within society at length. Such discussions are reflective of the same concepts underlying SDO (Pratto, Sidanius &

Levin, 2006). Of particular interest were class-based differences in how the existence of these social hierarchies were justified, resisted, and accounted for by students of color.

Theme 1 among class targeted students of color.   There were two kinds of responses from class targeted students of color in how they explained social inequality. Some highlighted the *arbitrary* nature of existing social hierarchies. Some highlighted the *social constructionist* nature of social class.

Class targeted students of color tended to highlight the arbitrary nature of the existing hierarchies and used their belief that such hierarchies are inherently social constructions as a basis to undermine the legitimacy of existing hierarchies.

> We have this desire, people in general, to create a structure – a hierarchy. If there was no hierarchy, we would search for one. When these different groups immigrated to the United States, they were inferior for some reason – some reason people needed to created. This is similar to the case with Blacks. The color of their skin was one thing different, hence another way to make others feel superiority. I think our society is constantly in search of this "one thing" to make others feel inferior – whatever that may be. As a result, we have constructed a social hierarchy that we "need." (student 119; class targeted Black woman)

The above quote illustrates the tendency of class targeted students of color to take a critical approach to hierarchy. They discussed the inherent human tendency to create hierarchies and differences while emphasizing that the axes upon which these differences were made are inherently arbitrary. In this sense, these students may tacitly agree with someone endorsing a high level of SDO that hierarchy is 'natural.' However, they do not accept that marginalized groups are marginalized on the basis of any sort of inherently meaningful criteria.

Another way class targeted students of color approached the existence of hierarchies and their subordinate position within them was by pointing out the socially constructed nature of dominant stereotypes about social class.

75

> There are obstacles blocking the way for those of lower SES to succeed and rise above their status. For example, our culture creates a gap between the rich and the poor. Those who do not fit the mold of what the rich expect people to look like, act like, or work as are seen as inferior. (student 63; class targeted Latina)

This quote suggests that class targeted students of color resist internalizing the dominant explanations for why low SES individuals are low SES. They are not seeing their social class as reflective of their own abilities. Instead, they are interpreting their marginalized class status as an arbitrary social category along the lines of race or gender: a constructed social marker that is used to enforce hierarchical differences.

Theme 1 among class privileged students of color. Class privileged students of color, in contrast, approached social hierarchies with a very different perspective. They viewed social hierarchy as a natural part of the social order. They also emphasized the unchanging nature of social hierarchies. Both these views reflect and at times mirror some of the items in SDO scale ("It is okay if some groups have more of a chance in life than others."; "Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups."). Specifically regarding their privileged class status, these students took a sort of "que sera sera" approach – that these differences exist and there is little they can do to mitigate them.

> I am glad that the other group [the class targeted students] talked about how there is no reason to feel guilty for being in the "upper class." As they said, there is no reason to feel guilty, and if anything, they shouldn't put us in a position where we have to feel guilty. (student 16; class privileged Indian man)

> I have wondered for a long time how I can be an ally with the people in a lower economic status. There is little I can do to ally with them. It is basically a society problem rather than the problem of the attitude of people. (student 12; class privileged Asian man)

Unlike the class targeted students of color who sought to undermine the legitimacy of class-based hierarchies by emphasizing the arbitrary nature of these differences, the class

privileged students of color regard a class-based hierarchy that privileges them with a passive acceptance. The first participant's quote above rejects feelings of class-based guilt (citing responses from his classmates which he interprets as an acquittal of his privileged position), which tacitly gives support to class-based hierarchy. The second quote takes this a step further. In contrast to the social constructivist position of his middle/working class counterparts, this student locates the origins of hierarchy in the fundamental workings of society. He explicitly rejects class-based hierarchy as matter of individuals' perceptions or beliefs. By doing so, he naturalizes the existing pecking order.

Additionally, some class privileged students of color extended this perspective more broadly, couching discrimination and oppression as a dispositional rather than structural phenomenon.

> There will always be racist, sexist and just people who are full of hatred in the world. (student 129; class privileged Black woman)

The idea that oppression is rooted in 'bad eggs' may be a way for this student to explain away her own class-based privilege. Instead of acknowledging her own unearned privileges and questioning whether she has engaged in classist behavior herself, she sidesteps these concerns by reframing the issues as one of personality instead of context. Furthermore, she takes a particularly fatalistic approach to the problem. Implicit in her quote is the idea that if there are always bad eggs, there is no real way to combat discrimination and oppression.

Theme 2 – The role of hard work. The second prominent theme that emerged was related to the role of hard work and social mobility. Conceptually, both of these ideas are clearly linked to JH. Almost all of the class targeted students of color discussed

77

the role of hard work or expressed some hope of upward mobility in the future. This

theme was virtually absent among class privileged students of color.

   Theme 2 among class targeted students of color. Many class targeted students of

color were quite explicit in their endorsement of hard work and their feelings of self-

efficacy.

> I ultimately believe I can do anything I put my mind to. (student 58; class
> targeted Black woman)

> I learned that if a person works hard they can achieve much more than their SES
> says they can achieve. A person doesn't have to remain in their status, either.
> (student 26; class targeted Black woman)

The quotes above show a clear belief in the power of hard work. The first quote, for

instance, is extremely close to the wording of several items from the JH scale (ex: "Hard

work has really helped me to get ahead in life.") used in Studies 1 and 2 (which was not

presented to these students). Additionally, class targeted students of color discussed hard

work in terms of their prospects for upward mobility in the future.

> I know that one day I will be rich and comfortable if I continue to work as hard as
> I have been. I have learned that higher SES are just people and because they have
> unearned wealth does not mean that they are any better than I am, it just means I
> have to work a bit harder to get where I want to be. (student 62; class targeted
> Black man)

> I am part of the working class. It isn't my fault, it is unearned. I don't blame my
> mother, by my mom raised me, therefore until I get to working full time I will
> consider myself part of her socioeconomic class. (student 119; class targeted
> Black woman)

These two students have a clear sense of their own social class status and their papers

suggest a level of dissatisfaction with it. Both of them point out that the factor they

believe gained them admission to a prestigious university – hard work – will be the same

one that eventually elevates them to the next rung in the class ladder. This high level of self-efficacy and self-reliance is also found in populations high in JH.

A number of the class targeted students of color took a more nuanced view of hard work and their social identities. While these students, like the ones above, saw hard work as their biggest strength and the best mechanism they had to move up to a different social class they also recognized that their intersecting identities led to more obstacles they needed to overcome to reach those goals.

> I remember my dad always used to tell me, "Son, as a minority, you have to work twice as hard as others to get the equal treatment and recognition." I truly believe every word of that. (student 85; class targeted Chinese man)

> I know that I can determine where I end up but not where I began. Being a black person with a low socio-economic level or working class level is like a double negative. To be black sends so many messages. You are forced to prove yourself in so many ways and make sure that you are up to par and on top of everything. (student 62; class targeted Black man)

> I know after this course that me being an African American woman and me being of a lower socioeconomic status have something to do with one another. They have a negative effect on one another and with the stereotypes that accompany them I have to work harder to defeat them in order to succeed. (student 56; class targeted Black woman)

These students recognize the structural factors in place, in regards to their marginalized position as women, lower income people, and people of color, but still see upward social mobility as a possible (perhaps even likely) future outcome. They acknowledge that they will have to work harder than those in positions of privilege, but all seem to suggest that they are capable of meeting the challenge posed by their intersecting marginalized identities.

Theme 2 among class privileged students of color. While hard work was rarely mentioned in this group, when it was it had a distinctly different character than when it

was discussed by their class targeted counterparts. When they did talk about hard work, they did not present it as necessary to overcome obstacles.

> Another slight thing that bothers me is all the hoopla surrounding affirmative action. When I applied to [this] university, affirmative action was still happening. [My] university only gave additional points for admission for minorities who were African American, Latino, or Native American. Hence, affirmative action did not apply at all for me [as a South Asian]. I received no additional points for being a minority. However, my fellow classmates did not know this. They assumed that since I was a minority my chances for admission were automatically increased. I had to work just as hard as Whites did to get admission into Michigan. (student 16; class privileged Indian man)

There are two things of interest embedded in the quote above. First, in contrast to the class targeted students of color who describe themselves as having to work *harder than* White students, this student describes himself as working *just as hard as* White students. Thus, he implicitly places himself at the same level with students privileged in terms of their race, with the same (lack of) obstacles. He is not discussing the way his ethnic or class identity has shaped his opportunities for learning. Second, though this student is a minority himself, he holds a negative view of Affirmative Action policies, which suggests that his class-based privileges may have shielded him from a number of the issues facing class targeted students of color when they apply to college.

Discussion

Strong support was found for both hypotheses. As expected, class privileged students of color accepted existing class-based social hierarchies as natural and not particularly problematic and were less likely to emphasize the role of hard work in their successes than class targeted students of color. These findings provide much-needed insight into the quantitative results from Studies 1 and 2.

The thematic analysis of these papers suggests that class privileged people of color may be less aware of their privileged class status than class targeted people of color are of their marginalized class status. This may lead them to accept without question their privileged class position. Analysis of the class targeted people of color's papers, in contrast, showed that intersections of various disadvantaged social identities heightens one's awareness of privilege and that they also embody the spirit of John Henryism as a personal striving coping strategy.

The experience of class privileged people of color is quite different. The existence of taboos around discussions of finances and open disclosures of class in the United States suggests that such identities may be especially hard to articulate (Sims, 1951). They may see their own position as an indication that disparities between racial groups are overemphasized without realizing that their social class buffers their marginalized racial position. This finding adds qualitative support to the findings from the previous studies where class privileged people of color were the highest on SDO and lowest on JH.

General Discussion

I found strong support for all of my hypotheses. In both Studies 1 and 2, SDO and JH were negatively correlated with one another. This relationship emerged in both a high SES and low SES context. While this finding holds a great deal of intuitive purchase, this is the first time it has been demonstrated (hypothesis 1). Class x Race interactions emerged for both JH and SDO in Study 1 and Study 2, as well. In both studies, class privileged people of color displayed the highest levels of SDO and the lowest levels of JH (hypothesis 2). In Study 3, a qualitative study looking at narrative expressions of their social identities produced by students of color, I found that

participants generated themes that coincided with SDO and JH. As hypothesized, the narratives of class privileged people of color reflected a greater degree of acceptance of social hierarchy and little regard for the importance of hard work (hypothesis 3), which closely mirrors the quantitative findings.

Taken together, these findings emphasize the interactive effect social class and race has on how we interpret and approach our own marginalized identities. It should be noted that these interactive effects are shaped by the context, as well. In Study 2, I found that those from a comparatively lower socioeconomic context tended to be higher in JH across race and gender. The effects of context also give great insight into why, precisely, class privileged people of color develop a mindset consistent with high levels of SDO and low levels of JH.

I argue that these findings reflect the particular educational context in which this research was conducted. Stewart and Ostrove (1993) argue that higher education is a site of class socialization, one that strives to prepare economically advantaged students to adopt and function in the roles those of their status are expected to take on in the future. A number of researchers have noted that class targeted college students and first-generation college students, those who lack the social capital to easily negotiate such institutions, grapple with issues of 'fit' (Bergerson, 2007; Jones, 2003). Class differences that had been previously hidden may become quite clear when working class students realize that they do not necessarily hold the same expectations and worldviews as their classmates. The combination of additional pressures and burgeoning class awareness makes the transition to college for high-achieving low-income students a rocky one. However, for class privileged students of color, their privileged class identity may serve

as a buffer when they enter higher education. They may find that due to their class identity their transition is easier than it is for class targeted people. Their class identity, unlike their racial or ethnic identity, is congruous with the goals and values of the institutional they find themselves in. As a protective measure, it makes sense that they would adhere to this identity as closely as they can and endorse a perhaps exaggerated version of the worldview endorsed by class privileged Whites.

The findings presented here, when interpreted this way, bear a striking resemblance to Weis' (2006) work on working class White men. Weis (2003) argues that working-class gender ideologies emerge through a process of sexist and racist "othering" used by White working-class men to differentiate themselves from women and people of color. Women are seen as vulnerable, domestic, and dependent, leading working-class men to construct masculinity in terms of the ability to hold down a job, to be the primary or sole economic provider for the household, and also to protect White women from racial and ethnic minority men. Additionally, the categorization of mental labor as feminine leads White working-class men to become academically disengaged and seek occupations that emphasize physical strength or manual dexterity (Argyle, 1994). In essence, these men are emphasizing their maleness and Whiteness for the same reason that class privileged people of color in my studies emphasized their class identity: doing so enables them to fashion an identity which highlights the ways they best fit with their context and downplays the ways in which they don't. Future research is needed to explore how this phenomenon plays out in other contexts with other social identities.

Limitations and Future Directions

83

As noted above, this research focused on social identities within the context of higher education. This research, then, tells us little about how such identities are managed by young adults not pursuing higher education, a group that tends to be chronically understudied. There is some research to suggest that identity may be expressed or form differently among working class young adults not enrolled in college. Morash (1980) compared the identity status frequencies of a group of working class young adult men who had already entered the workplace with previously published middle class samples and found that the working class participants underwent different identity formation processes than their middle class college-bound counterparts. Future research on social class should take care to include both student and non-student populations.

An additional limitation of this work is that there are most certainly differences between various marginalized racial and ethnic groups in how they are affect by racial and classed oppression. Specifically, the Model Minority Myth likely means that East Asian and South Asian people have a different experience within educational settings than other racial groups. East and South Asian people also face a different kind of classed invisibility – unlike Blacks and Latino/as who are never seen as class privileged, Asians are rarely assumed to be class targeted. Unfortunately, the size of my samples and the preponderance of White participants rendered me unable to test these extremely important questions directly. In future work, I hope to explore these issue directly.

Conclusion

Using an intersectional framework, I demonstrated that specific combinations of social identities have very different effects on participants' differential endorsement of

84

SDO and JH. Although previous research has found that people of color in general tend to be low in SDO and high in JH, a more nuanced approach showed that class privileged people of color reacted to these variables very differently than class targeted people of color. Class privileged people of color were found to be higher in SDO and lower in JH than any other group, in some sense endorsing an exaggerated version of the pattern found among the most privileged group, class privileged Whites. I argue that this finding has to be understood with the context of an economically advantaged higher education setting.

References

Argyle, M. (1994). *The psychology of social class*. New York: Routledge.

Bennett, G. G., Merritt, M. M., Edwards, C. L., Whitfield, K. E., Brandon, D. T., &
  Tucker, R. D. (2004). Stress, coping, and health outcomes among African-
  Americans: A review of the John Henryism hypothesis. *Psychology & Health, 19,*
  369-383.

Bergerson, A. A. (2007). Exploring the impact of social class on adjustment to college:
  Anna's story. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 20,* 99-
  119.

Bettie, J. (2003). *Women without class: Girls, race, and identity*. Berkeley: University of
  California Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge
  University Press.

Cheng, C., Sanders, M. R., Sanchez-Burks, J., Molina, K., Lee, F., Darling, E., & Zhao, Y.
  (2008). Reaping the rewards of diversity: The role of identity integration. *Social and
  Personality Psychology Compass*, *2,* 1182-1198.

Christopher, A. N., Zabel, K. L., Jones, J. R., & Marek, P. (2008). Protestant ethic
  ideology: Its multifaceted relationships with just world beliefs, social dominance
  orientation, and right-wing authoritarianism. *Personality and Individual
  Differences, 45,* 473-477.

Cole, E. R. (2009). Intersectionality and research in psychology. *American Psychologist,
  64,* 170-180.

Darling, E., Molina, K., Sanders, M. R., Lee, F., & Zhao, Y. (2008). Belonging and achieving: The role of identity integration. In M. Maehr, S. Karabenick, & T. Urdan (Eds.) *Advances in motivation and achievement: Social psychological perspective on motivation and achievement, volume 15*. Elsevier Press: NY.

Duijkers, T. J., Drijver, M., Kromhout, D., & James, S. A. (1988). 'John Henryism' and blood pressure in a Dutch population. *Psychosomatic Medicine, 50,* 353-359.

Fine, M., Weis, L., Addelston, J., & Marusza, J. (1997). (In)secure times: Constructing white working-class masculinities in the late 20th century. *Gender and Society, 11,* 52-68.

Haritatos, J., Mahalingam, R., & James, S. A. (2007). John Henryism, self-reported physical health indicators, and the mediating role of perceived stress among high socio-economic status Asian immigrants. *Social Sciences & Medicine, 64,* 1192-1203.

Hochschild, J. L. (1995). *Race, class, and the soul of the nation: Facing up to the American Dream.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Hochschild, J. L. (2003). *The American Dream and the public schools*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hurtado, A. (1989). Relating to privilege: Seduction and rejection in the subordination of White women and women of Color. *Signs, 14,* 833-855.

James, S. A. (1994). John Henryism and the health of African-Americans. *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry, 18,* 163-182.

Jones, S. J. (2003). Complex subjectivities: Class, ethnicity, and race in women's narratives of upward mobility. *Journal of Social Issues, 59,* 803-820.

Jost, J. T., & Banaji, M. R. (1994). The role stereotyping in system justification and the

    production of false consciousness. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 33,* 1-27.

Jost, J. T., & Thompson, E. P. (2000). Group-based dominance and opposition to equality

    as independent predictors of self-esteem, ethnocentrism, and social policy

    attitudes among African Americans and European Americans. *Journal of*

    Experimental Social Psychology, 36, 209-232.

Mahalingam, R. (2006). *Cultural psychology of immigrants.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence

    Erbaum Associates Publishers.

Mahalingam, R. (2007). Essentialism, power, and the representation of social categories:

    A folk sociology perspective. *Human Development, 50,* 300-319.

Mahalingam, R., & Leu, J. (2005). Culture, essentialism, immigration and representations

    of gender. *Theory & Psychology, 15,* 839-860.

Miller, D. A., Smith, E. R., & Mackie, D. M. (2004). Effects of intergroup contact and

    political predispositions on prejudice: Role of intergroup emotions. *Group*

    Processes & Intergroup Relations, 7, 221-237.

Morash, M. (1980). Working class membership and the adolescent identity crisis.

    Adolescence, 15, 313-320.

Pratto, F., Liu, J. H., Levin, S., Sidanius, J., Shih, M., Bachrach, H., & Hegarty, P.

    (2000). Social dominance orientation and the legitimization of inequality across

    cultures. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 31,* 369-409.

Pratto, F., Sidanius, J., & Levin, S. (2006). Social dominance theory and the dynamics of

    intergroup relations: Taking stock and looking forward. *European Review of*

    Social Psychology, 17, 271-320.

Sanders, M. R., & Mahalingam, R. (2010). *Essentialism, social dominance and awareness of privilege*. Manuscript submitted for publication.

Schmitt, M. T., Branscombe, N. R., & Kappen, D. M. (2003). Attitudes toward group-based inequality: Social dominance or social identity? *British Journal of Social Psychology, 42,* 161-186.

Sidanius, J., & Pratto, F. (2001). *Social dominance: An intergroup theory of social hierarchy and oppression*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Sims, V. (1951). A technique for measuring social class identification. *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 11,* 541-548.

Stewart, A. J., & McDermott, C. (2004). Gender in psychology. *Annual Review of Psychology, 55,* 519-544.

Stewart, A. J., & Ostrove, J. M. (1993). Social class, social change, and gender: Working-class women at Radcliffe and after. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 17*, 475-497.

Van Loon, J. M., Tijhuis, M., Surtees, P. G., & Ormel, J. (2001). Personality and coping: Their relationship with lifestyle risk factors for cancer. *Personality and Individual Differences, 31,* 541-55.

Weis, L. (2003). Acquiring White working-class identities: Legitimate and silenced discourse within the school. In M. Fine & L. Weis (Eds.), *Silenced voices and extraordinary conversations…re-imagining schools* (pp.88-108). New York: Teachers College Press.

Weis, L. (2006). Masculinity, Whiteness, and the new economy: An exploration of privilege and loss. *Men and Masculinities, 8,* 262-272.

Yoder, J. D., & Aniakudo, P. (1997). 'Outsider within' the firehouse: Subordination and

difference in the social interactions of African American women firefighters.

Gender & Society, 11, 324-341.

Footnotes

[1] The contrast weights for both post-hoc contrasts in Study 1 were as follows: class privileged people of color set at 3, class targeted people of color set at -1, class privileged Whites set at -1, and class targeted Whites set at -1.

[2] Given Pratto, Sidanius, and Levin's (2006) finding that traditionally marginalized groups tend to show lower rates of internal consistency on the SDO scale than privileged groups, this difference in reliability is to be expected.

[3] The contrast weights for this post-hoc contrast in Study 2 are as follows: middle/working class Midwesterners set at 3, upper class Midwesterners set at -1, middle/working class East Texans set at -1, and upper class East Texans set at -1.

[4] The contrast weights for this post-hoc contrast in Study 2 were the same as those used in Study 1. Class privileged people of color were set at 3, class targeted people of color were set at -1, class privileged Whites were set at -1, and class targeted Whites were set at -1.

[5] The contrasts weights for this post-hoc contrast in Study 2 were as follows: class targeted people of color set at 3, class privileged people of color set at -1, class targeted Whites set at -1, and class privileged Whites set at -1.
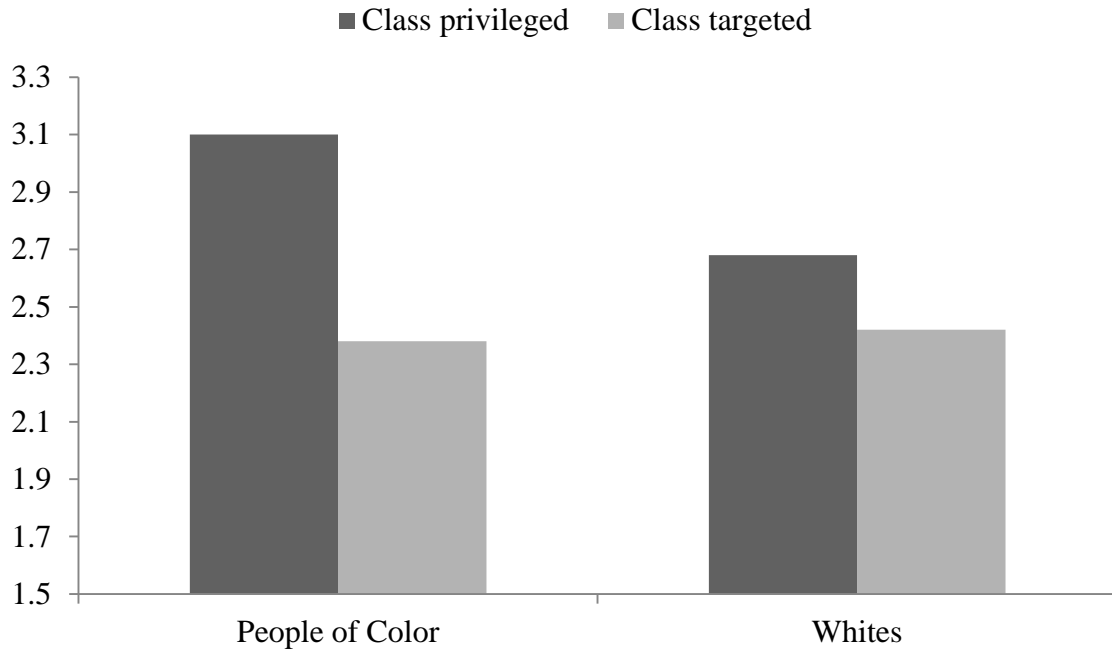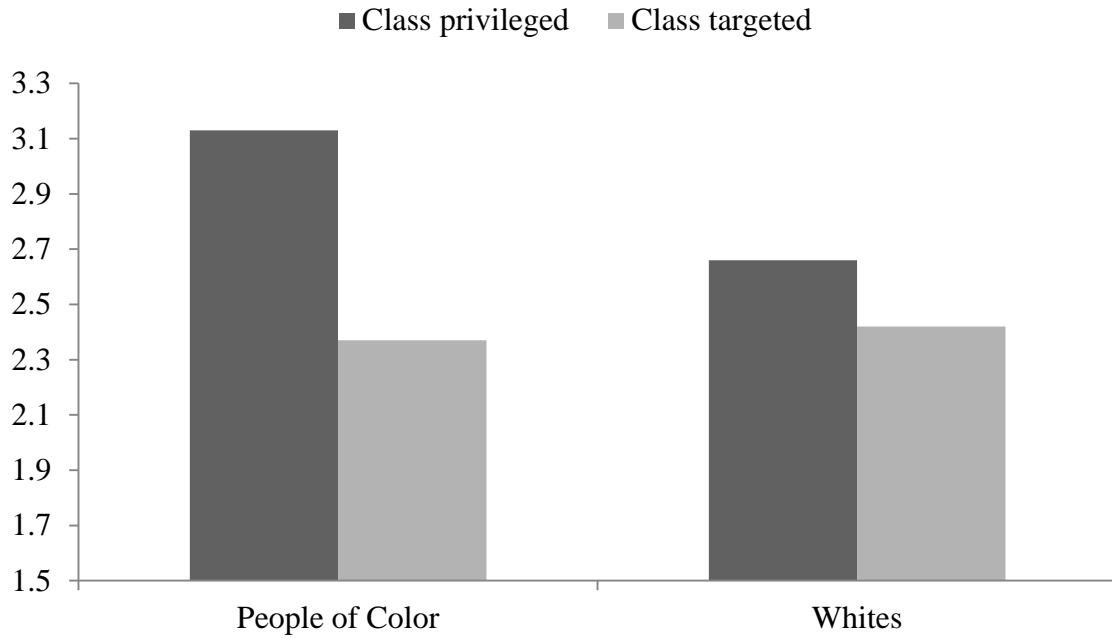
Figure 3.1. Class x Race interaction on SDO in Study 1. The class privileged people of color group was higher in SDO than all other groups.
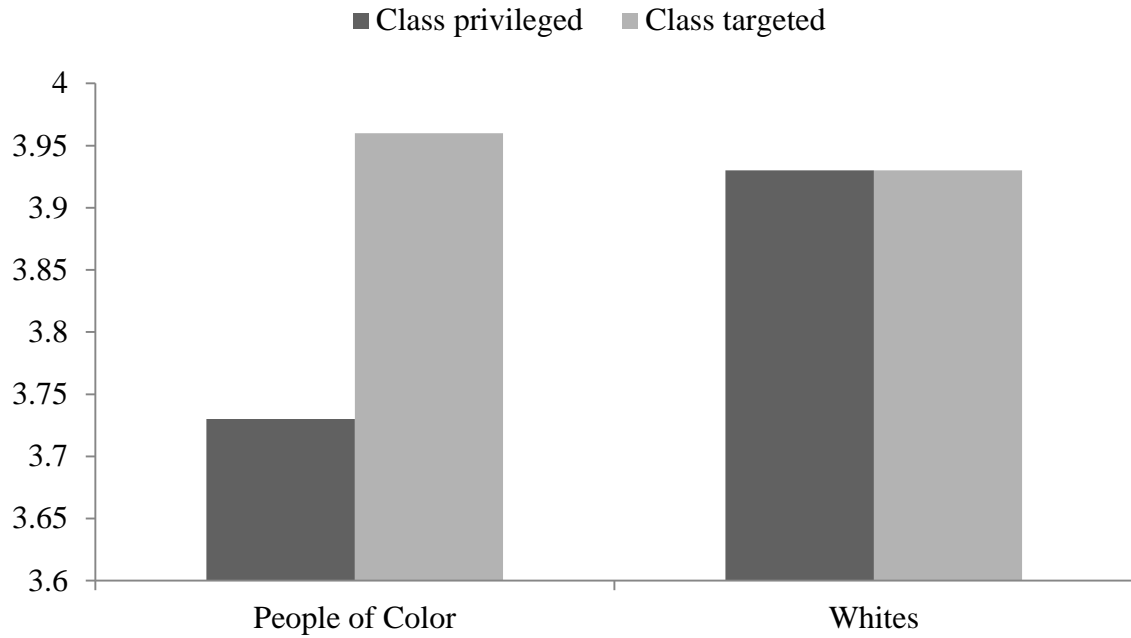
Figure 3.2. Class x Race interaction on JH in Study 1. Class privileged people of color reported lower levels of JH than any other group.
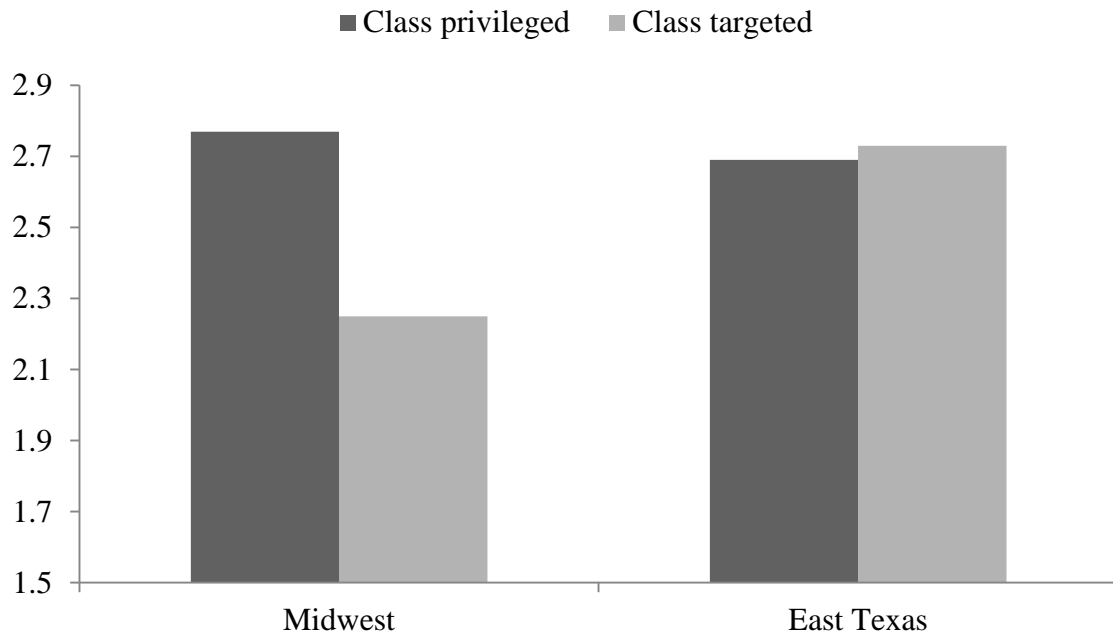
Figure 3.3. Class x Research Site interaction on SDO in Study 2. Middle/working class

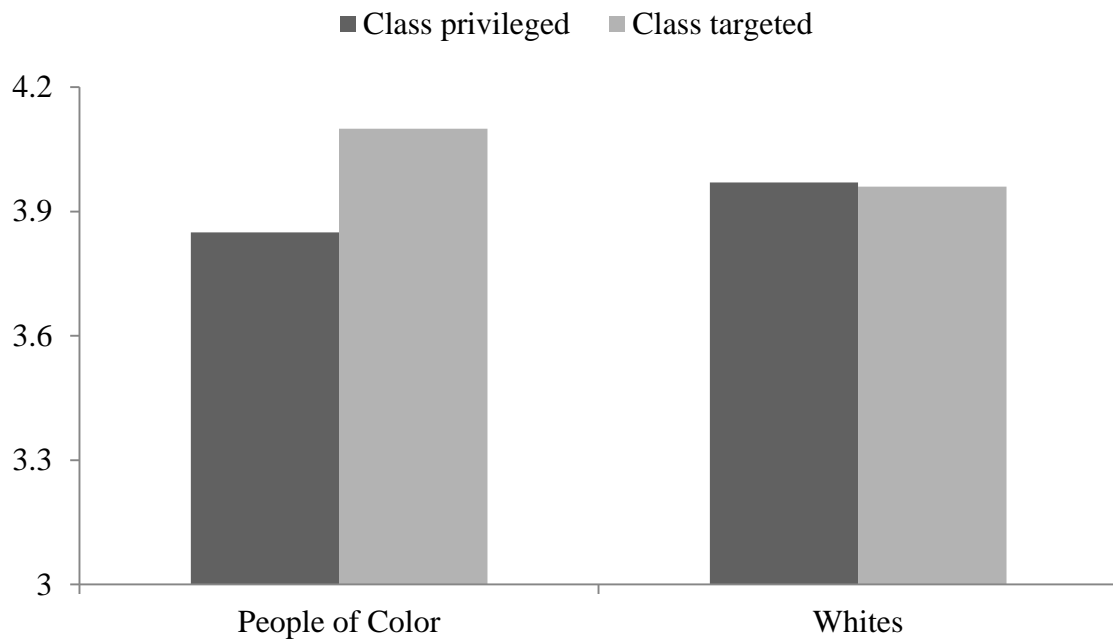participants in the Midwest had lower levels of SDO than all other groups.

Figure 3.4. Class x Race interaction on SDO in Study 2. Class privileged people of color had higher levels of SDO than all other groups.

Figure 3.5. Class x Race interaction on JH in Study 2. Class privileged people of color were found to be lowest in JH and class targeted people of color were found to be highest in JH.

Chapter IV. Essentialism, Social Dominance and Awareness of Privilege

This paper examines the relationship among social dominance orientation (one's attitude toward social hierarchies), privilege awareness and intersectional consciousness. I argue that social dominance orientation is related to an individual's social location, and that these attitudes toward social hierarchies shape one's awareness of privilege and level of intersectional consciousness.

Recently several researchers have called for the need to use an intersectional framework to study the simultaneous impact of multiple social identities (see Shields, 2008 in the Special Issue of *Sex Roles*). Shields (2008) argued that, instead of essentializing gender, we have to study how intersections of social categories simultaneously affect our life experiences. Collins' (2000) construct of the "matrix of domination" elucidates the ways in which structured, hegemonic and interpersonal factors converge to systematically marginalize or privilege certain communities. Using an interdisciplinary framework that integrates critical theory and an intersectional perspective, this research explores the relationships between SDO and beliefs about privilege. Individuals from a privileged social location will score high on ideological beliefs that legitimize existing social hierarchies and economic inequalities, such as social dominance orientation (SDO) and will also essentialize class differences to a stronger degree. High levels of SDO will negatively relate to awareness of various forms of privilege. Finally, privilege awareness will mediate the relationship between SDO and intersectional consciousness. So far, few psychological studies have examined the

relationship between social location, essentialism, social dominance orientation and beliefs about privilege using an intersectional framework.

Theoretical Perspective

Power and Essentialism

Research on essentialism demonstrates that essentialist thinking, or the cognitive bias to perceive social categories as natural and fixed, is embedded in ideological beliefs which justify existing social hierarchies (Hirschfeld, 1996; Mahalingam, 2007a). To this end, there is evidence that those in positions of privilege tend to engage in more essentialist thinking than those in marginalized positions. For example, in a study conducted in India, Mahalingam & Jackson (2007) found that those who scored high on essentialist beliefs about gender were also more likely to endorse violence against women. Similarly, members of dominant caste groups essentialized caste more often than subordinate groups (Mahalingam & Rodriguez, 2006).

Qualitative researchers have found that marginalized group members resist essentialist representations more strongly than dominant group members. In a study of class consciousness among adolescents in a private boarding school, lower income students tried to overcome their marginalized social status by resisting stigmatizing social identities (Kuriloff & Reichert, 2003). In a study on caste identity, Mahalingam found that Dalits resisted discourse about caste as a biologically inherited identity (Mahalingam, 2007a).

Social Dominance Theory and Privilege

Social dominance theory (Levin, 2004; Levin, Federico, Sidanius, & Rabinowitz, 2002; Pratto, Sidanius, & Levin, 2006) explores how privileged social location shapes

attitudes toward social hierarchies. Social dominance theory posits that access to resources differs across notable social categories: age (children vs. adults), gender (men vs. women) and other arbitrary distinctions such as class or race. Social dominance orientation (SDO) is conceptualized as an individual difference variable that describes how individuals understand social hierarchies (Pratto, Sidanius, & Levin, 2006). SDO has also been treated as a general orientation, like a worldview, or alternatively a potentially hierarchy-enhancing ideology.

Using an extensive body of research, psychologists have explored the arbitrary nature of social hierarchies in various societies, specifically why they develop and how they are maintained. According to Pratto, Sidanius, and Levin (2006), individuals from a privileged social location tend to see social hierarchies as natural and acceptable. Such attitudes may reinforce their tendency to support and strengthen hierarchies which then becomes an ideological tool used to justify the benefits and privileges bestowed upon them because of their social location. For example, a substantial body of research has shown that Whites have higher levels of SDO than people of color, and that men have higher levels of SDO than women. SDO is also related to political conservatism, sexist attitudes and disapproval of open immigration policies (Jost & Thompson, 2004; Pratto, Sidanius, & Levin, 2006). Miller, Smith, and Mackie (2004) found that higher levels of SDO were related to more prejudiced attitudes towards Blacks. Research on SDO indicates that those in positions of privilege endorse ideologies that justify existing gender and race-based privileges. They are also more likely to engage in discriminatory practices (Pratto, Sidanius, & Levin, 2006). Taken together, the literature on SDO suggests that it is a hierarchy-supporting worldview which is shaped by the dynamic

99

relationship between privileged social location and internalization of ideological beliefs which naturalize existing social hierarchies.

Intersectionality and Privilege

Crenshaw (1995) proposed an intersectional perspective to study the simultaneous impact of race, class and sexualities on the experience of gender. An understanding of the interlocking influence of social categories allows us to examine the complex and context bound influence of social categories (Cole, 2009; Greenwood, 2008). Cole and Omari (2003) studied the class privileges associated with Blacks from various social locations. Some scholars have focused on the cultural and social capital that comes with various class positions within the Black community (Wilson, 1996). Bergerson (2007) documented the strategies used by students from underprivileged backgrounds to cope with the class pressures of adjusting to the college environment. Fine and Burns (2003) focused on the need to articulate a psychological framework to study how school systems reproduce class privileges through what Hochschild (2003) called 'nested inequalities.'

In her groundbreaking work on White privilege, McIntosh (1988) delineated how privileged identities become invisible and critical pedagogical practices are needed to unpack that invisibility. Ancis and Szymanski (2001) used the narratives of White counseling students to identify the development of privilege awareness among White counselors (see also Sabnani & Ponterotto, 1992). Lawrence and Bunche (1996) found that teaching about White privilege in a multicultural course could serve as a catalyst to help White students as they progress through their development of a critical White identity.

There are two strands of research that use an intersectional framework (for a review, see Mahalingam, Balan & Molina, 2009). Some researchers use an intersectional framework primarily to examine the interplay between social location and social identities (e.g., Cole, 2009). Some researchers have studied intersectionality as a belief system (i.e., a person's awareness that intersecting identities simultaneously affect our lives) to study intergroup attitudes (e.g., Greenwood, 2008). The research presented here integrates both strands of research: I seek to understand how social location impacts the development of intersectional consciousness.

In sum, the research on privilege awareness highlights the need to use an intersectional framework to study how social location shapes ideological beliefs about social hierarchies, privilege and intersectional consciousness. An awareness of aspects of one's privilege or marginalized social status often occurs in contexts where an individual is able to reflect on his/her social location in relation to their peers. Intersectional consciousness serves as a way for individuals to examine societal structures and challenge them, in contrast to SDO and essentialist perspectives, which legitimize systematic inequalities.

The Current Research

This paper draws the research on essentialism, SDO, privilege and intersectionality together. Development of intersectional consciousness will relate to a critical view of structural inequalities (low levels of SDO) and an awareness of the privileges associated with such structural inequalities. Views of structural inequalities are shaped by an individual's social identities. Figure 4.1 describes the relationships among the constructs of interest in the current research.

There is ample reason to think that social location impacts how structural inequalities are understood. Of particular interest are essentialism and SDO, both of which naturalize structural inequalities. Those high in SDO and essentialism see structural inequalities as legitimate and natural, and previous research has demonstrated that those from advantaged backgrounds tend to endorse SDO most strongly. However, the relationship between social location, SDO, and privilege awareness has not yet been examined. The research presented here proposes that perceptions of structural inequality as natural and acceptable lead to less awareness of systemic privilege. Those who come from privileged social location are more likely to engage in essentialist thinking and are more likely to endorse a status-quo reinforcing orientation like SDO because such a naturalization of hierarchies benefits them by legitimizing their privilege. In addition, a lack of awareness of these unearned benefits renders privilege invisible: dominant group members may often assume that their experiences are normative and hold true of all groups, and the complaints of marginalized group members are thought to be a reflection of that individual and not the system at large. Thus, SDO is expected to mediate the relationship between social location and awareness of privilege.

Privilege awareness, in turn, will mediate the relationship between SDO and intersectional consciousness (i.e., the extent to which one understands and endorses intersectional explanations for inequality). Intersectional consciousness is a critical orientation which questions the legitimacy of structural hierarchy. An essential component of this ideology is an understanding of the concept of privilege. Therefore, when SDO endorsement is low, an individual is more likely to have higher levels of

intersectional consciousness because of their deeper understanding of how social structures shape the experience of social identities.

Study 1 explored the relationship between social location, essentialism, SDO and privilege awareness. Social location is hypothesized to shape SDO such that those from privileged backgrounds (men, Whites, the wealthy) will endorse SDO most strongly.

Study 2 examined the relationship among SDO, privilege awareness and intersectional consciousness. Intersectional consciousness is hypothesized to correlate positively with both male privilege awareness and White privilege awareness. SDO is expected to negatively correlate with intersectional consciousness; however, privilege awareness will mediate this relationship.

Study 1

Study 1 explored the relationships between social class essentialism (SCE), SDO, and beliefs participants hold about privilege. Those from privileged social locations (ex: men, Whites, and economically advantaged individuals) will be higher in SDO than those who come from marginalized backgrounds. I hypothesize that SCE and SDO will be positively correlated. SDO will negatively relate to awareness of male and White privilege. Finally, SDO will mediate the relationship between demographic social identities and awareness of these forms of privilege.

Method

Participants. A total of 261 undergraduates enrolled in an introductory psychology course at a large Midwestern university participated and received course credit compensation for the study. Participants signed up to participate in the study through the subject pool website. The content and goals of every study on the subject

pool website are unavailable to participants; participants who took the survey did not know beforehand what the study was about.

Gender was fairly evenly distributed (152 women, 109 men), but race was not (193 White participants, 28 Asian Americans, 9 African Americans, 6 Latino/as, and 25 participants who described their race or ethnicity as 'other'). Participants' ages ranged from 17 years old to 27 years old. The sample was class privileged: over half of the participants (150) reported coming from families who made over $100,000, and 148 participants self-identified as 'upper middle class' or 'upper class'.

Materials.

Social class essentialism. Participants completed an 11-item measure of social class essentialism (SCE, Mahalingam & Gelman, 2001), which measured the extent to which they saw social class as a fixed and unchanging aspect of an individual. Participants used a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 was *strongly disagree* and 7 was *strongly disagree*. This scale includes items that measure participants' beliefs about class mobility ("A person's class identity, such as upper class or poor, will never change.") and tendency to associate traits with social class ("Wealthy people tend to have better verbal skills than poor people."). This scale was somewhat reliable ($\alpha = .52$) and higher scores indicate a greater tendency to essentialize social class. See Appendix 4.1 for the full text of all items on this scale.

Social dominance orientation. Participants also completed Sidanius and Pratto's (2001) social dominance orientation (SDO) scale, a 16-item scale that measures an individual's tendency to see inequality and social hierarchies as natural and acceptable ("It is okay if some groups have more of a chance in life than others."; "Some groups of

104

people are simply inferior to other groups"). Participants rated the items using the same 7-point Likert scale as used with the SCE scale. This scale was found to be highly reliable ($\alpha = .93$) and higher scores suggest a more socially dominant outlook.

Intersectional consciousness. Intersectional consciousness was measured using a scale developed by Greenwood (2008). Participants rated five items ("Understanding the life experiences of women from different ethnic groups helps women to achieve our goals."; "In order to achieve the changes we seek, we must fight racism as well as sexism."; "Black and White women experience sexism in different ways."; "Sex and race are inseparable issues in the lives of women."; "All oppressions are tied together.") using the same 7-point Likert scale used with the other measures, and was somewhat reliable ($\alpha = .59$). Higher scores on this measure indicated higher levels of intersectional consciousness.

Privilege awareness. Participants completed two measures which measure individuals' male privilege awareness and White privilege awareness. The male privilege awareness scale (Case, 2007a) contained seven items that explored the extent to which the participant saw inequalities between men and women in society today ("Men automatically have more opportunities than women in employment and education."; "Women and men have equal chances at success in this country. (R)") and was acceptably reliable ($\alpha = .73$).

The six item White privilege awareness scale (Case, 2007b) assessed participants' perceptions of the prevalence of race-based inequalities ("Whites are at an advantage because their cultural values determine what is normal."; "Just as non-Whites are the disadvantaged, Whites are the advantaged.") and was reliable ($\alpha = .80$). Both scales used

the 7-point Likert response scale used with the other measures, and higher scores indicated greater awareness of the existence of these kinds of privilege.

Procedure. Participants signed up to participate using an online system and were emailed a link to a web-based survey. After obtaining written consent, participants completed the SCE scale, SDO scale, and measures of intersectional consciousness, male privilege awareness and White privilege awareness. They then completed a short demographics questionnaire which asked them to provide their age, gender and race/ethnicity. Additionally, they were asked to provide their subjective class by indicating if they saw themselves as a member of the *lower working class, working class, lower middle class, middle class, upper middle class,* or *upper class*. Finally, participants were then thanked, debriefed, and given course credit for their participation.

Results

Preliminary analyses. Since the number of participants of any minority racial or ethnic category was small enough to preclude meaningful analyses between them, I created a binary categorical variable for race, which resulted in 193 White participants and 68 participants of color. Likewise, a binary categorical variable was created for class. Median splits showed that roughly half of the participants identified as either upper class or upper middle class. These two labels were collapsed into an class privileged group (*n* = 147) and all other labels were collapsed to form a class targeted (*n* = 115). These binary variables are used throughout the analyses.

Main analyses. Bivariate correlations were run on all outcome variables (see Table 4.1). As hypothesized, SDO and SCE were positively correlated, $r(265) = .32, p <$ .001. SDO negatively correlated with intersectional consciousness, male privilege

awareness, and White privilege awareness. SCE negatively correlated with intersectional consciousness and was not found to be related to either of the awareness of privilege variables. Intersectional consciousness, male privilege awareness, and White privilege awareness positively correlated with each other.

A series of ANOVAs were run on each of the outcome variables with gender, class, and race entered as the fixed factors. Men ($M = 3.79$, $SD = .43$) reported marginally higher levels of SCE than women ($M = 3.64$, $SD = .43$), $F(1, 252) = 3.12$, $p = .08$. Class privileged participants ($M = 3.78$, $SD = .51$) reported significantly higher levels of SCE than class targeted participants ($M = 3.60$, $SD = .44$), $F(1, 252) = 12.50$, $p < .001$. No race differences on SCE were found.

Consistent with past research, men ($M = 2.85$, $SD = 1.09$) were higher in SDO than women ($M = 2.31$, $SD = .90$), $F(1, 253) = 18.59$, $p < .001$. Class privileged participants ($M = 2.76$, $SD = 1.05$) were higher in SDO than class targeted participants ($M = 2.25$, $SD = .90$), $F(1, 253) = 25.96$, $p < .001$. Participants of color ($M = 2.63$, $SD = 1.10$) had higher levels of SDO than Whites ($M = 2.51$, $SD = .99$; $F(1, 253) = 5.73$, $p = .02$), but this unexpected finding was qualified by a significant Class x Race interaction, $F(1, 253) = 5.25$, $p = .02$ (see Figure 4.2). Post-hoc pairwise comparisons revealed that while there was no difference in SDO among White participants, class privileged people of color ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 1.03$) had significantly higher levels of SDO than either class privileged Whites ($M = 2.66$, $SD = 1.03$; $t(148) = -2.65$, $p = .01$) or class targeted participants of color ($M = 2.20$, $SD = .95$; $t(66) = -4.24$, $p < .001$).

Women ($M = 4.73$, $SD = .79$) had higher levels of intersectional consciousness than men ($M = 4.37$, $SD = .82$), $F(1, 253) = 7.86$, $p = .01$. Class targeted participants (M

107

= 4.63, *SD* = .85) had marginally higher levels of intersectional consciousness than class privileged participants (*M* = 4.51, *SD* = .81), *F*(1, 253) = 2.86, *p* = .09. No race differences on intersectional consciousness were found.

Participants of color (*M* = 4.69, *SD* = 1.15) were marginally more aware of White privilege than White participants (*M* = 4.30, *SD* = 1.04), *F*(1, 253) = 3.01, *p* = .08. Class targeted participants (*M* = 4.53, *SD* = 1.09) were more aware of White privilege than class privileged participants (*M* = 4.31, *SD* = 1.06), *F*(1, 253) = 3.73, *p* = .05. No gender differences on awareness of White privilege were found.

Women (*M* = 4.75, *SD* = .98) were more aware of male privilege than men (*M* = 4.20, *SD* = 1.05), *F*(1, 253) = 15.09, *p* < .001. Class targeted participants (*M* = 4.64, *SD* = 1.10) were more aware of male privilege than class privileged participants (*M* = 4.42, *SD* = 1.00), *F* (1, 253) = 5.06, *p* = .02. No race differences on awareness of male privilege were found. Taken together, these results provide support for my hypothesis that social location is related to ideological endorsement and beliefs about privilege.

Using the steps outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986), a series of regressions were used to test if the relationship between SCE and intersectional consciousness was mediated by SDO. As found in the bivariate correlations, SCE significantly negatively correlated with intersectional consciousness, R^2 = .02, *F*(1, 262) = 4.61, *p* = .03. SCE significantly positively correlated with SDO, R^2 = .10, *F*(1, 262) = 29.87, *p* < .001. SDO, in turn, was found to significantly negatively correlate to intersectional consciousness, R^2 = .14, *F*(1, 262) = 42.94, *p* < .001. When both SCE and SDO were included in a regression on intersectional consciousness, SDO fully mediated the relationship between

intersectional consciousness and SCE, $R^2 = .13$, $\Delta R^2 = .14$, $F(2, 261) = 20.46$, $p < .001$

(see Figure 4.3).

Discussion

Gender and class were related to both SCE and SDO in the proposed directions.

Men and class privileged participants, both in positions of privilege, scored high in both

SCE and SDO. Interestingly, race had no impact on SCE, and contrary to what was

hypothesized, participants of color were higher in SDO than Whites were. However, the

Class x Race interaction showed that this effect was driven by class privileged people of

color, suggesting that this particular group may be adopting a more socially dominant

view than other groups.

As predicted, SDO and SCE were positively correlated with one another. I found

that SDO was negatively related to awareness of privilege and that those high in SDO

and SCE had lower levels of intersectional consciousness. As predicted, SDO fully

mediated the relationship between SCE and intersectional consciousness. This research

suggests that various aspects of social location, such as race, class and gender contribute

to essentialist beliefs about social class which positively relate to SDO, and thereby have

indirect effects on awareness of privilege.

It should be noted that the SCE scale created for and used in this study had low

reliability. The findings from this scale, then, should be taken with caution. While SCE

did correlate in the hypothesized directions with SDO and intersectional consciousness,

due to the issues with the scale's reliability it is unclear what, precisely, was being tested.

The SCE scale proposed that class disparities have two related causes: innate

characteristics and the fixedness of those characteristics. It is not obvious from these

analyses whether the relationships found in these analyses reflect a belief that classed characteristics are innate or a belief that they are fixed. Furthermore, the idea of fixedness, specifically in an American context which reifies class mobility, may have contributed to the low reliability of the items. While it is likely that essentialism of class plays an important role in the development of attitudes and beliefs about class privilege, much work needs to be done on this scale to make it a viable and useful tool in future research. However, the hypothesized link between SCE and SDO was found. In spite of issues with reliability, Study 1 established that there may be a direct relationship between essentialism and beliefs about social hierarchies. Study 2 examines how these beliefs about social hierarchies directly and indirectly relate to beliefs about privilege.

Study 2

Study 2 examined the indirect effects of SDO and the direct effects of privilege awareness on intersectional consciousness. Intersectional consciousness will correlate positively with both male privilege awareness and White privilege awareness. As in Study 1, SDO will negatively correlate with both privilege awareness variables. SDO is also expected to negatively correlate with intersectional consciousness; however, privilege awareness will mediate this relationship. The proposed mediation will be tested separately with male privilege awareness and White privilege awareness but is expected to hold across both variables.

Method

Participants. A total of 122 undergraduates at a large Midwestern university enrolled in an introductory psychology course participated in this study and received course credit as compensation. Participants for this study were recruited using the same

established subject pool policies described in Study 1.The sample included 72 men and 50 women. Again, the racial distribution was skewed, with 80 Whites, 17 Asian Americans, 6 African Americans, 7 Latino/as, and 12 participants who identified their race or ethnicity as 'other'. Participants' ages ranged from 17 years old to 21 years old. The sample was class privileged: half of the participants (66) reported coming from families who made over $100,000, and 69 participants self-identified as "upper middle class" or "upper class" (full demographic data on class is available in Table 4.1).

Materials. Participants completed the same SDO scale ($\alpha = .89$), measures of White privilege awareness ($\alpha = .82$) and male privilege awareness ($\alpha = .89$), and intersectional consciousness ($\alpha = .75$) used in Study 1.

Procedure. The study was conducted online using the same procedure as Study 1. Participants completed measures of SDO, privilege awareness and intersectional consciousness. Participants also completed a demographic questionnaire identical to the one used in Study 1.

Results

Two hypothesized mediating pathways were tested using the same four-step mediational analysis used in Study 1. The following analyses explored whether awareness of multiple forms of privilege mediated the relationship between SDO and intersectional consciousness. The mediational analyses were conducted with White privilege awareness and male privilege awareness separately. As a first step, bivariate correlations were conducted between all variables of interest (Table 4.2). White privilege awareness, male privilege awareness and intersectional consciousness were all positively intercorrelated. SDO negatively correlated with all other variables. In all following

analyses, race and gender were included as covariates. Unless otherwise specified, race and gender were not significant.

White privilege awareness was hypothesized to mediate the relationship between SDO and intersectional consciousness. Gender (where women were coded as 1 and men were coded as 0) positively predicted intersectional consciousness, and SDO negatively predicted intersectional consciousness, $R^2 = .12$, $F(3, 117) = 5.26$, $p = .002$. Gender and White privilege awareness positively predicted intersectional consciousness, $R^2 = .30$, $F(3, 117) = 16.52$, $p < .001$. SDO and race predicted White privilege awareness, $R^2 = .12$, $F(3, 117) = 5.40$, $p = .002$. When SDO, White privilege awareness, gender and race were included in a regression on intersectional consciousness, White privilege awareness fully mediated the relationship between SDO and intersectional consciousness, $R^2 = .31$, $\Delta R^2 = .29$, $F(4, 116) = 13.05$, $p < .001$ (Figure 4.4).

Male privilege awareness was also hypothesized to mediate the relationship between SDO and intersectional consciousness. Again, gender positively predicted and SDO negatively predicted intersectional consciousness, $R^2 = .12$, $F(3, 117) = 5.26$, $p = .002$. Male privilege awareness positively predicted intersectional consciousness, $R^2 = .34$, $F(3, 117) = 19.98$, $p < .001$. SDO, race and gender predicted male privilege awareness, $R^2 = .16$, $F(3, 117) = 7.45$, $p < .002$. When SDO, male privilege awareness, gender and race were included in a regression on intersectional consciousness, male privilege awareness fully mediated the relationship between SDO and intersectional consciousness, $R^2 = .35$, $\Delta R^2 = .35$, $F(4, 116) = 15.88$, $p < .001$ (Figure 4.5).

Discussion

All hypotheses were supported. SDO negatively correlated with both privilege awareness and intersectional consciousness (which replicated Study 1). Privilege awareness emerged as a full mediator of the relationship between SDO and intersectional consciousness. Taken together, these findings suggest that privilege awareness is a necessary component of intersectional consciousness. The lack of a direct relationship between SDO and intersectional consciousness suggests that a critical understanding of structural inequality requires an awareness of privilege to take root. It is possible that an awareness of privilege represents a practical understanding of how structural inequalities function and are perpetuated. With such a deep level of understanding it may be easier to critique the validity of such structures.

General Discussion

Taken together, these findings demonstrate the relationship between essentialism, SDO, intersectional awareness and awareness of various privileges. I argue that essentialism underpins ideological beliefs about social hierarchies and attitudes about privileges (Mahalingam, 2007b). Although several social psychologists have theorized the relationship between essentialism and the naturalization of social categories, very few researchers have empirically investigated the relationship between essentialism, SDO and attitude toward privileges (Mahalingam & Jackson, 2007).

Study 1 established that participants with privileged identities would score high on SDO and low on awareness of privilege associated with their identities and low on intersectional consciousness. The results were in the expected directions. People of color were more aware of White privilege than Whites and women were more aware of male privilege than men in both studies. Class targeted participants tended to be more aware

113

of male and White privilege than their class privileged counterparts, regardless of gender or race. Marginalized social identities might also increase a critical awareness of other targeted identities. Study 1 also established that SDO negatively correlated with privilege awareness and intersectional consciousness. Higher levels of intersectional consciousness may in general increase a general awareness of privilege, power and essentialist representations of social class.

In Study 2, I replicated the relationship between SDO, privilege awareness, and intersectional consciousness. These findings were extended by a more detailed and nuanced exploration of these relationships. Both male and White privilege awareness mediated the relationship between SDO and intersectional consciousness. These findings shed light on how social location, SDO, privilege awareness and intersectional consciousness are related. Specifically, these results suggest that there may be an underlying process or set of mechanisms driving these relationships. Given that SDO mediated the relationship between social location and privilege awareness, and that privilege awareness in turn mediated the relationship between intersectional consciousness and SDO, this suggests that a multi-step process may be in place. While this data is only correlational in nature and cannot by itself establish causal links between these variables, social location may shape the endorsement of ideological worldviews. Taken together, these findings suggest that worldviews – in this case, SDO – shape perceptions of privilege in nuanced ways.

Intersectionality provides a more nuanced theoretical vantage point to illustrate the fluidity and multiplicity of our identities and privileges associated with such identities. SDO and awareness of privilege fully mediate the relationship between

essentialist beliefs about social class and intersectional consciousness. Social psychological research on power and social status will benefit by incorporating the emerging body of research on intersectionality and its relevance to the study of social identities and power. This research is an illustration of how essentialism, SDO, privilege and intersectional consciousness together shape our attitudes toward social categories such as social class.

Limitations

A major limitation of this work is that it was conducted solely on college students. Additionally, the majority of these students were White and class privileged, and my sample had relatively low variability on both these demographic categories. Although I was unable to test it, I would argue that individuals from different ethnic minority groups would not necessarily respond the same way. In terms of social class, findings regarding lower income students would not necessarily generalize to lower income young adults not in higher education.

The social class essentialism (SCE) scale also had a low reliability. Social class may be a more diffused and less visible social category compared to gender and race. In America, there is little direct discourse about social class. Often when it is discussed, it is conflated with race. This lack of clear language may have contributed to some confusion about the scale on the part of the participants.

Conclusions

I proposed a theoretical framework to study the relationship essentialist beliefs about social class, SDO, privilege awareness and intersectional consciousness. Essentialist beliefs about social class relate to SDO, which in turn relates to awareness of

various forms of privilege. Individuals' levels of awareness of privilege then shape their feelings of warmth towards marginalized group members. Intersecting social identities, such as class-gender status and race-gender status, impact SDO as well. SDO and awareness of privilege are critical variables in shaping the relationship between essentialist beliefs about social class and intersectional consciousness. Awareness of privilege, power, and social identities shape our intersectional consciousness.

References

Ancis, J. R., & Szymanski, D. M. (2001). Awareness of White privilege among White counseling trainees. *The Counseling Psychologist*, *29*, 548-569.

Baron, R. M., & Kenny, D. A. (1986). The moderator-mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: Conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51,* 1173-1182.

Bergerson, A. A. (2007). Exploring the impact of social class on adjustment to college: Anna's story. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 20,* 99-119.

Case, K. A. (2007a). Raising male privilege awareness and reducing sexism: An evaluation of diversity courses. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 31,* 426-435.

Case, K.A. (2007b). Raising white privilege awareness and reducing racial prejudice: Assessing diversity course effectiveness. *Teaching of Psychology, 34*, 231-235.

Cole, E. R. (2009). Intersectionality and research in psychology. *American Psychologist, 64,* 170-180.

Cole, E. R., & Omari, S. R. (2003). Race, class and the dilemmas of upward mobility for African Americans. *Journal of Social Issues, 59,* 785-802.

Crenshaw, K. W. (1995). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. In K. Crenshaw, N. Gotanda, G. Peller, &. K. Thomas (Eds.), *Critical race theory: The key writings that formed the movement.* (pp. 357-383). New York: The New Press.

Croll, P. R. (2007). Modeling determinants of White racial identity: Results from a new national survey. *Social Forces, 86,* 613-642.

Fine, M., & Burns, A. (2003). Class notes: Towards a critical psychology of class and schooling. *Journal of Social Issues, 59*, 841-860.

Frank, K. (2007). Thinking critically about strip club research. *Sexualities, 10,* 501-517.

Garriot, P. O., Love, K. M., & Tyler, K. M. (2008). Anti-Black racism, self-esteem, and the adjustment of White students in higher education. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 1,* 45-58.

Greenwood, R. M. (2008). Intersectional political consciousness: Appreciation for intragroup differences and solidarity in diverse groups. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 32,* 36-47.

Helms, J. E. (1990). *Black and White racial identity: Theory, research, and practice.* New York: Greenwood Press.

Hirschfeld, L. A. (1996). *Race in the making: Cognition, culture, and the child's construction of human kinds.* Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Hochschild, J. L. (2003). Social class in public schools. *Journal of Social Issues, 59,* 821-840.

Jones, S. J. (2003). Complex subjectivities: Class, ethnicity, and race in women's narratives of upward mobility. *Journal of Social Issues, 59,* 803-820.

Jost, J. T., & Banaji, M. R. (1994) The role stereotyping in system justification and the production of false consciousness. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 33,* 1-27.

Jost, J. T., & Thompson, E. P. (2000). Group-based dominance and opposition to equality as independent predictors of self-esteem, ethnocentrism, and social policy attitudes among African Americans and European Americans. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 36,* 209-232.

Kuriloff, P., & Reichert, M. C. (2003). Boys of class, boys of color: Negotiating the

    academic and social geography of an elite independent school. *Journal of Social*

    Issues, 59, 751-769.

Lawrence, S. M., & Bunche, T. (1996). Feeling and dealing: Teaching White students

    about racial privilege. *Scandinavian Audiology Supplement, 25,* 531-542.

Mahalingam, R. (2003). Essentialism, culture, and power: Representations of social class.

    Journal of Social Issues, 59, 733-749.

Mahalingam, R. (2006). *Cultural psychology of immigrants.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence

    Erbaum Associates Publishers.

Mahalingam, R. (2007a). Beliefs about chastity, machismo, and caste identity: A cultural

    psychology of gender. *Sex Roles, 56,* 239-249.

Mahalingam, R. (2007b). Essentialism, power, and the representation of social

    categories: A folk sociology perspective. *Human Development, 50,* 300-319.

Mahalingam, R., Balan, S., & Haritatos, J. (2008). Engendering immigrant psychology:

    An intersectionality perspective. *Sex Roles, 59,* 326-336.

Mahalingam, R., & Gelman, S. A. (2001). *Essentialist beliefs about social identities*

    scale. University of Michigan.

Mahalingam, R., & Jackson, B. (2007). Idealized cultural beliefs about gender:

    Implications for mental health. *Social Psychology and Psychiatric Epidemiology,*

    42, 1012-1023.

Mahalingam, R., & Rodriguez, J. (2006). Culture, brain transplants, and implicit theories

    of identity. *Journal of Cognition and Culture, 63,* 453-462.

McIntosh, P. (2003). White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack. In S. Plous
(Ed.), *Understanding prejudice and discrimination* (pp. 191-196). Boston:
McGraw-Hill.

Miller, D. A., Smith, E. R., & Mackie, D. M. (2004). Effects of intergroup contact and
political predispositions on prejudice: Role of intergroup emotions. *Group
Processes & Intergroup Relations, 7,* 221-237.

Mulvey, A., Terenzio, M., Hill, J., Bond, M. A., Huygens, I., Hamerton, H. R., Cahill, S.
(2000). Stories of relative privilege: Power and social change in feminist
community psychology. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 28,* 883-
911.

Pratto, F., Liu, J. H., Levin, S., Sidanius, J., Shih, M., Bachrach, H., & Hegarty, P.
(2000). Social dominance orientation and the legitimization of inequality across
cultures. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology,31,* 369-409.

Pratto, F., Sidanius, J., & Levin, S. (2006). Social dominance theory and the dynamics of
intergroup relations: Taking stock and looking forward. *European Review of
Social Psychology, 17,* 271-320.

Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton
University Press.

Sabnani, H., & Ponterotto, J. G. (1992). Racial/ethnic minority-specific instrumentation
in counseling research: A review, critique, and recommendations. *Measurement
and Evaluation in Counseling and Development, 24,* 161-187.

Sidanius, J., Levin, S., Federico, C. M. & Pratto, F. (2001). Legitimizing ideologies: The
social dominance approach. In J. Jost & B. Major (Eds.), *The psychology of*

legitimacy: Emerging perspectives on ideology, justice, and intergroup relations

(pp. 307-331). Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Sidanius, J., & Pratto, F.(2001). *Social Dominance: An Intergroup Theory of Social*

Hierarchy and Oppression. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Sue, D. W. (2006). The invisible Whiteness of being: Whiteness, White supremacy,

White privilege, and racism. In M. Constantine (Ed.), *Addressing racism:*

Facilitating cultural competence in mental health and educational settings (pp.

15-30). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Van Every, J. (1995). Heterosexuality, heterosex, and heterosexual privilege. *Feminist &*

Psychology, 5, 140-144.

Wilcox, C., Sigelman, L., & Cook, E. (1989). Some like it hot: Individual differences in

responses to group feeling thermometers. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 53,* 246-257.

Wilson, C. A. (1996). *Racism: From slavery to advanced capitalism.* Thousand Oaks,

CA: Sage.

Table 4.1

Study 1: Correlations Between Outcome Variables

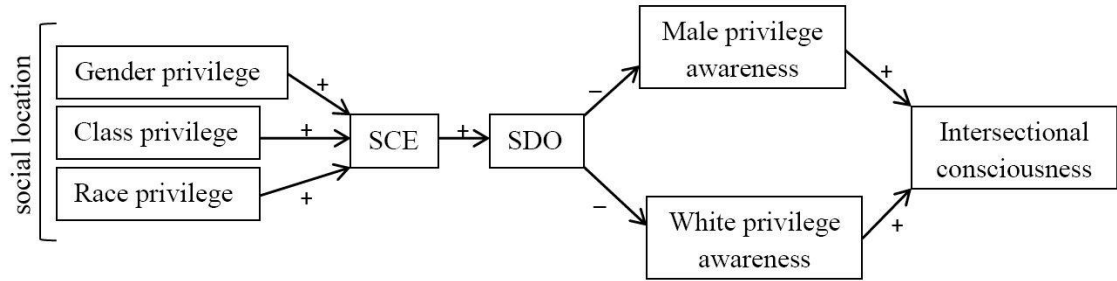|	SCE	Intersectional consciousness	Awareness of male privilege	Awareness of White privilege
SDO	.32**	-.37**	-.23**	-.21**
SCE	--	-.13*	.02	-.05
Intersectional consciousness	--	--	.51**	.48**
Awareness of male privilege	--	--	--	.54**

* *p* < .05
** *p* < .001

Table 4.2

Study 2: Correlations Between Outcome Variables

	Intersectional consciousness	Awareness of White privilege	Awareness of male privilege
SDO	-.30**	-.26*	-.26*
Intersectional consciousness	--	.49**	.56**
Awareness of White Privilege	--	--	.64**

* *p* < .05
**p < .001
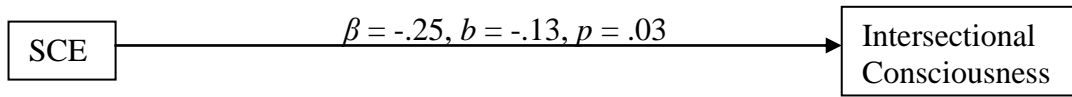
Figure 4.1. Proposed conceptual model outlining the direct and indirect effects of SDO

and SCE on privilege awareness and intersectional consciousness.
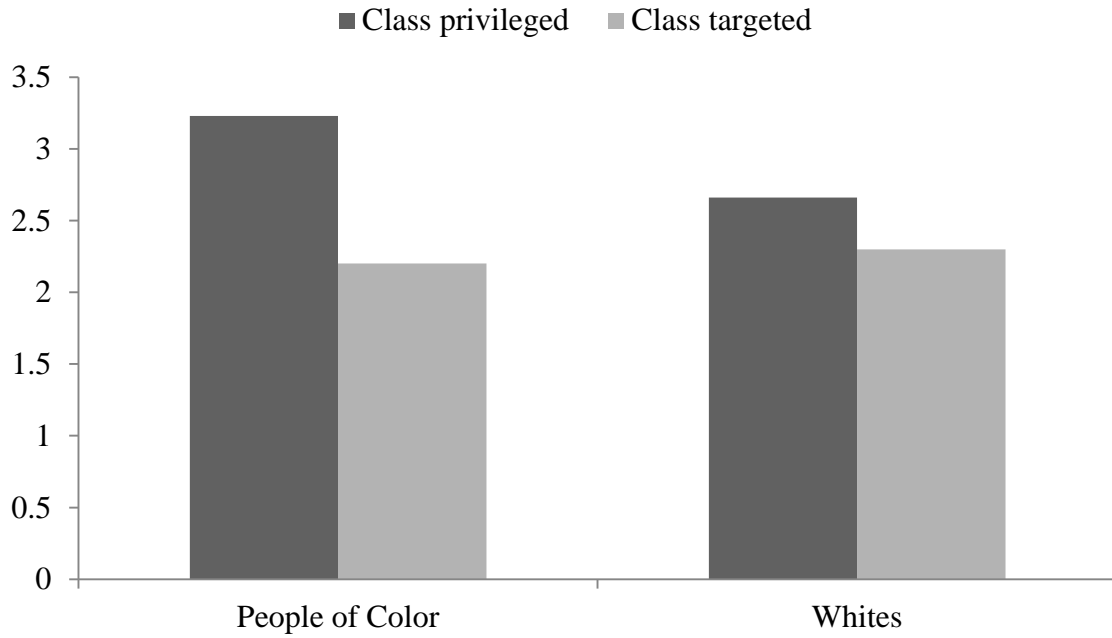
Figure 4.2. Class x Race interaction on SDO in Study 1. Class privileged people of color were found to have higher levels of SDO than all other groups.

SCE ────── $\beta = -.25, b = -.13, p = .03$ ──────→ Intersectional Consciousness

a) Direct pathway

SCE ┄┄┄┄┄ $\beta = -.03, b = -.02, p = .80$ ┄┄┄┄┄→ Intersectional Consciousness

$\beta = .76,$
$b = .32,$
$p < .001$

$\beta = -.29,$
$b = -.36,$
$p < .001$

SDO
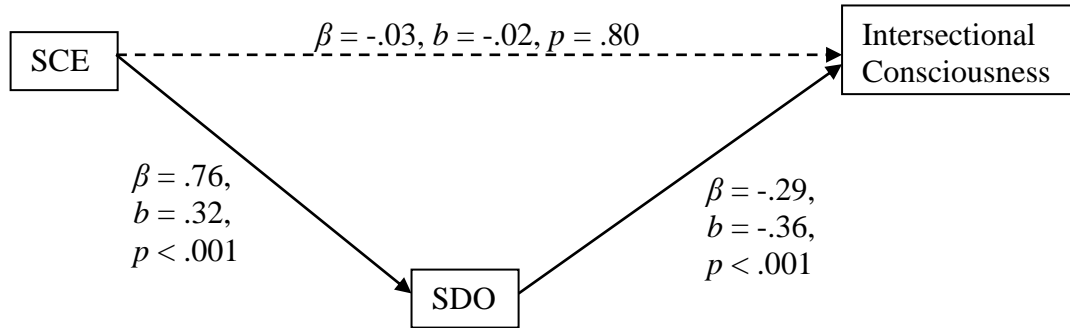
b) Mediated pathway

Figure 4.3. Mediational analysis of SCE, SDO and intersectional consciousness in Study 1. SDO was found to fully mediate the relationship between SCE and intersectional consciousness.

$\beta = -.25, b = -.34, p = .005$

SDO

Intersectional Consciousness
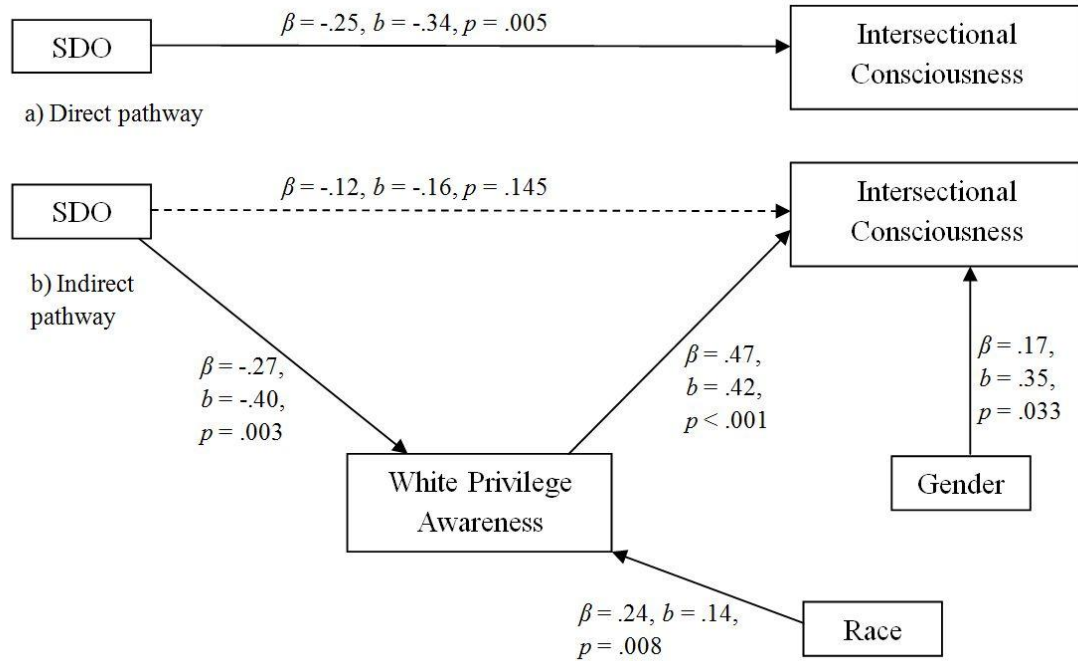
a) Direct pathway

$\beta = -.12, b = -.16, p = .145$

SDO

Intersectional Consciousness

b) Indirect pathway

$\beta = -.27,$
$b = -.40,$
$p = .003$

$\beta = .47,$
$b = .42,$
$p < .001$

$\beta = .17,$
$b = .35,$
$p = .033$

White Privilege Awareness

Gender

$\beta = .24, b = .14,$
$p = .008$

Race

Figure 4.4. Mediational analysis of SDO, White privilege awareness, and intersectional consciousness in Study 2. White privilege awareness fully mediated the relationship between SDO and intersectional consciousness. Gender and race were controlled for in this analysis.
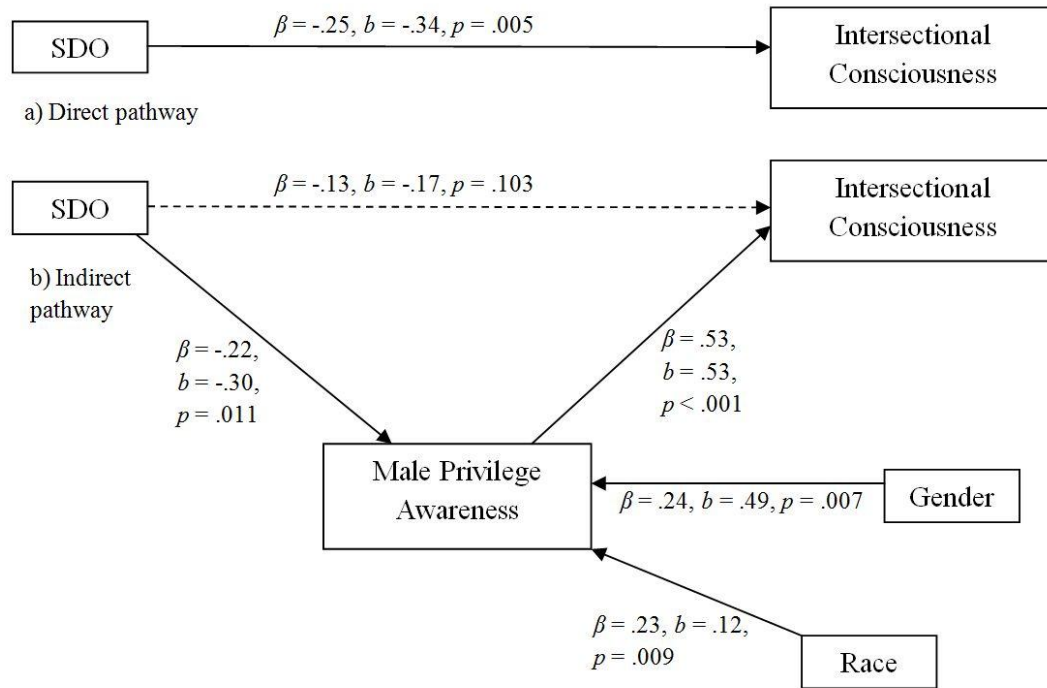
Figure 4.5. Mediational analysis of SDO, male privilege awareness, and intersectional consciousness in Study 2. Male privilege awareness fully mediated the relationship between SDO and intersectional consciousness. Gender and race were controlled for in this analysis.

Appendix 4.1: Social Class Essentialism (SCE) Scale
(Mahalingam & Gelman, 2001)

Please read each item below carefully and rate how much you agree or disagree with each statement using the scale below:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Slightly Disagree**	**Neither Agree or Disagree**	**Slightly Agree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**

1.	Social class differences are the result of upbringing and social influences.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	A person's class identity, such as upper class or poor, will never change.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	Wealthy people tend to have better verbal skills than poor people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	A poor person's class identity can be altered by acquiring wealth.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	Poor people are more creative than wealthy people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	Rich people tend to be less hardworking than poor people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	There are no essential differences between the rich and poor.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8.	Poor people have less math ability than rich people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.	A rich person will still maintain his/her class identity even after loosing his/her wealth.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10.	A person's class identity, such as being rich or poor, is inherited from their parents.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11.	Poor people are more generous than wealthy people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Chapter V. Conclusions and General Discussion

Social class is a central and relevant topic of investigation for psychologists interested in the formation and experience of social identities. Though often overlooked in American society, social class is a complex construct which influences social attitudes and perceptions of social structures. The multidimensionality of social class requires that researchers approach it with careful thought; like many other formative social identities, multiple methodologies are needed to fully explore the impact class has on our behaviors, beliefs, and reactions to the world around us. This chapter discusses how the relevance of findings from chapters II, III, and IV on the psychological study of social class. The theoretical contribution of this work will be discussed, as well as limitations of the current research and possible future directions.

Summary of Findings

The current work contributes to identity theory with a specific focus on the interplay between privilege, discourse and social context. Chapter II explored issues pertaining to the of ***measurement social class*** and established that social class is influenced by objective material conditions, but also becomes internalized and manifests as a subjectively experienced identity. This chapter addressed the social construction of class by triangulating the objective, subjective and the lived experience of class using both qualitative and quantitative methods. This multi-method approach explored the breadth and nuance of social class identity, where objective and subjective aspects of social class interact and mutually reinforce one another. Objective measures − such as

130

income or education level – positively correlated with measures of subjective class identification, but they were not interchangeable. Objective, subjective, and projective measures predicted attitudes towards different groups despite the fact that they correlated with one another. Furthermore, descriptive analysis of the relationship between class context, self-ascribed class identity label and self-reported objective class criteria revealed that the same objective criteria (in this case, level of income) was interpreted differently by individuals depending on the overarching class level of the broader context. The level of income used as a heuristic cutoff for what constitutes 'middle class' differed in an economically privileged context than in an economically disadvantaged context. The combination of these findings shows the complexity of social class as a psychological construct: its dimensions are related but still distinct, and it exists as both a characteristic of individual and the context the individual is in.

The work presented in Chapter III expands on the ***multidimensional nature of class*** by incorporating intersectionality theory. Social class as an identity must be examined in relation to other identities. Because the intersections of sets of social identities reflect qualitatively different lived experiences, social class identity cannot be examined in a vacuum. Of particular interest was the simultaneous impact of multiple identities on ideological endorsement. A consistent finding across three studies was that people of color who were class privileged endorsed ideologies that naturalized hierarchy and the status quo (SDO) most strongly, and endorsed ideologies emphasizing the potential efficacy of hard work (JH) the least strongly. Qualitative exploration of these findings found that those who were class privileged people of color questioned the validity of existing social hierarchies less and were less likely to mention hard work as a

mechanism for future success. This finding should be understood within the context in which this research was conducted; namely, there is reason to think that this finding may be linked specifically to participants' experiences within higher education. Given that higher education is *one* of the sites of class values transmission and a site of socialization into upper middle and upper class statuses, class privileged individuals come into these spaces with enough cultural capital to be institutionally literate. These students have a clearer and more intuitive understanding of how centers of higher education function and are better able to exist within them than class targeted students. Class privileged people of color, however, are both institutionally literate and institutionally underrepresented in higher education. It may be that these individuals adhere to dominant forms of discourse (i.e. higher SDO) as a way of positioning themselves as 'fitting' in this space, and it could further be that their class privilege shields them enough that they have less need to employ high-effort active coping strategies such as JH. The results may be different if the research were to be conducted in a different social context, such as work place settings.

Chapter IV took the concept of social location – the ***simultaneous impact*** of demographic social identities such as race, class, and gender – and explored its relationship to perceptions of social structures in greater depth. In a series of correlational studies, the relationship between social location, SDO, intersectional consciousness and perceptions of privilege were analyzed. Social location directly related to levels of SDO, such that those from comparatively privileged backgrounds along the lines of race, class and gender endorsed this status quo-enhancing ideology more strongly. Those with high levels of SDO were found to have low levels of awareness of male privilege, White privilege, or intersectional consciousness. Further analysis showed that the direct

relationship between SDO and intersectional consciousness was fully mediated by privilege awareness. Thus, the research from this chapter shows the complex and nuanced ways that one's understanding of the legitimacy of privilege is shaped by social identities.

Taken together, the research presented in this dissertation represents an innovative and vibrant approach to the psychological study of social class. This work explores social class as a lived experience, as a social identity, at multiple levels. By drawing together intersectionality theory and the sociological concept of habitus, this work is able to explore the full breadth of social class as a construct. This nuanced approach is able to identify ways in which social class interacts with and mutually reinforces other social identities, such as race. A focus on habitus means that particular attention is paid to the importance of context, which shapes social class in multiple and sometimes unexpected ways. Investigation on the lack of critical discourse regarding social class experiences reveals how important an understanding of intersectionality and habitus are to the study of social class: in an American context, social class is a slippery and half-seen thing, an identity more felt than discussed, and one heavily shaded by the embodiment of other social identities. This research shows that a sophisticated approach to social class identity needs to recognize the importance of multiple methods and attention to the tensions between the individual and the specific context the individual exists within. Further, this research shows the importance of intersectionality theory in order to understand how diverse and heterogeneous social class groupings are.

Habitus and Discourse

The findings presented here emphasize the role of socialization in the development of social class identity and perceptions of social class. Habitus (Swartz, 1997) describes a

process through which lived experiences based on objective economic differences are internalized and abstracted into value systems and worldviews. Bourdieu (1977) further discusses the role of discourse in upholding habitus: societally approved avenues of discourse shape what individuals question and how they relate to the normalization of hierarchies. This work uses the concepts of habitus and discourse to construct a framework for understanding the psychological experience of social class.

This approach to social class highlights its multidimensional nature, and also shows how these various dimensions are mutually reinforcing. The limits imposed by economic stratification lead to reduced opportunities for class targeted individuals. The reduced opportunities and economic scarcity in turn shape the value systems and worldviews of individuals. Classed opportunities, for example, can impact how an individual interacts with institutions such as schools, which can have important downstream effects on career aspirations and occupational prestige. Thus, habitus represents a way of understanding how social class is subjectively construed, and how this level of subjective identification can further entrench objective economic situations.

Using this as a starting point, the research presented here explored some of the ways in which social class identity is constructed. Consonant with the concept of habitus, findings showed that social class identity develops contextually. I found that both the economic position of the individual and the broader economic context of the individual contribute to an individual's worldview. Social dominance orientation – the tendency to see hierarchical inequalities as natural and acceptable – depended on the context-level class even when individual-level class was held constant. In addition, who constitutes which class differs between economic contexts. Those in economically privileged areas

had a different understanding of what resources it took to be considered 'middle class' than those from economically disadvantaged areas. Qualitative research into how individuals negotiate their class status showed that class identity is constructed in relation to others. Thus, an individual's understanding of her/his social class is somewhat flexible and dependent on the objective and performative aspects of class of those around them. Together this work shows that social class does not exist in a vacuum; rather, it is a rich and complex psychological construct influenced heavily by contextual variables. While the findings presented here may be unique to the American cultural context, the methodological approach employed in this work could be employed in other cultural contexts. Taking an intersectional approach to habitus with a specific focus on the content and fluency of critical discourse on social class may provide important insights into how class is understood and framed elsewhere. Cultures where this is explicit discourse about social class, for example, obviously have different status-quo reproducing mechanisms in place than those used in the United State, but careful analysis of the framing of discourse in cultures that do speak about class will give great insight into how individuals in that culture internalize and subjectively extrapolate their classed experiences.

Bourdieu (1977) argues that the maintenance of habitus relies on a strict management of discourse. This work provides some evidence for his argument. The qualitative work presented in Chapter II showed that taboos around the discussion of class exist, and that they serve to silence conversations about social class. Habitus, then, is a process of negotiating and understanding contextual economic elements in an implicit, non-verbalized way. The lack of discussion about these issues is silencing to lower-income people and privilege-reproducing for economically advantaged people.

Interrupting this process by engaging in a critical and an explicit discourse about classed inequalities, however, can disrupt the process of habitus and lead to a different understanding of social class. Disruption of this process is important especially to upwardly mobile individuals, such as low-income and first-generation college students, who experience issues of fit within predominately class privileged social institutions.

Intersectionality and Perceptions of Social Hierarchies

Critical intersectionality theory states that every individual embodies multiple social identities, and that these multiple social identities have a simultaneous and mutually reinforcing relationship with one another (Crenshaw, 1995). One is not separately a woman, a person of color, and middle class; one is each of these things at the same time. Incorporating an intersectional perspective to study social class provides a framework for understanding how classed identity relates to race and gender. An intersectional perspective on social class also allows researchers to develop a nuanced approach to perceptions of structural hierarchies and privilege awareness. A consistent finding of the studies presented here is that the adoption of ideologies occurs at the intersection of race and class. Endorsement of SDO and John Henryism were related to both race and class. Main effects along both class and racial lines emerged, but the interaction between race and class on both SDO and JH had much greater explanatory power. These findings emphasize the danger of ignoring the role of intersecting identities: an understanding of intersectionality best explains within group variations. In this analysis, it was shown multiple times that those class privileged people of color held the most hierarchy-reinforcing attitudes, a finding which would have been overlooked if race and class had been investigated in isolation.

136

This finding – that race and class have a simultaneous influence on adoption of ideologies regarding social structures – is of particular interest given the American context in which this work was conducted. Qualitative work on American students presented here showed the tendency to conflate race and class. Specifically, discourse about social class can sometimes be masked and reframed as discourse about race. This discursive framing combined with the very real linkages between race and class-based structural inequities highlights the importance of intersectionality theory. Social class in the American context cannot be adequately studied without a thorough and nuanced examination of race, and vice versa. This theoretical approach is important for those conducting social science research on social identity.

Perceptions of social hierarchies are related to people's awareness of privilege. Endorsement of SDO, a hierarchy enhancing and system legitimizing ideology, was related to less awareness of male privilege, White privilege, and lower intersectional consciousness. This suggests that social location (the particular constellation of social identities an individual simultaneously embodies) influences not only the perceived validity of structural inequalities, but also how the consequences of those inequalities are understood.

The research presented here has the potential to be used in applied settings, specifically in classrooms focusing on critical social justice curriculums and in community organizing settings. The concept of intersectional consciousness as a critical framework for understanding the intersections of power axes in society could be a useful way to deepen students' understanding of intersectionality theory beyond an acknowledgement of how they, themselves, embody multiple social identities

simultaneously. Keeping a focus on how power structures intersect and reinforce each other through mechanisms such as control of discourse and ideological endorsement encourages students to think broadly and externally about the applications of intersectionality theory. Using this critical perspective as a learning tool could further benefit community groups seeking to establish coalitions or strengthen their organizations across a diverse population.

Methodological Challenges in the Study of Social Class

The study of social class in the field of psychology is burgeoning, but faces a set of complex methodological issues. By adopting a framework informed by habitus and intersectionality theory, the multidimensional nature of social class becomes clear. Multidimensional constructs require multiple methods; for a construct as large and nuanced as social class, we must triangulate research questions using a variety of approaches.

My research has identified the complex dimensions of social class with a specific focus on privilege and social context. This certainly does not represent an exhaustive and complete understanding of social class, but it does highlight the advantages of taking a thorough and varied approach to the study of social class. So-called 'objective' elements of social class are the most common way social class is measured. Objective measurements of social class are typically income, occupational prestige, and highest attained level of education. Often, it is assumed that these measures of social class are transparent: they are clear and uncomplicated markers of an objective economic position. However, the research presented here shows that the objective aspects of social class are actually very complicated. Interactions between the general economic climate an

individual lives in and her/his specific economic position predicted endorsement of ideologies of social hierarchies. In the case of attitudes towards the legitimacy of social structures, multiple levels of objective class data were meaningful. Too often, social scientists focus on only one or the other - either the economic position of the individual or the economic climate of a given area or context - and are likely losing a good deal of explanatory power of social class in the process. A clearer focus on the impact of context on social class-related phenomena as well as the flexible relationship between the social class of the individual and the class of the context they exist within needs to be adopted by psychological researchers.

Further complicating this is that objective economic positions are internalized and subjectively experienced. As mentioned before regarding habitus, the objective aspects of class shape individuals' achievement trajectories, opportunities for social mobility, and value systems. Individuals may adopt social class as an identity, an aspect of their self-concept. In this case, the subjective classed identity is related to objective markers of class, but not synonymous. Of particular methodological interest is the finding that objective and subjective measures of class were found to be correlated positively, yet predicted attitudes towards different groups. These different dimensions of social class are not interchangeable, which is often assumed in the study of social class. Such findings emphasize the level of attention and detail researchers must pay to social class. Social scientists need to consider which dimension of social class they are interested in and choose appropriate methods accordingly. Furthermore, social scientists should be aware of the overlapping nature of these dimensions, as sometimes using only one measure of social class can be inadequate and potentially misleading.

Beyond an awareness of the importance of both context and individual factors, the multidimensional nature of class is best explored through the use of multiple methodologies. Specifically, quantitative data on the objective economic dimensions of class are most fruitful when paired with deep qualitative data. Qualitative data on social class may be the best way to investigate may aspects of subjective class identity in large part due to the lack of critical discourse surrounding class. Social class identity may be hard to investigate through closed-ended self-report data specifically because (unlike with gender or race) there is not an accepted language to describe and label their classed experiences. The language individuals use is often idiosyncratic, but touches on recurrent themes of hierarchy and hard work. In this case, qualitative content analysis is exceedingly useful, especially when paired with quantitative investigation of the individual's economic position and the economic climate of the context that individual exists within.

The use of multiple methods to measure different aspects of social class within one study is a powerful approach because it allows us to explore how those different aspects of social class interact with one another. This approach also has a depth and level of detail necessary to explore findings that would be on the surface seems contradictory or paradoxical. While research that uses primarily objective, quantitative data and research taking a more subjective, qualitative approach to issues of social class often cohere, there are findings which are at first glance at odds. By using multiple methods in tandem, researchers can reconcile the divergences in objectively and subjectively experienced class. The use of multiple methods and the attention paid to the tension

between individual and context level social class factors are major strengths of the work presented here.

Future Directions and Limitations

While this work represents a new and potentially very useful theoretical and methodological approach to the study of social class, this research is not exhaustive and does have limitations. All of the research presented here was conducted in the United States, and is likely unique in important ways to the American context. Americans have historically had a different kind of relationship to social class than other cultures (Weeden & Grusky, 2005). While social class is a visible and salient aspect of identity and criteria for grouping other individuals in many other cultures (Argyle, 1994), in the United States the impact and relevance of social class is masked. There are several reasons why the discourse of class in America is limited. The American context is one marked by a history of explicit, structurally enforced racism, which has resulted in a strong link between wealth accruement and racial privilege. Discussions of class occur, but often are reframed as discussions of race.

Furthermore, the American Dream ideology is a major and ever-present aspect of the US context (Hochschild, 1995). American Dream ideology posits that those who work hard will be rewarded with upward mobility. Extrapolations of this ideology, therefore, suggest that those who have attained a high status have earned it, and that those who are stuck in a lower status are there because they have failed to earn anything better. This ideology is particularly limiting for classed dialogue because it describes social class as always potentially moving up: the focus is on what might be achieved one day as opposed to the conditions an individual is currently living in (Hochschild, 1995; Jones

141

2003). There is an idea that poor people are not really poor people, that they are wealthy people who are just not yet wealthy (Bullock & Limbert, 2003). Discourse that interrogates the structural reproduction of class discourse which moves the reasons for classed status away from an individual's personal levels of ability is avoided because it challenges American Dream ideology (Hochschild, 2003). These particular elements of American society combine in such a way that discourse around social class is largely absent, and the development of a class-challenging discourse faces obstacles that many not be generalizable to other cultural contexts. Thus, the necessity for studying social class in an American context is clear - this is a topic which goes largely understudied, especially in psychology - but it should be noted that the methods and approaches best suited to study social class in the United States may not be optimal elsewhere.

Further complicating this is that this research was conducted in an exclusively American context with American citizens. Immigrant populations likely have a very different relationship to and understanding of social class. Immigration status may intersect with social class in very interesting and complex ways - for example, the class status of an immigrant performing menial labor is very different than that of an immigrant recruited for a high-level position. Further complicating this, each of these hypothetical immigrants may have similar educational backgrounds and credentials - suggesting that they may hold relatively consonant class status in their place of origin - but may for a variety of structural reasons face very different opportunities in the United States. There is a distinct possibility, then, that immigrants hold multiple, sometimes conflicting and often context dependent class identities. Another interesting question is how immigrants' class identity develops when they move into a new context. Do they use

a similar relativistic process as the students investigated in the research presented here? What references points do they use? As global economies become more tightly entwined, the need to take a transnational perspective and incorporate the experiences of immigrants only becomes more important to the study of identity (Mhalingam, 2007).

Another limitation of this research is that all studies were conducted exclusively with college students. While there was variety in the type of school investigated, it should also be noted that all samples were collected at institutions of higher learning. The experiences of college students, while worth exploring, reflect a particular life trajectory (Arnett, 2004; Morash, 1980). Recognizing the impact of this trajectory is necessary for work on class, and it is important not to generalize the findings of those in this particular economic and educational position to other populations. By virtue of being in college at all - whether at a large, prestigious university of at a small community college - the students who participated in these studies are accruing levels of social capital which will allow them to enter and thrive in the middle class (Bergerson, 2007). Many students are already middle class, which means that this work is studying either laterally or upwardly mobile individuals; those who are experiencing downward mobility were not represented in the participants in the study. The participants' experience as college students may also impact their perceptions of the role of hard work. This research posits an active coping strategy which promotes the efficacy of hard work as a way lower-income students adjust to college, but it may be that the role of hard work is especially prevalent in this setting. The link between success and effort is often quite clear and transparent in academic settings, which means that emphasis on hard work to get ahead is not misplaced. Furthermore, many of these students were high achievers at a prestigious and rigorous

school, upwardly mobile, and saw the fruits of dedicated effort in their own lives. However, work on John Henryism suggests that in other arenas the link between success and hard work is tenuous or not present (Bennett et al, 2004; James, 1994). Finally, exclusive work on college students obscures generational differences in the construction of class identity. The particular economic climate these young people live in is quite different from the situation of working class individuals twenty years ago - specifically, the lack of manufacturing and industrial jobs, which were once the backbone of 'blue-collar' working class identity and the uncertainty of the payoff of attaining high degrees while accumulating large amounts of student debt (Weis, 2006). The differences in the types of jobs available, the security of those jobs, and the educational levels needed to attain those jobs may interact to form a different kind of working class identity today. Future research should explore how the construction of social class identity changes from generation to generation.

Another limitation is that the trajectories and experiences of non-college bound young adults were not explored in this work. Osgood, et.al. (2005) found that some individuals attain adult status in multiple domains earlier – often marrying early, living independently, and entering into the workforce in manual occupations with limited educational attainment – while others from the same socioeconomic background delay developing adult status in multiple domains in order to focus on educational attainment. The quicker pace of life and lack of a proper arena for prolonged identity exploration of the first group suggests that they cannot be said to meaningfully experience Arnett's (2004) concept of emerging adulthood. The elements that push some low-income

individuals away from emerging adulthood are related to a stronger awareness of and identification social class.

Future research needs to include both objective and subjective measures of social class in order to tease these two groups apart. Research is needed to understand the ways that long-term investment in the self may be compatible with strong working class identification. Identifying this would be a first step in the creation of theoretically sound interventions designed to increase interest and pursuit of higher education in low-income schools by the group currently at the most risk. Another fruitful area for future researchers is to uncover how some low-income individuals internalize middle class values and beliefs when they may be incongruent with their objective situation and messages they are receiving from their parents and peers. The research opportunities posed by the effect of strength of class identification on educational and occupational outcomes are a promising new direction for understanding the life outcomes of low-income adolescents. Beyond the limitations of working exclusively with students, this research was conducted solely at institutions of higher learning. Future work should explore other major social institutions which reproduce class boundaries and value systems. Of particular interest may be medical settings. Intersections between class, race, and gender are likely to be particularly salient in medical settings due to differences in quality of care, access to care, and differences in types of care needed. It would be very interesting to see how intersecting identities impact the nature of the relationship between patients and doctors, for example, in an institution which is oriented towards need and dependence as opposed to one used as a mode for upward social mobility and individual progress. Despite the differences in the institutional roles and orientations, issues of fit

may still arise along class lines in the medical world; low-income patients are likely to have less institutional knowledge, literacy, and access, which puts them in a similar position to low-income students. However, the salience and visibility of classed identities may be greater in medical settings given the urgent financial demands of medical care.

Conclusion

The research presented in this dissertation in an in-depth exploration of the multi-layered experience of social class. Approaching social class as a multidimensional construct which is dependent on the social context of a person and his or her direct economic position, and the internalization of his/her economic positions. Such framework will further our understanding the complexity realities of social class identity. This research comes from a particularly rich interdisciplinary framework that draws on important theories from disciplines of gender and women's studies, sociology and psychology. This research also utilizes multiple methods, which work in concert to explore the nuances of class identity.

The findings, approach and methodologies used here represent a strong first step towards a more thorough psychological understanding of social class. Previously understudied aspects of social class - context-level variables, intersections with other social identities, and the importance of classed narratives - emerged as important elements of social class. It is my hope that this research can provide guidance to future research questions about the impact of social class identity on attitudes and behaviors.

References

Argyle, M. (1994). *The psychology of social class*. New York: Routledge.

Arnett, J. (2004). *Emerging adulthood: The winding road from the late teens through the twenties.* Oxford University Press.

Bennett, G. G., Merritt, M. M., Edwards, C. L., Whitfield, K. E., Brandon, D. T., & Tucker, R. D. (2004). Stress, coping, and health outcomes among African-Americans: A review of the John Henryism hypothesis. *Psychology & Health, 19,* 369-383.

Bergerson, A. A. (2007). Exploring the impact of social class on adjustment to college: Anna's story. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 20,* 99-119.

Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice.* Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Bullock, H. E., & Limbert, W. M. (2003). Scaling the socioeconomic ladder: Low-income women's perceptions of class status and opportunity. *Journal of Social Issues, 59,* 693-709.

Crenshaw, K. W. (1995). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. In K. Crenshaw, N. Gotanda, G. Peller, &. K. Thomas (Eds.), *Critical race theory: The key writings that formed the movement.* (pp. 357-383). New York: The New Press.

Hochschild, J. L. (1995). *Race, class, and the soul of the nation: Facing up to the American Dream.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Hochschild, J. L. (2003). *The American Dream and the public schools*. New York: Oxford University Press.

James, S. A. (1994). John Henryism and the health of African-Americans. *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry, 18,* 163-182.

Jones, S. J. (2003). Embodying working-class subjectivity and narrating self: "We were the hired help". In D.L. Tolman & M. Brydon-Miller (Eds.), *From subjects to subjectivities: A handbook of interpretive and participatory methods* (pp. 145-162)*.* NY: NYU Press.

Mahalingam, R. (2007). Essentialism, power, and the representation of social categories: A folk sociology perspective. *Human Development, 50,* 300-319.

Morash, M. (1980). Working class membership and the adolescent identity crisis. *Adolescence, 15,* 313-320.

Osgood, D., Ruth, G., Eccles, J., & Barber, B. (2005). Six paths to adulthood: Fast starters, parents without careers, educated parents, educated singles, working singles, and slow starters. In F. Furstenberg, R. Rumbaut, & R. Settersten (Eds.), *On the Frontier of Adulthood* (MacArthur network edited volume), University of Chicago Press.

Swartz, D. (1997). *Culture and power: The sociology of Pierre Bourdieu.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Weeden, K., & Grusky, D. (2005). The case for a new class map. *The American Journal of Sociology, 111,* 141-212.

Weis, L. (2006). Masculinity, whiteness, and the new economy: An exploration of privilege and loss. *Men and Masculinities, 8,* 262-272