

‘Blair’s children’: young women as ‘aspirational subjects’ in the psychic landscape of class

Kim Allen

Abstract

This paper engages with the subjective experience of ‘doing’ aspiration, teasing out the psychic and social costs that accompany this as a classed process. It draws on a qualitative study of young women located in further education and contemplating their futures under New Labour, locating how the political rhetoric of aspiration gets institutionalized within school practices; how it intersects with maternal expectations and practices of involvement; and how these are lived and managed by subjects located in different positions in class-inflected social space. In attending to the tangled web of institutional, intergenerational and affective practices which shape young women’s aspirations, the paper seeks to interrupt the celebratory and simplistic rhetoric of aspiration that characterizes the contemporary socio-political register of neoliberalism. As these ideals become further entrenched by the current Coalition government, there is an even greater urgency for such sociological enquiries.

Introduction: aspiration nation?

It is our duty to create an age of aspiration . . . I want to see an expanded middle class. (Gordon Brown, 2010)

The mission for this government is to build an aspiration nation. . . . It’s what’s always made our hearts beat faster – aspiration; people rising from the bottom to the top . . . Line one, rule one of being a Conservative is that it’s not where you’ve come from that counts, it’s where you’re going. . . . We just get behind people who want to get on in life. The doers. The risk-takers. . . We are the party of the want to be better-off, those who strive to make a better life for themselves and their families – and we should never, ever be ashamed of saying so. (David Cameron, 2012)

‘Aspiration’ has been an enduring trope across the discursive landscape of successive UK governments. A ‘poverty of aspirations’ was a central feature

of New Labour's education and social policy, locating working-class youth as lacking in or having the 'wrong' aspirations. This rhetoric formed part of a broader but glib political 'commitment' to increase 'social mobility' and build a 'fair' and 'meritocratic' Britain (Gillies, 2005; Tomlinson, 2004). As Owen Jones (2011) documents in his book *Chavs*, the aspiration project was central to New Labour's desire to appeal to what they saw as an 'aspirational working-class' who 'wanted to climb the social ladder' (2011: 89–91). Under the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government we have seen a further entrenchment of these ideals: Prime Minister David Cameron has repeatedly addressed Britain as an 'aspiration nation', appealing to those who want to 'rise from the bottom to the top'. In their 'Social Mobility' and 'Child Poverty' strategies, the Coalition evoke aspiration as some kind of panacea for inequality with pledges to 'combat culture of worklessness' and 'intergenerational cycles of poverty' by 'raising the aspirations' of working-class families (Department for Work and Pensions and Department for Education, 2011; Cabinet Office, 2011).

This rhetoric of aspiration and concurrent framing of upward mobility as an unequivocal good, ignores a raft of sociological evidence that reveals no shortage of aspiration among working-class families (see Allen and Hollingworth, 2013; Roberts and Evans, 2012; Irwin and Elley, 2013; Shildrick *et al.*, 2012). It is also dependent on – and productive of – a devaluing of the working classes. Indeed, such policy rhetoric is premised on the notion that becoming middle class should be an aspiration *because* being working class is 'bad', something from which individuals must escape (Skeggs, 2004; Tyler 2013). As Jones argues, 'today's consensus is about escaping the working class. The speeches of politicians are peppered with promises to enlarge the middle class. 'Aspiration' has been redefined to mean individual self-enrichment: to scramble up the social ladder and become middle-class' (2011: 10). It can be argued that 'aspiration' plays a pivotal role in institutionalizing neoliberal forms of governance which have reshaped class relations in contemporary Britain. Sociologists of education and parenting have illuminated how New Labour's education and family policy, shrouded in terms such as 'social justice' and 'social inclusion', represented concerted attempts to remake the working class in the image of the 'ideal-type' middle-class family (eg Gewirtz, 2001; Gillies, 2005).

Such calls to 'be aspirational', to 'become someone' are both narrowly defined and individualizing, negating the broader inequalities which limit who goes where. 'Success' (or the lack of) becomes understood through notions of individual effort, self-management, enterprise and risk-taking. Alongside 'the underclass', 'shirkers and strivers' and 'the feral chav', 'aspiration' has come to form part of a potent set of (de)classificatory practices. Here, a litany of social pathologies (Slater, 2013) and 'moralizing register' (Skeggs, 2005) has replaced a vocabulary of exploitation and injustice. In political and the media, poverty is subject to stigma and shame, constituting the working class not just as Other but also wholly responsible for their plight (Shildrick and

MacDonald, 2013; Tyler, 2013). As Paul Johnson and Stephanie Lawler (2005) write, 'social-structural dimensions of class inequality are now understood as being embedded only in the subjectivities of social actors'. Yet the imperative to produce oneself as 'aspirational' and 'enterprising' relies not just on 'access to and control of symbolic resources, but also on knowing how to display one's subjectivity properly' (Skeggs, 2005: 973): forms of self-making that are unequally available across the contours of social class.

Incitements to aspiration and the implications of these are also gendered. The figure of the young woman has played a symbolic role in reproduction of neoliberal ideologies, where young women have been subject to an intensified gaze, constructed as reflexive, entrepreneurial, mobile and 'successful' subjects of the twenty-first century. As Angela McRobbie states in her critique of New Labour, 'Young women . . . have replaced youth as a metaphor for social change [and] are now recognised as one of the stakes upon which the future depends' (2000: 200–1). Yet, this is a specifically 'bourgeois fantasy of femininity (Walkerdine, 2003, 2006). Within this symbolic economy, the figure of the working-class woman has thus come to function as the 'constitutive other'. Classified as ungovernable, excessive, and immoral she is the failing femininity of the ideal neoliberal subject (Skeggs, 2005).

There is another way in which terrain is gendered. The policy emphasis on parenting as the key to unlocking and raising young people's aspirations is especially focused on mothers. In the cascading discourses of social mobility, choice, aspiration and parental determinism, it is mothers who are charged with releasing the 'potential' of their child as future citizens and workers: to 'raise the meritocracy' (Gillies, 2005), resulting in the incessant blaming of working-class mothers for 'failing to generate aspirational values needed to facilitate' their child's educational success (Gillies, 2005: 845). Yet, as a rich body of work has demonstrated, while mothers are the primary labourers in shoring up their children's educational 'success', their capacity for intervening in and securing their children's future is unequal, shaped by their access to class-based resources, and the class-differentiated evaluations of this labour by powerful others (see Ball, 2003; Ball and Vincent, 2001; Devine, 2004; Gillies, 2007; Irwin and Elley, 2011, 2013; Lareau, 2003; Reay, 1998a, 1998b, 2004b, 2005a; Vincent, 2001). As such, it is crucial to attend to the ways in which 'class specific intricacies' of maternal involvement (Reay, 2004: 71) bleed into and complicate young women's desired, imagined and possible futures.

This paper attempts to unpick what it means to be subjected to such incitements to be 'aspirational'; to be the site of a multitude of labours, investments and desires to 'become somebody' when contemporary regimes of (de)classification recognize this as a subject 'made in the image of the middle class' (Walkerdine, 2003: 239). It attends to how the socio-political rhetoric of aspiration gets institutionalized within school practices and cultures; how it intersects with maternal expectations and practices of involvement; and how these are lived and managed by young women located in different class

positions. To do this, I draw on the narrative accounts of three young women who were located in further education and contemplating their futures under New Labour's education, social and economic policies oriented around meritocracy and social inclusion. Forming their aspirations in the midst of New Labour's term in government, they can be understood as 'Blair's children' (rather than 'Thatcher's children'). In attending to the tangled web of institutional, intergenerational and affective practices which shape young women's aspirations, I seek to further interrupt the celebratory and simplistic rhetoric of aspiration that characterize the contemporary socio-political register. As these ideals become further entrenched by the Coalition government, I argue that there is an even greater urgency for such enquiries.

Before turning to their accounts, I introduce the theoretical framework that informs my analysis of the subjective experience of 'doing' aspiration within class-inflected social space.

The psychic landscape of class: a feminist Bourdieurian approach to the study of aspiration

Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical understanding of social class has been central to examining the reproduction of social inequalities within education. Class is conceptualized as dynamic and relative in social space, formed through a complex layering of material, social, cultural and symbolic resources and practices of distinction. Contemporary cultural class analysis shows that while the economic remains important, cultural practices and psychic dispositions are increasingly central to shaping an individual's position in social space (Devine *et al.*, 2004; Skeggs, 2004).

According to Bourdieu (1993: 34) 'those with lots of red tokens and few yellow tokens, that is lots of economic capital and a little cultural capital, will not play in the same way as those who have many yellow tokens and a few red ones'. Yet, capitals have no value outside of their contextual and historical dimensions and the specific logic of the field in which individuals move. Thus, Skeggs (2004) argues that capitals are better conceptualized as class resources whereby these operate *only* as a form of capital that can be exchanged within *certain arenas* and when they are carried by *certain bodies*. We must, therefore, attend to the processes by which particular resources become ascribed as forms of capital within particular arenas and how this process is institutionalized. In this research, the young women had different stocks *and* configurations of capital, powerfully shaping their positioning, aspirations and lived experiences of class within the site of the performing arts school as a specific 'field' of exchange within which cultural capital was the dominant currency. I therefore attend to the performing arts school as a microcosm of social practices and an arena of *struggle* between actors with different 'tokens', unpicking how the field legitimated and rewarded particular resources, dispositions and 'ways of being': the habitus.

A 'system of lasting, transposable dispositions which . . . functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions' (Bourdieu, 1977: 82–3), habitus is the social embodied and inscribed on the body, expressed in one's beliefs and values, ways of speaking, dressing and talking. Characterizing the recurring patterns of social class outlook which provide the context for the individual conduct and engagement with the social world, 'habitus' is a useful tool to examine the formation and lived experience of 'aspiration'. A fusion of the past and present, habitus shapes 'common-sense' ways of operating and what course of action are perceived ab/normal, un/desirable and im/possible.

It is the interaction of habitus, capital and field which gives habitus its dynamic quality. Indeed, while habitus is seen to lend itself to reproduction rather than transformation, a change in habitus has not been precluded in Bourdieu's accounts and some who use his conceptual arsenal. Habitus can be seen to *predispose* rather than determine action, responsive to other social experiences as individuals move through different social fields. These experiences provide conditions for the embodiment of new dispositions (Reay, 2004a; Dumais, 2002). As Jenkins (2002: 45) writes, 'the habitus can be transformed by changed circumstances, and expectations or aspirations will change with it'.

However, while confronting an unfamiliar field can generate new ways of being, more often this produces 'disquiet, ambivalence, insecurity and uncertainty' (Reay *et al.*, 2005: 28). Diane Reay's work on the 'psychic landscape of class' (2005b: 911), is significant here. Reay engages with the entanglement of social and psychic practices through which class is lived, especially among working-class children who are educationally 'successful' or surrounded by generational desires for 'upward class mobility' where failure and judgment 'looms large' (2005b: 917). Reay calls for an analysis that is attuned to the affective, emotional landscape within which class inequality is lived, felt and managed: the 'petty mundane humiliations . . . class recognitions, visceral aversions and feelings of inferiority and superiority' (2005b: 917).

Sam Friedman (2013) usefully draws on this work to explore the potential costs of individual class 'mobility' or 'transformation'. Friedman elaborates on Bourdieu's notion of 'habitus clive', used to refer to the 'social limbo' and 'double isolation' of working-class students entering the unfamiliar field of French higher education. The product of such a movement is a divided or disrupted habitus, 'torn by contradiction and internal division' (Bourdieu, 2004 in Friedman, 2013: 11). Revealing 'how social space travel may disrupt the coherency of the self' and produce feelings of 'unease, anxiety and dislocation' (2013: 13), Friedman's work counters the 'benevolent' policy rhetoric around aspiration and social mobility. Work by Stephanie Lawler (1999, 2000) on the experiences of upwardly mobile women is also notable here, revealing the feelings of pain, fear, estrangement, guilt and desire that complicate attempted 'escapes' from a disadvantaged class position. Like them, I am concerned here with the ontological insecurity experienced by those who are subject to

a cacophony of calls to 'become someone' when this is modeled on the image of 'someone else'.

The study

In this paper, I attempt to tease out the social and psychic landscape of social class and gender in which young women's aspirations are regulated and performed. I draw on the narrative accounts of three young women (aged 16–18) who were located in a state-funded performing arts institution delivering education and training for the creative industries. While it is not possible to fully introduce this provision and the policy agendas that shaped it, it encapsulated many of the disparate strands of New Labour's ideology and thus provides a useful empirical setting for sociological engagements with the institutionalization and lived experience of 'aspiration'.

At the time of the research (2006–10), New Labour had invested heavily in the creative industries as central to the economic and social well-being of 'Cool Britannia', within Western knowledge economies where 'we compete on brains not brawns' (Blair, 1999). Reflecting New Labour's Third Way project, discourses of social inclusion and meritocracy sat alongside economic competitiveness. A narrative of 'culture for all' suffused education and economic policy for the creative industries, captured in the then Culture Minister Tessa Jowell's claim that 'engagement with culture can help alleviate [a] poverty of aspiration' (2005). In 2001, Tony Blair stated that 'Creative talent will be crucial to our individual and national economic success . . . Over the next 10 years we want to work towards *all* children having the freedom and opportunity to develop their creative talent' (Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS), 2001: 11, emphasis added). A discourse of 'entitlement' to creative learning became prominent within government-commissioned reviews and White papers (Roberts, 2006; National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education, 1999; DCMS/DfES, 2006), along with a 'democratic' conceptualization of creativity as a universal capacity rather than something held by the gifted. A rhetoric of 'social inclusion' infused the agenda's commitment to widening pathways into the creative sector and increase workforce 'diversity' (Allen *et al.*, 2012).

The Priory School, where the research was based, played a prominent role in this agenda. Unlike other specialist performing arts provision, located in the independent sector and charging upwards of £3,000 per term in fees, the Priory School was free to attend. While the proportion of students eligible for free school meals was below the national average, the school had higher than average pupils who were from minority and ethnic groups. The 'inclusive' and seemingly 'diverse' nature of the school's student body featured in the school's promotional material, and the school was frequently referenced by policymakers as a 'hot house' for fostering creative talent and widening access to the sector. The school was based in a relatively deprived area of greater

London, though pupils came from a range of locations in London and the south-east of England. As I go on to explain, despite the school's claims to inclusivity, its admissions practices undermined this.

The study set out to examine how such policy commitments of New Labour policy filtered down into these educational sites, and how these shaped the subjectivities and aspirations of young women in these settings. In-depth individual and group interviews were conducted with 12 young working- and middle-class women (16–19 years) studying vocational (BTEC) Performing Arts. Interviews were loosely structured, however themes covered included: educational experiences, childhood hobbies; educational choices and processes of decision-making; and future aspirations. Additional biographical data including parental occupation and family experiences of higher education were collected. Lasting between 60 and 120 minutes, interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Data were thematically coded and analysed, examining what courses of action (eg education, career, family, fame) were perceived to be desirable or achievable and participants' 'dispositional frames' towards these (eg active, self-authoring, constrained).

In this paper I focus in detail on the accounts of just three of these young women: Carly and Vicky lived in small provincial towns around the south of England, speaking with strong Estuary English accents.¹ They had both attended state schools and completed their GCSEs prior to joining the Priory School at 16. Carly and Vicky could be described as belonging to the intermediate or 'novitiate' cleavages of the middle class who have a 'shorter history of middle classness – a group which have received relatively little academic attention (though see Reay *et al.*, 2005; see also Vincent, 2001; Irwin and Elley, 2013). A motif of parental occupational mobility infused their accounts as they described how their parents had left school with no or few qualifications, 'working their way up' into semi-professional and managerial positions. Carly's mother was a part-time beautician and fitness instructor and her father 'did something with solicitors'. Vicky's mother worked in human resources at a local university after earlier employment in childcare, and her father worked in catering. Their parents had no experience of higher education although Vicky's mother and Carly's father had returned to college to gain professional qualifications as mature students. It may be reasonably argued that their parents benefited from the early social and economic policies of Thatcherism, and were the very cohort of upwardly mobile working-class and lower middle-class families that New Labour sought to appeal to. While their experiences were by no means homogenous, Carly and Vicky were in many ways representative of the majority of the participants I interviewed.

Nancy's class position was somewhat different. She described her upbringing as 'bohemian', living with her divorced mother in a council-rented accommodation in a fashionable area of South London, and receiving an educational maintenance allowance (EMA).² Despite having little material wealth, her parent's occupation was significant, specializing in symbolic production and

distribution: Her mother was a working artist and part-time lecturer in Art History and father a sculptor and landscape gardener. Nancy's parents were both highly qualified, having studied at prestigious London art schools.

Positioned differently in the field of the performing arts school through various mechanisms of classification, I have selected these young women so as to reveal the complexity of their positions within social space. Attending to the experiences of those occupying particular class fractions, including those with very recent histories of – and fragile claims on – 'middle classness', I aim to tease out the psychic and social costs that accompany incitements to 'aspiration' as a classed process.

The school: realigning aspirations and resocializing the habitus

In this section, I am concerned with how these women's aspirations were read, regulated and shaped within the school as a particular scene of exchange. I attend to the 'micro-interactional processes whereby individuals' strategic use of knowledge, skills and competence comes into contact with institutionalized standards of evaluation' (Lareau, 2003: 2), and how this generates ways of being and feeling.

Despite an institutional commitment to 'inclusion' and 'widening access' to the creative sector, the study revealed the presence of contradictory school practices reflecting broader mechanisms of social closure within the creative industries (see Allen *et al.*, 2012, 2013) and education more generally. On my initial visit to the school, the deputy headteacher explained his mission to dispel the public image of the school as a 'fame school' and raise awareness of the cultural and economic significance of performing arts education. Central to this was the rejection of particular aspirations and, by consequence, particular students. In part this was achieved through a 'thorough and rigorous' admission procedure including application form, audition and interview. The headteacher explained that students had to show 'drive' and focus, be interested in a range of careers including 'behind the scenes' occupations, and be able to adapt to the school's ethos which valued a 'broad' cultural education and introduced students to a range of cultural genres, including 'the greats' of art, theatre and literature. Just 'wanting to be on the telly' was discouraged and the school's admission process was described as necessary to ensure that students attended the school for the 'right' reasons.

This dismissal of aspirations for fame and corresponding valuing of aspirations for more artistically oriented careers must be read within a broader socio-political context where, over the last decade at least, 'celebrity culture' has generated much public and political concern, seen to have eroded young people's aspirations and the values of 'hard work'. Such concerns have in particular been made in reference to working-class youth (see Allen and Mendick, 2012, 2013), captured in the Secretary for Work and Pensions Iain Duncan Smith's claim 'an X-Factor culture' fuelled the English riots of 2011:

'Kids are meant to believe that their stepping stone to massive money is The X Factor.³ Luck is great, but most of life is hard work. We do not celebrate people who have made success out of serious hard work' (Wintour and Lewis, 2011). While Duncan Smith does not explicitly name class here, the government's response to the riots was characterized by a moralizing register and stigmatizing gaze which fell upon the poor (Tyler, 2013).

Expressions of (dis)taste are central to institutionalized processes of class formation (Bourdieu, 1986) and, I argue, discourses of 'aspiration'. As Skeggs (2004: 142) states, we must attend to 'how certain tastes become institutionalised, protected by symbolic boundaries and forms of exclusion, so that the categories used by groups to recognise and cultivate differences become legitimated over time'. The Priory School's desire to challenge public misconceptions entailed the institutionalized legitimation of particular tastes and forms of cultural knowledge (specifically towards 'high' art and literature) to be held and displayed in prospective student's performances as 'aspirational' subjects. Such practices reflected the broader role of educational institutions in inculcating middle-class dispositions, values and practices under New Labour (Gewirtz, 2001; Ball, 2003). Thus, despite flaunting notions of meritocracy, inclusion and a 'widening' of opportunity, the school, much like New Labour's education policy, worked to maintain and consolidate middle-class privilege.

The inscribed (il)legitimacy of particular aspirations directed who needed to do work on themselves in order to be recognized as the right kind of student. Indeed, the emphasis here is not on a perceived 'lack' of aspiration among particular pupils but rather on what is read as an *excess* and *misdirection* of aspiration. Moral distinctions structure the hierarchy of 'aspirations' produced within Priory School and broader public and political discourse, where aspirations for fame – and those who are seen to hold them – are coded as shallow, taste-less, unjustified and misguided. What is significant is that these classificatory practices seeped into these young women's narratives as Carly and Vicky described in great detail, and with some sense of shame, a realignment of their aspirations upon entering the school.

Both Vicky and Carly described in vivid detail childhood dreams of fame and careers in the realm of the popular. Vicky explained 'I liked watching TV and used to think "I really want to be on TV" . . . It's just something I've always wanted'. Meanwhile, Carly discussed her long held aspirations and desire for a 'glamorous' and 'fun' job in TV, stating: 'I always wanted to be a presenter. I loved watching people on kids TV like and I'd be thinking I'd love that job *so much*. It seems like such a fun job, really glamorous, dressing up in lovely clothes all day'. Because of its visible nature, fame operates as a powerful symbol of success, informed by classed and gendered desires for recognition and mobility into the bourgeois order (see Allen and Mendick, 2012). As Walkerdine states, 'the lure of fame . . . offers working-class girls the possibility of a talent from which they have not automatically been excluded by virtue of their supposed lack of intelligence or culture' (1997: 50). However, Vicky and Carly's accounts reveal how such aspirations were met with disapproval,

revealing their weak feel for the game. These had to be swiftly replaced by more esoteric careers associated with high cultural genres:

Vicky: You can't say you want to be famous . . . Before, when I'd get asked whose career I'd like to achieve, I'd say a TV presenter but I found out they don't wanna see that on your application form. So I don't say that now 'cos I know [the teachers] don't like that. I'm like 'What answer will they like?'. . . The school's *brainwashed* us . . . told us that people who say they admire TV actresses look like all they want is to be a celebrity . . . Saying you like an obscure theatre actress is better 'cos it shows you're more dedicated.

Carly: I had false illusions really . . . Before, I thought this was a school where you come out and you're immediately a famous TV presenter. But it's not like that. Not in a bad way, 'cos that's quite pretentious isn't it? Just wanting to be famous . . . ? It makes you look really shallow. They wanna see you've got a passion for theatre not TV presenting.

While a legacy of work within Cultural Studies has located popular culture as a site of struggle over identity and forms of resistance, in social spaces defined by middle-class (and masculine) standards of evaluation, popular cultural texts and practices can be misrecognized as inappropriate, trivial and insignificant (Hall 2007; Hall and Jefferson, 1975; McRobbie and Garber, 1975). In Burke and McManus's (2009) research on the admissions practices of elite art schools, they argue that the questions put to candidates – such as 'what influences your work?' and 'what books do you read' – are oriented around the evaluation of student's ability to provide 'acceptable answers which reflect middle-class habitus and cultural capital' (2009: 39). They identify how knowledge of popular culture among working-class applicants was misrecognized as 'lacking' and improper, and led to them being judged as 'unsuitable'. Likewise, Carly and Vicky learned that their passion for the popular and desires for fame were not simply 'false illusions' but would betray them and thus had to be rejected.

The Priory School can be understood to work on students through transforming the habitus, as students learn to develop and display *particular* orientations to culture and to education. To enter a particular field means 'you can only partake in the practice going on within the field if you abide by these rules, accumulate these resources and invest them in accepted ways' (Flemmen, 2013: 329): Class becomes a matter of 'getting it right' by learning middle-class cultural practices and knowledge in order to transcend working-class signifiers' (Skeggs, 2005: 54). In order to 'get it right', Vicky and Carly had to reject the codified class signifiers misrecognized in their aspirations for TV fame, and mobilize the 'right' cultural knowledge and tastes. Like Rita in the film *Educating Rita*, Vicky and Carly show willing to transform the self,

‘switch[ing] affections by learning to appreciate some things or to appreciate the difference between pulp fiction and literature’ (Ahmed, 2010: 35).

As Carly and Vicky recognize the judgements of other, we glimpse moments of disorientation that characterize the habitus clive or ‘divided’ habitus, where entry to the school left them positioned uneasily between two ways of being. Encountering the school’s classificatory practices ‘cause[s] self-questioning . . . [as] habitus begins to operate at the level of consciousness’ (Reay, 2004a: 438; Friedman, 2013). Their ways of being in the world were no longer effective, and this lack of fit prompted them to become reflexive and self-monitoring. Yet, Vicky’s description of ‘brainwashing’ is revealing. Brainwashing is defined as ‘the application of coercive techniques to change the values and beliefs, perceptions and judgments, and subsequent mindsets and behaviors of people’. Despite showing willing to realign their aspirations, there were several moments of slippage – or perhaps resistance to this incitement to perform aspirations in a very particular way. As Carly explained, ‘I have such expectations on me. Everyone in my hometown is like “wow, she’s at stage school, she’s gonna be so famous” [. . .] I do want to impress people. I wanna be famous and I want people to see me. I don’t want them to say “ha, she failed!”’ Thus, despite institutional attempts at transformation, desires for fame remained. Painful and incomplete, these practices produced uncertainty about how to exist in the world.

By way of contrast, Nancy embodied a very different set of dispositions. She explained how her artist parents had sensitized her to cultural distinction:

Nancy: I always had art around me growing up . . . I remember going to see plays and being totally mesmerised and thinking ‘I want to do that’ . . . and we’d go to Italy a lot for my mum’s work and my mum would take me to all the galleries. . . . [When I was a child] my parents would take me to improvised music sessions. They were into that scene so it was part of my growing up.

Nancy talked at length about her desires to work in ‘creative’ roles in theatre including scriptwriter and set-designer, and planned to apply to elite drama schools, Rada and Guildhall. Her disinterest – indeed rejection – of the popular was strident, emphasizing her dispositions towards respect, recognition, individuality and creativity:

Nancy: The *X-Factor* churns people out . . . everyone [wants to] be a celebrity but talent is important . . . Real, proper actors who are respected, valued for what they do . . . talented, who work hard and sincerely want it. I’d rather have recognition [than fame]. There’s so much bad television and I just want to do good theatre. . . . connecting creatively. And what is life if it’s not about humanity? Theatre is just sublime.

Nancy’s cultural knowledge was vast. She had undertaken work experience at Glyndebourne and her role model was not a TV presenter but the Italian

novelist Italo Calvino. She spoke of her ambitions to translate his work into a play: 'His book is beautiful. The metaphors that go through it are amazing'. Nancy displayed a cultivated habitus validated within the school and developed through 'early immersion into a world of cultivated people, practices and objects' (Bourdieu, 1986: 81). She had mastered the principles of aesthetic taste and was able to display her appreciation of high culture in ways that would be rewarded. Unlike Carly and Vicky's experiences of jarring, Nancy moved with disinterested ease through social space, inhabiting the field with a sense of entitlement and claiming her place as the ideal Priory student and aspirational subject. And as I listened and nodded in discomfort at my inability to comprehend or respond adequately to her knowledge of Calvino, Nancy also exposed my 'lack' of distinction.

In this next section I move from the institution to examine the intergenerational practices that shaped the young women's aspirations and their accompanying tensions.

Class-specific intricacies of maternal involvement: precarious futures and the burden of aspiration

As Walkerdine *et al.* (2001) argue, parental desires for their children's future operate with different class dynamics: 'For middle-class families . . . what is aimed at by children is becoming like their parents. . . . For working-class daughters of aspirational parents the message is quite different; it is clearly about not becoming like them' (2001: 158). Irwin and Elley's (2013) research on parental expectations and aspirations for their children's future reveals similar class differences, where they note that 'those in middling and less advantaged contexts typically hoping for their children to do better than themselves' (2013: 119). However, while much scholarship has focused on middle- and working-class parents, Irwin and Elley shed light on inter- and intra-class differences in parents' subjective orientations to their children's future. They argue that parental expectations within intermediate- and working-class families were informed by parent's own 'experiences of upward mobility and feelings that they themselves has not been encouraged or supported in this way by their own parents' (2013: 120).

Experiences of upward mobility among Vicky and Carly's parents were significant themes within their accounts: both described their mothers as 'young mums' who had unhappy childhood and school experiences, only achieving 'good jobs' later in life:

Vicky: My mum dropped out [of school]. She was a nanny and then a temp, in an office and built herself up. She couldn't get any higher without any proper qualifications so she [did] an evening course in human resources or something to get quite a top job in her office. Because of that she wants me to be successful.

Carly: My mum likes the idea of me getting an exciting job 'cos she wanted me to broaden my horizons . . . 'cos she only got to get where she wanted after she had us. . . . You know, it took her time. So she wants me to just get out there and do it all now.

Such intergenerational callings for a 'better life' have been discussed elsewhere, where gaining a degree and a 'decent job' is understood to be highly valued by parents who had been denied this themselves (Lawler, 2000; Walkerdine *et al.*, 2001; Irwin and Elley, 2013). While it is not possible to make significant claims on the mother's actual experiences, what I want to call attention to here is the place of this (imagined or real) maternal trajectory within Vicky and Carly's own aspirational narratives. Indeed, the theme of maternal 'going without' appeared to give rise to self-perceptions that they should exceed the career and educational achievements that went before them. In their accounts, we sense the presence of an intense maternal orientation towards their children's future constructed around economic security and a 'good career'. Such orientations are more aligned with the middle class (Gillies, 2007; Reay, 1998a, 1998b, 2005a). Given these mothers' working-class histories, this adds weight to Irwin and Elley's claim that 'a future focus' which is often associated with a middle-class ethic is 'manifest across a much wider population' (2013: 120).

In Skeggs' (1997) pivotal study, the working-class women she interviewed made 'strenuous efforts to deny, disidentify and dissimulate . . . attempt[ing] to display their distinction from being classified as working-class through a variety of methods [which] indicated a strong desire to be middle-class' (1997: 94–5). Desires to take on some (but not all) of the dispositions classified as 'middle class' were manifest in their consumption practices and dress. However, this may also be sought via other processes of dis-identification. Indeed, attempts to realize 'class mobility' can incorporate material, social and physical practices of movement (for example, through movement to 'better' areas, investment in higher education or climbing the career ladder) as well as forms of psychic distancing. In Carly and Vicky's accounts these practices of distancing and dis-identification are played out on and through the figure of the mother. Like the upwardly mobile young women in Lawler's (2000) study who had to reject their working-class mothers to establish their 'different' class position, Carly and Vicky also appeared to use their mothers' education and work trajectory and identity to construct their future selves. Vicky called upon her mother's '9–5' office job to imagine her future self where work functions as a site of pleasure and self-actualization: 'I just hate repetitiveness. I couldn't stand having a monotonous office job like my mum's, just working to get paid [. . .] I'd love [to work in] theatre 'cos its different . . . God, I couldn't do what she [mum] does'.

Carly also drew on her mother's narrative. However, this was complicated, revealing the various practices of (self-) regulation in the formation of the 'aspirational subject' as a place of class struggle. Here, Carly revealed her

desires to *be like* her (young) mother – having a child at 18. However this caused conflict as she struggled to defend from the (imagined) judgement of others as being 'that sort of girl' – where young motherhood has been subject to practices of pathologization and devaluation:

Carly: In five years time I'd like to be married with children. That's number one 'cos my mum had me when she was 18 and I'd like to do the same . . . That's a thousand times more important than a career. But . . . I don't want to be stereotyped as *that sort of girl* who just wants kids. I would feel a bit of a failure. I'd rather prove that I do have ambition and I work hard.

The creative sector to which these young women were aspiring is characterized by a lack of clear pathways, a preponderance of unpaid work and informal recruitment mechanisms which operate as forms of social closure, contributing to a chronic lack of workforce diversity (Allen *et al.*, 2012, 2013). Opportunities to realize aspirations for such careers are particularly constrained for some social groups. Such uncertainty was felt by these young women and generated particularly difficult feelings which appeared to operate intergenerationally. For example, Vicky described how she'd been encouraged to pursue more 'stable' pathways as possible safeguards from the struggles her mother had experienced:

Vicky: She had a rough childhood [and] tries to give us what she never had. . . . She wants nice successful kids. That's why she doesn't want me to go into this career 'cos it's so unstable and you don't get paid much . . . [She'd rather] I open a hairdressing business and make loads of money . . . or go to uni[versity] and do teaching or nursing 'cos she said I'll always have a job. She thinks I'll be ruining my life and end up working at Tesco.

Similarly, Carly discussed her mother's anxieties surrounding her career choice, revealing a palpable fear that she would be unable to fulfil her side of the bargain:

Carly: [Work] won't [be] a constant thing, there'll be gaps. My boyfriend's mum works in a department store and said I could come and sell perfume. But my mum said 'I don't want you doing that. You've spent two years studying, what's the point of you doing that and then work selling perfume?'. . . It's difficult. I'm really scared.

Irwin and Elley (2013: 122) propose that the 'fear of falling' associated with the middle class within sociological literature is less a universal and general trait of the middle classes but 'more likely to be associated with specific experiences and concerns' – specifically intergenerational experiences of movement from working- to middle-class contexts. I argue that for Carly and Vicky, their mother's own biography – real or imagined – is significant to the production of

their anxiety. Working in Tesco or selling perfume becomes felt as a form of failure, the ‘unambitious’ shop girl (Walkerdine, 2006: 17), symbolizing the constrained existence their mothers had fought to escape. Their mothers’ experiences of ‘unfulfilled aspirations’ powerfully structured these young women’s consciousness, lived as heavy burdens. As Lawler (2000) shows, growing up the daughter of a working-class mother intent on securing her escape from the working-class *through you* is not easy. In this unfolding intergenerational project of aspiration, there is a great deal at stake, not least the management of deep ontological conflicts.

We saw earlier how Vicky’s entry to the school engendered self-awareness and self-judgement. In what follows, we see how this shift in habitus also produced a new awareness of her mother’s ways of being:

Vicky: My mum never got anything when she was growing up. They didn’t have money . . . She told me that she’d get a pencil case for Christmas. That’s why she tries to give us what she never had. She’s got this idea of what a family should be. She wants her fancy home, nice holiday so she can say, ‘ooh I go to the south of France’ . . . She’s too *obsessed* with having the *right* things. . . . It’s cringey.

Vicky’s affective, visceral response to her mother’s ‘obsessive’ desire for ‘the right things’ – the recoiling ‘cringe’ – are telling. We might usefully return to Bourdieu’s (1986) discussion of the double bind of the *petit bourgeoisie* in France who sought to distinguish themselves from the working class through their acquisition of material wealth. Despite a ‘disappearance of economic constraints’, their ‘eager’ enthusiasm for culture bore the marks of effort and exposed them to accusations of pretention (1986: 274). Judged by her daughter, Vicky’s mother’s desires for respectability by accumulating the ‘goods of the world of privilege and possession’ (Steedman, 1986: 38), operated as ‘both a marker and a burden of class’ (Walkerdine *et al.*, 2001: 45; Skeggs, 1997). Her attempts at embourgeoisement and desire for external approval expose her fragile middle-class status (Friedman, 2013).

Desires for ‘success’ are bequeathed with anxiety, particularly in austere times. Being middle class does not shield from ‘bumps in the road’ (Lareau, 2011: 264), yet these anxieties are differently felt. Children of the working class inherit anxiety about their class position which structures their consciousness, if not preventing them from doing things, then bringing with it a sense of lack. Children of the middle class inherit a sense of entitlement about their future success, and ‘although middle-class parents cannot count on their children’s motivation, they can draw on stocks of readily available resources in seeking to secure a hoped for future in their children’ (Irwin and Elley, 2013: 127), including knowledge of higher education, experience of professional careers and ‘proximate’ reference points aligned with that sector. In Nancy’s account we find a similar ‘gluing together of resources and aspirations’ (Irwin and

Elley, 2013: 127), where her parents' own professional experience of the creative sector were drawn upon as she imagined her own future:

Nancy: My parents' careers were always up and down. My mum got offers for shows from Saatchi. So some weeks were amazing, and other times it would be potatoes for dinner. That's just the way it is in the arts . . . When I said I wanted to come here, my mum reminded me of how difficult it is to work in this sector. But then she said, 'can you imagine doing anything else? What's important to you?' And I said 'being able to write and create'. And she said 'well there you go then. Do it'.

Unlike Carly and Vicky, anxieties about securing aspirations were relatively absent from Nancy's account. Despite having little money, the cultural capital available to Nancy didn't simply provide the 'right' knowledge, networks and tastes. It also produced a different orientation to the risks associated with her aspirations. The uncertain economic rewards associated with careers in the creative sector were insignificant to Nancy who oriented herself to the symbolic. Nancy's habitus was 'free from hunger' (Ahmed, 2010: 35) with the will to choose, rather than a taste for the necessary.

Furthermore, as Skeggs (2005: 971) argues, for the middle class 'choosing danger, adventure and risk may enhance personal exchange-value. . . . For the working-class it is likely to result in imprisonment. . . . only some people can or would want to politically mobilize their affects (of trauma or suffering)'. Nancy's fearless embrace of the risky career, and her emphasis on the 'injuries' of going without ('potatoes for dinner') can perhaps be understood as part of this resourcing of the middle-class subject, mobilized in part *because* she has resources which can soften the blow. For Carly and Vicky, with shorter histories of middle classness, aspiring towards a risky future may not bring literal imprisonment, but may well bring a form of social imprisonment: a 'falling back' into that place which they have been encouraged to leave.

Conclusion

Isn't the greatest disadvantage of all being written off by those so in hock to a culture of low expectations that they have forgotten what it's like to be ambitious, to want to transcend your background? . . . I'm not here to defend privilege, I'm here to spread it. (David Cameron, 2012)

As this paper has shown, aspirations – their performance, production and the capacity by which to secure them – are powerfully shaped by class, revealed here to be made up of a complex interplay of material, cultural, discursive and psychological resources and dispositions. The young women discussed here inhabited different locations in social space which shaped how their aspirations were formed, regulated and read. Nancy, replete with the cultural capital,

performing the ‘right’ tastes that were legitimized and valued in the school and wider field of the arts and cultural sector to which she aspired, had a ‘feel for the game’, moving seamlessly within social space. Carly and Vicky, despite having modest stocks of economic capital, experienced jarring and discomfort which demanded a realignment of dispositions and aspirations. Yet they had years of knowledge and experience to make up for, before they could ever ‘get it right’, manifest in a constant sense of lack and fragility.

The constant state of disorientation about their place in the world reveals the deep ontological insecurity experienced by children of the working class who are educationally successful or aspire to enter fields of which they are not the natural inhabitants. This inherited, embodied insecurity structures their consciousness long after the objective conditions of its emergence have dislodged. Their lack of a middle-class history made their position a precarious one and Vicky and Carly were managing this emotionally whilst trying to ‘succeed’ in their studies.

In this austere neo-liberal climate, we are surrounded by even louder voices telling us to aspire for ‘better’, to be ambitious, to ‘transcend our backgrounds’ – despite growing levels of poverty and youth unemployment. The rhetoric of aspiration that saturates the present not only positions the working class as something to escape. It also disconnects young people from the social, material and emotional landscape within which their aspirations are (per)formed and realized. More so, aspiration rhetoric contributes to a wider shift towards a hardening of public attitudes and growing contempt for the poor, where the causes of poverty are located in individuals rather than the structural changes effected by neoliberalism (Tyler, 2013). The withdrawal of a vocabulary of exploitation and injustice under neoliberalism has deeply damaging consequences for those who experience class inequality. With only individualized explanations to hand, class inequality produces ‘ugly feelings’ (Ngai in Skeggs and Loveday, 2012) that can’t be attached to the right object – ‘to the injustices that produced the affect’ (2012: 487). Without a conceptual frame of class, these may be internalized and experienced as shame, self-doubt and lack. Or they may be projected onto phantom others (‘the ‘undeserving poor’, ‘the tasteless’) (Shildrick and MacDonald, 2013). As young people are called upon to ‘aspire’, we must not only continue to call attention to the spaces in which aspirations can be fulfilled. We must also keep class on the political agenda as a way of speaking the injury produced through constant judgement, devaluation, exclusion and frustration.

Manchester Metropolitan University

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to the young women who took part in this research. I would also like to thank Bev Skeggs for her patience and careful input, Sam Friedman for sharing his work with me, and the three anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments.

Notes

- 1 Estuary English (EE) is a form of dialect or accent that has its origin around the river Thames and the south-east of England, often described as falling between RP (received pronunciation) and London 'cockney' speech. In the post-war era it was identified as resulting from a 'loosening' of social stratification and the rise of comprehensive schooling. EE has been associated with British celebrities such as David and Victoria Beckham and Denise Van Outen.
- 2 The EMA was introduced by New Labour to improve post-16 participation. It provided students between the ages of 16 and 18 with up to £30 per week to assist with the purchase of books, travel and equipment. Individuals were eligible if their annual household income was below £30,810 (tax year 2006/2007). In 2011 it was controversially abolished by the Coalition Government.
- 3 *The X Factor* is a TV talent show which originated in the UK in 2006. Individuals and groups compete against each other in open auditions and then in a weekly singing contest to secure a record contract.

References

- Ahmed, S., (2010), *The Promise of Happiness*, London: Duke University Press.
- Allen, K. and Hollingworth, S., (2013), 'Social class, place and urban young people's aspirations for work in the knowledge economy: "sticky subjects" or "cosmopolitan creative"?' *Urban Studies*, 50 (3): 499–517.
- Allen, K. and Mendick, H., (2012), 'Young people's uses of celebrity: class, gender and "improper" ' celebrity', *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 34 (1): 77–93.
- Allen, K. and Mendick, H., (2013), 'Keeping it real? Social class, young people and authenticity in Reality TV', *Sociology*, 47 (3): 460–476.
- Allen, K., Quinn, J., Hollingworth, S. and Rose, A., (2012), 'Doing diversity and evading equality: the case of student work placements in the creative sector', in Taylor, Y. (ed.), *Educational Diversity: The Subject of Difference and Different Subjects*, 180–200, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Allen, K., Quinn, J., Hollingworth, S. and Rose, A., (2013), 'Becoming employable students and "ideal" creative workers: exclusion and inequality in higher education work placements', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 34 (3): 431–452.
- Ball, S., (2003), *Class Strategies and the Education Market: The Middle Classes and Social Advantage*, London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Ball, S. and Vincent C., (2001), 'New class relations in education: the strategies of the "fearful" middle-classes', in Demaine, J. (ed.), *Sociology of Education Today*, London: Palgrave.
- Blair, T., (1999), 'Foreword' in National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education, *All our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education*, London: DCMS.
- Bourdieu, P., (1977), *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P., (1986), *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, London: Routledge.
- Bourdieu, P., (1993), *Sociology in Question*, London: Sage.
- Bourdieu, P., (2004), 'Forms of capital', in Ball, S. (ed.), *The RoutledgeFalmer Reader in Sociology of Education*, London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Brown, G., (2010), 'We can break the glass ceiling', *The Guardian*, 15 January, www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/jan/15/aspiration-mobility-middle-class-labour
- Burke, P.J. and McManus, J., (2009), *Art for a Few: Exclusion and Misrecognition in Arts and Design Higher Education Admissions*, London: NALN.
- Cabinet Office, (2011), *Social Mobility Strategy: Opening Doors: Breaking Barriers*, London: Cabinet Office.

- Cameron, D., (2012), 'Conservative Party Conference speech', 10 October, available at: www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/conservative/9598534/David-Camerons-Conservative-Party-Conference-speech-in-full.html
- Department for Culture Media and Sport, (2001). *Culture and Creativity: The Next Ten Years* (Green Paper), London: The Stationery Office.
- Department for Culture Media and Sport and Department for Education and Skills, (2006), *Government Response to Paul Roberts Report 'Nurturing Creativity in Young People'*, London: DCMS/DfES.
- Department for Work and Pensions and Department for Education, (2011), *A New Approach to Child Poverty*, London: The Stationery Office.
- Devine, F., (2004), *Class Practices. How Parents Help their Children Get Good Jobs*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Devine, F., Savage, M., Crompton, R. and Scott, J. (eds), (2004), *Rethinking Class: Identities, Cultures and Lifestyles*, London: Palgrave.
- Dumais, S.A., (2002), 'Cultural Capital, Gender, and School Success: The Role of Habitus', *Sociology of Education*, 75 (1): 44–68.
- Flemmen, M., (2013), 'Putting Bourdieu to work for class analysis: reflections on some recent contributions', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 64 (2): 325–343.
- Friedman, S., (2013), 'The price of the ticket: rethinking the experience of social mobility', *Sociology*, Online First: <http://soc.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/07/18/0038038513490355.abstract>
- Gewirtz, S., (2001), 'Cloning the Blairs: New Labour's programme for the re-socialization of working-class parents', *Journal of Education Policy*, 16 (4): 365–378.
- Gillies, V., (2005), 'Raising the "meritocracy" parenting and the individualization of social class', *Sociology*, 39 (5): 835–853.
- Gillies, V., (2007), *Marginalised Mothers: Exploring Working-class Experience of Parenting*, London: Routledge
- Hall, S., (2007), 'Notes on deconstructing the popular', in Storey, J. (ed.), *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, London: Pearson.
- Hall, S. and Jefferson, T., (1975), *Resistance through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*, London: Routledge.
- Irwin, S. and Elley, S., (2011), 'Concerted cultivation? Parenting values, education and class diversity', *Sociology*, 45 (3): 480–495.
- Irwin, S. and Elley, S., (2013), 'Parents' hopes and expectations for their children's future occupations', *The Sociological Review*, 61 (1).
- Jenkins, R., (2002), *Pierre Bourdieu*, London: Routledge.
- Johnson, P. and Lawler, S., (2005), 'Coming home to love and class', *Sociological Research Online*, 10 (3), www.socresonline.org.uk/10/3/johnson.html
- Jones, O., (2011), *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class*, London: Verso.
- Jowell, T., (2005), 'Tackling poverty of aspiration through rebuilding the public realm', a speech for Demos at Toynbee Hall, London, 12 April.
- Lareau A., (2003), *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race and Family Life*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Lareau, A., (2011), *Unequal Childhoods. Class, Race and Family Life. 2nd edition*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Lawler S., (1999), 'Getting out and getting away: women's narratives of class mobility', *Feminist Review*, 63: 3–24.
- Lawler, S., (2000), *Mothering the Self: Mothers, Daughters, Subjects*, London: Routledge.
- McRobbie, A., (2000), *Feminism and Youth Culture*, London: Macmillan.
- McRobbie, A. and Garber, J., (1975), 'Girls and subcultures: an exploration', in Hall, S. and Jefferson, T. (eds), *Resistance through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*, London: Routledge.

- National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education, (1999), *All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education*, London: DCMS.
- Reay, D., (1998a), 'Engendering social reproduction: mothers in the educational marketplace', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 19 (2): 195–209.
- Reay, D., (1998b), *Class Work: Mother's Involvement in their Children's Primary Schooling*, London: UCL Press.
- Reay, D., (2004a), '“It's all becoming a habitus”': beyond the habitual use of habitus in educational research', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 25 (4): 431–444.
- Reay, D., (2004b), 'Gendering Bourdieu's concepts of capitals? Emotional capital, women and social class', *The Sociological Review*, 52: 57–74.
- Reay, D., (2005a), 'Doing the dirty work of social class? Mothers' work in support of their children's schooling', *The Sociological Review*, 53: 104–116.
- Reay D., (2005b), 'Beyond consciousness? The psychic landscape of social class', *Sociology*, 39 (5): 911–928.
- Reay, D., David, M. and Ball, S., (2005), *Degrees of Choice: Social Class, Race and Gender in Higher Education*, Stoke On Trent: Trentham Books.
- Roberts, P., (2006), *Nurturing Creativity in Young People: A Report to Government to Inform Future Policy*, London: DCMS and DfES.
- Roberts, S. and Evans, S., (2012), '“Aspirations” and imagined futures: the im/possibilities for Britain's young working class'. in Atkinson, W., Roberts, S. and Savage, M. (eds), *Class Inequality in Austerity Britain*, 70–89, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Shildrick, T., MacDonald, R., Webster, C. and Garthwaite, K., (2012), *Poverty and Insecurity: Life in Low-pay, No-pay Britain*, Bristol: Policy Press.
- Shildrick, T. and MacDonald, R., (2013), 'Poverty talk: how people experiencing poverty deny their poverty and why they blame “the poor”', *The Sociological Review*, 61: 285–303.
- Skeggs, B., (1997), *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable*, London: Sage.
- Skeggs, B., (2004), *Class, Self, Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Skeggs, B., (2005), 'The making of class and gender through visualizing moral subject formation', *Sociology*, 39 (5): 965–982.
- Skeggs, B. and Loveday, V., (2012), 'Struggles for value: value practices, injustice, judgment, affect and the idea of class', *British Journal of Sociology*, 63 (3): 472–490.
- Slater, T., (2013), 'The myth of “Broken Britain”': welfare reform and the production of ignorance', *Antipode* 45 (early view).
- Steedman, C., (1986), *Landscape for a Good Woman*, London: Virago.
- Tomlinson, S., (2004), 'The rise of the meritocracy? New Labour and education in the second term', *Social Policy Review*, 16.
- Tyler, I., (2013), *Revolt Subjects: Social Abjection and Resistance in Neoliberal Britain*, London: Zed.
- Vincent, C., (2001), 'Social class and parental agency', *Journal of Education Policy*, 16 (4): 347–364.
- Walkerdine, V., (1997), *Daddy's Girl: Young Girls and Popular Culture*, London: Macmillan.
- Walkerdine, V., (2003), 'Reclassifying upward mobility: femininity and the neo-liberal subject', *Gender and Education*, 15 (3): 237–248.
- Walkerdine, V., (2006), 'Workers in the new economy: subjectivity as border crossing', *Ethos, Journal of the Society for Psychological Anthropology*, 34: 10–41.
- Walkerdine, V., Lucey, H. and Melody, J., (2001), *Growing Up Girl: Psychosocial Explorations of Gender and Class*, Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Wintour, P. and Lewis, P., (2011), 'X-Factor culture fuelled the UK riots, says Iain Duncan Smith', *The Guardian*, 9 December, available at: www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/dec/09/x-factor-culture-fuelled-riots