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a psychosocial approach to class

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A psychosocial approach to class

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to explore how a psychosocial approach to class can shed light on the ways in which neoliberal governmentality works through healthism´s moral judgments and how different emotions within a "field of judgments" are rooted in class relations.

Dahl states that neoliberalism "is not confined to what is traditionally understood as the political sphere, but it is a new societal logic suffusing our bodies and minds" (Dahl, 2012, p. 284). This article explores the implications of this statement in a psychosocial perspective, arguing that class morals are currently being revitalized. The main argument therefore is that neoliberal "governance through risk" profits from an intuitive class consciousness where emotions such as superiority, entitlement, satisfaction, guilt, shame and resentment are habituated experiences of class in the field of moral judgments. The basis for my approach to class is Bourdieu's description of how class struggles are "at the heart of culture, and consequently something we all internalise, whether we recognise that internalisation or not" (Bourdieu, 2010, p. 251).

I have chosen two empirical cases to illustrate my theoretical points. The cases stem from extensive fieldwork that I conducted as part of my PhD (Aamann, 2017a) among ethnic Danish middle- and working-class parents when involved in their six-year-old children's start in the final preschool class. Denmark is rarely understood as a class society, but is by contrast seen as one of the strongholds of the welfare state. However, despite an extensive redistribution of wealth, DK does have a range of the traditional class inequalities (Sabiers and Amin 2013; Olsen et al. 2014). Therefore, DK may be viewed as an extraordinarily strong case in studies of how class is currently increasing its impact on subjectivity through moral judgments and the associated feelings.

The article opens with a theoretical outline of some features of neoliberalism in relation to class and subjectivity. This is followed by a brief account of the method and data, after which the illustration via the two cases is unfolded. I will elaborate on the psychosocial approach to class in dialogue with the cases. The final sections of the article are the discussion and conclusion where I discuss the psychosocial contributions and outline potentials for analysing the connections between class, morals and neoliberal governmentality.

The field of judgments

Neoliberalism celebrates the individual's freedom of choice. It is, however, a well-established point that neoliberal governmentality operates precisely through "freedom" (Rose, 1999). Thus, as noted by Brown, "Neoliberal subjects are controlled *through* their freedom…because of neoliberalism´s *moralization* of the consequences of this freedom" (Brown, 2005, p. 44, italics in original).

One consequence of this is that *displaying* (Finch, 2007) one's responsibility and thereby one's moral worth becomes central. Neoliberal govermentality therefore works not only through evaluative (self-)monitoring, but also through demands to *display oneself* and thereby be morally judged. In line with this,

Skeggs finds that "people are increasingly expected to publicly legitimate themselves as good and worthy subjects" (Skeggs, 2011b, p. 496).

In this sense, neoliberalism reinforces evaluations of moral worth (Lamont, 2012). This leads to the establishment of a particular evaluative and performative culture: "a field of judgments" (Rich and Evans, 2009, p. 163), which may be understood as "a mode of regulation that employs judgments, comparisons, and displays" (Rich and Evans, 2009, p. 163). This "regime of moral judgments" is ubiquitously discursive, symbolic, institutional, relational and internalized. Skeggs and Loveday further note that there seems to be taking place an "intensification and legitimation, in the expression and maintenance of class distinction" (Skeggs and Loveday, 2012, p. 473). The neoliberal "regime of judgments" thus seems to be reinforcing moral class distinctions.

Neoliberal foundation: Individual responsibility for health

According to several scholars, health has become an ideology (Crawford, 1980, Lupton, 1995; Greco, 2004). Crawford defines this "healthism" as "…the preoccupation with personal health as a primary – often *the* primary – focus for the definition and achievement of well-being" (Crawford 1980, p. 368, italics in original). In this sense, the individual responsible for health, implied in healthism, "has become a model of and a model for the neoliberal restructuring of American society" (Crawford, 2006, p. 410).

Risk prevention plays a crucial role in this neoliberal "conduct of conduct" as risk issues have a moralizing (Hunt, 2003) and normalizing function, since "…the naming of something as a risk calls for certain forms of action, forcing individuals into self-governance according to the norms of what it means to make the 'right choice'" (Montelius and Nygren, 2014, p. 434).

In this light, healthiness and risk prevention become central to how the neoliberal subject is governed (Hamann, 2009) and health and risk practices are to be regarded as "a kind of moral performance infused with ideological meanings" (Montelius and Nygren, 2014, p. 435).

What I argue is that these ideological meanings both stem from and revitalize class-based moral judgments. The article thus explore the potentials of a psychosocial approach in order to develop a theoretical framework that can grasp the emotional implications of this.

Class and subjectivity

It is a well-argued point that neoliberalism marginalizes class as an explanation of inequality (McLaren, 2015), neglecting the structural circumstances that contribute strongly to shaping subjectivity.

According to Lawler, sociology tends to investigate class "as a set of 'empty' signifiers (employment, housing, etc.) waiting to be filled by interchangeable social actors" (Lawler, 2005, p. 797), while psychology tends to individualize experiences of social inequality and injustice rooted in class (Walkerdine, 2003, p. 238). Another important consequence of the transition from industrial to financial capitalism, by Tyler termed "neoliberalism" (Tyler, 2015), is that the link between class and identity appears to be weak (Casey, 2010). Instead, class seems to be "leaking beyond the traditional measures of classification" in sociology (Skeggs, 2005, p. 969).

Therefore, there is a need to develop an approach that is sensitive to the fuzzy and subtle character of class and its cultural, subjective and emotional dimensions. This is what I believe that a psychosocial framework is able to do. Reay states that "anxieties, conflicts, desires, defences, ambivalences and tensions within classed identities" are frequently overlooked and that "social class is not only etched

into our culture, it is still deeply etched into our psyches, despite class awareness and class consciousness being seen as 'a thing of the past'" (Reay, 2005, p. 912).

Qualitative researchers on class argue that moral evaluations of self and others often relate and respond to class (Steedman, 1986; Walkerdine and Lucey, 1989; Skeggs, 1997, 2005; Reay, 2005; Sayer, 2005). In this light, class works in relational processes that comprise "both a social filter and a key mechanism individuals utilise in placing themselves and others" (Reay, 1997, p. 226) in a strongly moralized terrain. In line with this, Skeggs defines class as a "dialogical relationship between those who judge and those, who are being judged [and between] those who can authorize their judgements and those who cannot" (Skeggs 2013, 5:27).

Another central feature of class is that it is rarely mentioned explicitly, as it is an embarrassing topic (Sayer, 2005). Instead, class usually appears as moral euphemisms (Bottero, 2004) that rely on "the process of interpretation to do the work of association" (Skeggs, 2005, p. 965).

In the present article, I intend to shed light on the emotional implications of these euphemistic classifying processes of "evaluation, moral attribution and authorization in the production of subjectivity" (p. 976) and how they are driven by neoliberal governance through risk, responsibilization and the associated morality.

My psychosocial approach is inspired by early cultural studies based on Williams' "structure of feeling" (Williams, 1958) and his argument that "it is at the level of the individual life that the cultural effects of social inequality are most apparent" (During, 1999, p. 2). I am also strongly inspired by a small feminist body of psychosocial work on class, referred to by Hey as "the 'English' school of feminist post-structuralists" (Hey, 2003, p. 321) (see for example Walkerdine, 1996, 2008; Mahony and Zmroczek, 1997; Reay, 2005, 2011), which has explored how "class has always worked its way through, on and behind us" (Hey, 2003, p. 320). The work of these scholars on class and its subjective dimensions draws on the notion of class formulated by Kuhn: "Class is something beneath your clothes, under your skin, in your reflexes, in your psyche, at the very core of your being" (Kuhn, 2002, p. 98).

Empirical cases

The empirical data I will use to illustrate my theoretical points stem from six months of fieldwork that I conducted as part of my PhD, in which I explored health practices and parenting in a class perspective. During the fieldwork, I participated in a range of events with the parents, for example, four parents' meetings initiated by the schools, seven meetings held by the local parent councils in their homes and 13 different social engagements. In addition, I conducted ten individual walk and talk interviews with mothers lasting from 30 to 90 minutes, and semi-structured in-depth interviews with six mothers, lasting from 50 to 150 minutes. I also observed 15 school-home meetings (lasting 15 minutes) and 21 introductory consultations (lasting 45 minutes) with school nurses, in addition to seven health consultations with older children at a fourth school.

When a child starts school in Denmark, parents are expected to establish a kind of community around the child's particular class. This is initiated through a range of social events with the purpose of getting to know each other and becoming friends in order to prevent bullying and social exclusion in class. In the context of "the preventative turn" (Mccarthy, 2011) and especially targeting parents due to "parent determinism" (Furedi, 2001), parents are being particularly monitored (Jensen, 2010; Lee *et al.*, 2014) and exposed to the field of judgments. These parents are, however, mostly women, as they are still, even in Scandinavia, the primary caregivers. With reference to Reay's writings, the Swedish researcher

Forsberg writes: "Parental involvement still means very different things to mothers and fathers. Fathers 'help out' and are involved 'at a distance', while their partners are given the main responsibility with few options of not being involved" (Forsberg, 2009, p. 39).

Furthermore, as children have become "loci of risk anxiety" (Jackson and Scott, 1999, p. 86), mothers in particular are subject to a close monitoring of their "ability" to "take responsibility" (Aamann and Dybbroe, 2018; Hennum, 2014) for their children's health. These circumstances make mothering practices in the context of starting school a fertile ground for exploring how a psychosocial perspective can illuminate how risk-based neoliberal governance profits from class-related emotions.

I have chosen two very different mothers as exemplary cases, Maria and Veronica. I will introduce them in the analysis, where I consider the different contexts in which the data were produced as an expression of fields of judgments.

Case 1: Feeling the convenience of entitlement

Maria has an academic education and works as a development consultant in a government agency. She was an only child in a nuclear family; her father is a bank manager and her mother is a high school teacher. She and her partner Ian, who is self-employed in the IT industry, have a six-year-old son, Birk, who is just starting school. They live in a large renovated apartment in one of the gentrified parts of Copenhagen. Maria appears cheerful, energetic and well-spoken in school and social contexts. She is a typical example of the parents I met with privileged backgrounds. They demonstrated a relaxed confidence, enjoyed themselves and conversed at ease with other parents and teachers and seemed cheery and comfortable in school-home interviews and in talks with the school nurse about starting school.

At the first formal parents' meeting, Maria offers to organize playgroups with another mother. The two mothers meet at a café, where I have also been invited. At one point they talk about the parent group and Maria says cheerfully:

"It's really exciting, a place like a school where you can say: all of a sudden there are some people here that you'd NEVER *meet at work. Or at least you wouldn't necessarily be friends with ... I mean, well, one of our friends said, 'I hope none of the parents are smokers' [laughter]. Or else: 'Well, what kind of food do they get there? Do we want our little kiddies to be in a smoky house eating sugary food on a weekday?'".* [1]

Although Maria makes a parody of her friend's remark about the other parents' smoking and eating habits, and thus seems to distance herself from the statement, she nevertheless manages to display herself as a parent who certainly does not smoke and only gives her children sweets at weekends, and who does not meet "that type of person" at work or in her social circle. Her circle of friends apparently consists of people who disapprove of parents who smoke.

In this way, the meeting between the two mothers constitutes a field of judgments in which Maria displays her responsibility by identifying children of parents with what is sometimes termed "risk behaviour" as those you would not want your child to have contact with.

The increased focus on health, as previously indicated, leads to a stricter moral regulation of society: "For centuries, the poor, the working class and immigrants have routinely been constructed as the

[1] In Scandinavia, many parents traditionally only give their children sweets on Fridays. Likewise, many kindergartens often have a ban on sweets and food containing sugar.

Other in public health discourses and practices… On the inside of the boundary lies social order, 'Us', while the outside is 'a twilight place of outcasts, danger and pollution'" (Lupton, 1995, p. 47).

The interesting aspect from a psychosocial perspective is that Maria seems to "naturally" understand herself as one of "us" and in addition sees herself as someone with a mandate to judge parents with different risk orientations than the dominant discursive ones to which she subscribes, based on her self-presentation. We can read between the lines that those parents are irresponsible.

Here I would like to draw on Reay's further development of Bourdieu's concept of habitus in a psychosocial direction (Reay, 2000, 2004, 2015), where she adds gender and emotions to Bourdieu's analytical framework. This is in order to "develop a psychosocial understanding of habitus that allows for a better and richer understanding of how the exterior – wider social structures – is experienced and mediated by the interior, the psyche" (Reay, 2015, p. 9).

Reay interprets Bourdieu's writings as psychosocial, since he argues: "the confrontation between the habitus and the field is always marked by affectivity, by affective transactions between habitus and the field" and because he also appears to "recognise that psychological and psychoanalytic processes, as much as social and economic ones, constitute the habitus" (Reay, 2015, p. 12).

Maria's privileged position in the social structures facilitates emotions such as superiority and entitlement and a naturalized feeling for drawing moral distinctions (judging people) that place her in a favourable position: smoking and too much sugar serve as a moral euphemism for "lower class" and Maria's self-presentation underlines that she "NEVER" meets such people socially or in her academic work. This is in line with Crawford, who points out: "Healthism is a kind of elitist moralizing about what are believed to be unhealthy coping behaviors" (Crawford, 1980, p. 385).

Feeling the comfort of judging

It is also interesting, in this moralizing health and risk prevention terrain, to see how working class mothering practices are held up as the antithesis of good parenting (Gillies, 2007). Other studies have addressed how the moral regulation embedded in health discourses is grounded in class morals; health works as a euphemism for class and as a marker of respectability, in contrast to "bad" mothering, where moral deprivation and "risky lifestyle choices" are closely linked to working-classness (Aamann, 2015). Furthermore, as noted by Tyler (2013), neo-liberal governmentality works through stigma: by scapegoating "the irresponsible", processes of othering establish a position for the responsible and morally worthwhile, dealing with legitimate risks in legitimate ways. The moral devaluation of parents with other risk practices can therefore be said to further serve as a means by which Maria displays herself as responsible.

Thus, when Maria displays herself as a risk-minimizing mother to the other two people, this implies a moral judgment on the parents who perhaps smoke and regularly serve sugary food. What is striking is that the very risks that are believed to be linked to passive smoking and excessive sugar play a rather insignificant role in the conversation. The key issue appears to be to present oneself as morally responsible *through* one's concern about *other* parents' "risk behaviour".

Maria's parodic portrayal of the concerns of a "mother hen" about what kind of people other parents are shows how neoliberalism´s implied moral imperative of risk minimization permeates the relationship between the mothers within the field of judgments, where class-based distinctions are revitalized through healthism.

Feeling the joy of displaying responsible mothering

In the school-home interview, Maria tells the two teachers about the first playgroup at a local playground, where four families were invited:

"Maria describes how Lilly's parents had previously written in an e-mail that they would join, but then they did not show up at first. Later, Maria explains, the whole family turned up at the playground - it seemed they had forgotten about the playgroup appointment, and just happened to be going to the same playground! She condemns their visit to the playground as 'quite inappropriate'".

In this extract, Maria again reveals how she considers herself entitled to pass judgment on other parents. She positions herself as someone authorized with a mandate to deprecate Lilly's parents, judging them as people with less moral worth and thereby like some lower (or upper) class parents who lag behind the imperative of proper parenting.

Furthermore, Maria seems totally comfortable in the situation, displaying her involvement in her child's school and her intensive, sensitive mothering practices, which are significant features of middle-class parenting (Jensen, 2010; Hays, 1996; Reay, 1998a; Reay, 1998b; Milkie and Warner, 2014; Lawler, 2005; Vincent et al., 2008). She seems to feel no need to defend or legitimate herself.

During my fieldwork, I could clearly see that the professional middle-class parents felt a certain entitlement; they were at ease with teachers and other professionals, while also strongly displaying their parenting. However, while Maria has no difficulty in displaying herself as a respectable parent, it is quite a different matter for mothers positioned as lower class.

Case 2: Feeling the unease of being under scrutiny

Veronica is in her early 30s and works as a substitute social educator assistant. She grew up in Copenhagen with her sister and single mother, who worked as a health care assistant. She lives in a small flat in the outskirts of Copenhagen with her partner, Tommy, who is a plumber. They have a six-year-old daughter, Liza, who has just started school. They have poor finances, which they say was their own choice, although Veronica is now looking for something more permanent, "just 10-15 hours a week as a basis".

Veronica is friendly and welcoming in school and social contexts. But at the same time, she is quite defensive. She seems serious and reticent, as if she is constantly assessing the atmosphere before speaking. During the school-home interview and the talk with the school nurse, she and Liza mainly listen while the professionals talk.

I have invited myself to Veronica's flat and when I arrive the atmosphere is strained. When I walk up the stairs, all three of them are standing in the narrow doorway to greet me, but the daughter hides behind her mother and refuses to say hello. From my field notes: *"They're expecting me, but they're quite shy and embarrassed, avoiding eye contact and saying little. Veronica says apologetically, 'Seems we're just tired today'. She says she had to promise Liza that it wouldn't be on TV".*

This reference to TV is interesting in light of the growing number of makeover and parenting programmes, which typically display working-class parents with children with poor health (almost always overweight and/or with mental health problems), where a (typically psychology, not social science) expert will teach them proper, i.e. middle-class, parenting practices (Skeggs and Wood, 2011; Vander Schee and Kline, 2013). What is noteworthy is that even the daughter intuitively seems to sense the field of judgments and is therefore worried about whether a researcher's visit to the family will also

lead to a judgment (see also Aamann, 2017b). It is also interesting that the family seems to expect that they will be judged, although none of them seem to want to put themselves on display.

Feeling the pain of having one´s respectability questioned

Yeo points out how middle-class identity has historically been established through distinctions from the aristocracy and the working class, based on the ideal of the housewife as a paragon of virtue and guardian of morality (Yeo, 2005, p. 6). According to Skeggs, that meant: "Respectability became a locus for a growing sense of class identity and social superiority amongst the labour aristocracy, defining themselves against the 'rough' working class…. Respectability was organized around a complex set of practices and representations which defined appropriate and acceptable modes of behavior, language and appearance." (Skeggs, 1997, p. 46).

Furthermore, respectability, in the efforts at emancipation of middle-class women, was manifested in charity work, which consisted primarily of advice to poor mothers: "institutionalized by the pedagogy in which middle-class women were used to transmit their practices (based on a wholly different economic, timescale structure) to 'deficient' working class women" (Skeggs 1997b, p. 48).

By extension, psychosocially oriented studies and Skeggs' longitudinal fieldwork among young working-class women (Skeggs, 1997) show that the lives of low-ranking women are infested with painful experiences of a morally devaluing gaze that typically makes them aspire to be considered respectable.

Respectability thus comprises a form of institutionalized and internalized judgmental gaze that is directed both outwards towards others and inwards towards the self. Accordingly, class is lived and produced on a very intimate level on the basis of these judgments. For example, Steedman points out how class manifests itself as a morally judgmental, institutionalized gaze and how the gaze is internalized: class consciousness permeates as a fear of the moral devaluation implied by being judged as non-respectable (1986).

In light of this, Veronica and her family seem to be aware of this risk of being morally devaluated by the middle-class researcher entering their home.

Feeling the fear of being judged

A few weeks later, I interview Veronica in a local café. In this sequence, she explains to me in detail how Liza is making her own lunch box with two slices of rye bread and vegetables:

Veronica: And then the fruit, it varies: Always a banana, and then - it could be a kiwi or mandarin or an apple or something like that, you see.
Iben: Mm … so what about those fig rolls and that type of ...
Veronica: [interrupting]: No!
Iben: ... snacks?
Veronica: That's sweets!
Iben: Yeeeah - is it?
Veronica: Well, she's got - she actually just got - I was really quite unsure whether I should let go and do it or not, but I let her get one single date as well.
Iben: Mmh?
Veronica: Mmm, and so it's become part of her lunch, too - and you know, I'm kind of thinking: well, eating just one date, that'll be ok, won't it? - But actually it IS sweets. It - it's a little healthier sweets, but after all: It IS sweets.

This interview works as a field of judgments where I am being positioned as the judge (see also Aamann, 2017b) while Veronica displays her mothering practices. This can be seen in the way she stresses how independent her daughter is and in her detailed account of the healthy contents of the lunch box.

Although Veronica agrees to display her parenting practices, she seems afraid of the verdict. She does not seem to notice that I am trying to challenge her categorization of fig rolls as sweets, as I ask, in surprise and doubt, "Yeeah - is it?" Instead, it works as a basis for legitimating her mothering by highlighting it as a kind of extraordinarily restrictive mothering.

Following this, what strikes me is the way in which Veronica interrupts her own sentence three times, when telling me about the date: she has to let me know, before actually mentioning the date, that she was very concerned about whether she should "let go" and do it or not.

Veronica is displaying mothering practices in line with celebrated middle-class "tough love" (Jensen, 2010) as a mother who takes good care of the health of her daughter, restricting her desire for sweet fruit and cultivating her self-discipline (Lareau, 2011), also seen in her use of the phrase "letting go".

Thus, Veronica's apparent eagerness to display mothering practices in line with celebrated and institutionalized parenting practices and thereby perhaps to be judged as respectable might arise from her position in the uncomfortable lower end of the middle class. Elsewhere it is argued that this position causes anxiety (Crozier et al., 2011, p. 102) and a "fear of falling" (Ehrenreich, 1989), of being deemed morally inferior and thus a lower-class mother, not concerned with the health of her child and just "letting go".

Discussion: different positions causing different feelings

While Maria, who generally judged others, seemed to enjoy displaying her mothering practices, Veronica seems considerably more uncomfortable, as a person who neither wants to display herself nor be judged and who in no way sees herself as having a mandate to judge others. Skeggs and Loveday show how the working-class participants in their study were very well aware of "how they were constantly judged and de-legitimated" (Skeggs and Loveday, 2012, p. 472). To further underline this point, we see how Maria invited me to the mothers' meeting while I had to invite myself to Veronica's apartment.

Skeggs points out: "Judgement is the missing hinge between doing subjectivity and being made subject. It is the core of class relationships" (Skeggs, 2011a, 50:00). In terms of this statement, this might suggest that Maria is doing subjectivity whereas Veronica is being made subject.

In psychosocial studies, the increased prevalence of "risk" has been associated with anxiety (Woodward, 2015) and research on this often "includes exploring the external factors and the processes through which social factors become psychic and become part of a person's inner world as well as identifying what is particular about the ways in which external factors express as well as are expressed by internal fears and anxieties" (Woodward, 2015, p. 107). In light of the two cases analysed in this article, it seems that this approach tends to overlook the moral implications of risk by implying that people when managing risk only relate to the "real dangers" associated with a certain risk. In contrast to this, I will argue that the worries expressed by Maria and Veronica about "health risks" are not merely about the future threats to their child´s health, but rather attached to moral judgments.

In both cases, the health risks to be prevented through a healthy diet are secondary risks. It is very clear that "sugary food on a weekday" (Maria) and "sweets" (Veronica) are bad and should be severely restricted, but at the same time, it seems that the "urgent danger" is about morals:

Whereas Maria displays responsibility *through* the moral judgments of other, lower class parents, Veronica clearly fears this risk of being judged as a non-respectable and thereby lower-class mother.

In this way, it becomes clear that Veronica feels under moral scrutiny – e.g. in the interview, where I am interpreted as a kind of "sugar police officer" - precisely the role of the judge that Maria took in her statement about smoky houses with sugary food on weekdays. In contrast to Maria, who felt very comfortable and made strong moral judgments of other parents' health practices, Veronica seems to have to legitimate and defend herself.

According to Skeggs, the crucial question regarding class distinctions in a society is: "Whose judgements are institutionalized?", because: "It literally puts people in place" (Skeggs 2011a, 50:47). To put it simply, then, while Veronica feels she is being judged, Maria feels like a judge. This occurs because Maria's middle-class habitus is in line with institutionalized, neoliberal ideas of what is valuable, i.e. morally responsible.

Conclusion

In this article I have explored a psychosocial approach to class and neoliberalism, using two cases representing two very different mothers in order to illustrate my theoretical points. The aim has been to show how neoliberalism, defined as healthism's individualized responsibilization and risk minimization, accompanied by a pervasive regime of moral judgment, revitalizes respectability and thus class and how this is driven by emotions such as joy and fear.

I have shown how Maria considers herself to possess a mandate to morally judge other mothers, while seemingly enjoying this and displaying her own parenting practices. I have also shown how Veronica is more defensive in relation to moral judgments as she seems to feel subject to being judged by others.

In this light, the psychosocial framework holds a huge potential for the development of a new approach to the concept of class, in order to "recognize that class is always lived on both a conscious and unconscious level" because "beneath socio-economic categorization, underneath class practices, lies a psychic economy of class that has been largely invisible in academic accounts and commonsense understandings" (Reay, 2005, p. 912).

The privileged middle-class mother seems content and cheerful, being entitled, while the less privileged lower-middle-class mother is ill at ease in the various fields of judgments relevant to parental involvement, including her interaction with me as a researcher. In this light the psychosocial potential also lies in exploring how the emotional implications are drivers of the ways in which neoliberal governmentality through risk orientation heavily relies on moral judgments and thereby reproduces class.

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Neoliberalism, healthism and moral judgments:

A psychosocial approach to class

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to explore how a psychosocial approach to class can shed light on the ways in which neoliberal governmentality works through healthism´s moral judgments and how different emotions within a "field of judgments" are rooted in class relations.

Dahl states that neoliberalism "is not confined to what is traditionally understood as the political sphere, but it is a new societal logic suffusing our bodies and minds" (Dahl, 2012, p. 284). This article explores the implications of this statement in a psychosocial perspective, arguing that class morals are currently being revitalized. The main argument therefore is that neoliberal "governance through risk" profits from an intuitive class consciousness where emotions such as superiority, entitlement, satisfaction, guilt, shame and resentment are habituated experiences of class in the field of moral judgments. The basis for my approach to class is Bourdieu's description of how class struggles are "at the heart of culture, and consequently something we all internalise, whether we recognise that internalisation or not" (Bourdieu, 2010, p. 251).

I have chosen two empirical cases to illustrate my theoretical points. The cases stem from extensive fieldwork that I conducted as part of my PhD (Aamann, 2017a) among ethnic Danish middle- and working-class parents when involved in their six-year-old children's start in the final preschool class. Denmark is rarely understood as a class society, but is by contrast seen as one of the strongholds of the welfare state. However, despite an extensive redistribution of wealth, DK does have a range of the traditional class inequalities (Sabiers and Amin 2013; Olsen et al. 2014). Therefore, DK may be viewed as an extraordinarily strong case in studies of how class is currently increasing its impact on subjectivity through moral judgments and the associated feelings.

The article opens with a theoretical outline of some features of neoliberalism in relation to class and subjectivity. This is followed by a brief account of the method and data, after which the illustration via the two cases is unfolded. I will elaborate on the psychosocial approach to class in dialogue with the cases. The final sections of the article are the discussion and conclusion where I discuss the psychosocial contributions and outline potentials for analysing the connections between class, morals and neoliberal governmentality.

The field of judgments

Neoliberalism celebrates the individual's freedom of choice. It is, however, a well-established point that neoliberal governmentality operates precisely through "freedom" (Rose, 1999). Thus, as noted by Brown, "Neoliberal subjects are controlled *through* their freedom…because of neoliberalism´s *moralization* of the consequences of this freedom" (Brown, 2005, p. 44, italics in original).

One consequence of this is that *displaying* (Finch, 2007) one's responsibility and thereby one's moral worth becomes central. Neoliberal govermentality therefore works not only through evaluative (self-)monitoring, but also through demands to *display oneself* and thereby be morally judged. In line with this,

Skeggs finds that "people are increasingly expected to publicly legitimate themselves as good and worthy subjects" (Skeggs, 2011b, p. 496).

In this sense, neoliberalism reinforces evaluations of moral worth (Lamont, 2012). This leads to the establishment of a particular evaluative and performative culture: "a field of judgments" (Rich and Evans, 2009, p. 163), which may be understood as "a mode of regulation that employs judgments, comparisons, and displays" (Rich and Evans, 2009, p. 163). This "regime of moral judgments" is ubiquitously discursive, symbolic, institutional, relational and internalized. Skeggs and Loveday further note that there seems to be taking place an "intensification and legitimation, in the expression and maintenance of class distinction" (Skeggs and Loveday, 2012, p. 473). The neoliberal "regime of judgments" thus seems to be reinforcing moral class distinctions.

Neoliberal foundation: Individual responsibility for health

According to several scholars, health has become an ideology (Crawford, 1980, Lupton, 1995; Greco, 2004). Crawford defines this "healthism" as "…the preoccupation with personal health as a primary – often *the* primary – focus for the definition and achievement of well-being" (Crawford 1980, p. 368, italics in original). In this sense, the individual responsible for health, implied in healthism, "has become a model of and a model for the neoliberal restructuring of American society" (Crawford, 2006, p. 410).

Risk prevention plays a crucial role in this neoliberal "conduct of conduct" as risk issues have a moralizing (Hunt, 2003) and normalizing function, since "…the naming of something as a risk calls for certain forms of action, forcing individuals into self-governance according to the norms of what it means to make the 'right choice'" (Montelius and Nygren, 2014, p. 434).

In this light, healthiness and risk prevention become central to how the neoliberal subject is governed (Hamann, 2009) and health and risk practices are to be regarded as "a kind of moral performance infused with ideological meanings" (Montelius and Nygren, 2014, p. 435).

What I argue is that these ideological meanings both stem from and revitalize class-based moral judgments. The article thus explore the potentials of a psychosocial approach in order to develop a theoretical framework that can grasp the emotional implications of this.

Class and subjectivity

It is a well-argued point that neoliberalism marginalizes class as an explanation of inequality (McLaren, 2015), neglecting the structural circumstances that contribute strongly to shaping subjectivity.

According to Lawler, sociology tends to investigate class "as a set of 'empty' signifiers (employment, housing, etc.) waiting to be filled by interchangeable social actors" (Lawler, 2005, p. 797), while psychology tends to individualize experiences of social inequality and injustice rooted in class (Walkerdine, 2003, p. 238). Another important consequence of the transition from industrial to financial capitalism, by Tyler termed "neoliberalism" (Tyler, 2015), is that the link between class and identity appears to be weak (Casey, 2010). Instead, class seems to be "leaking beyond the traditional measures of classification" in sociology (Skeggs, 2005, p. 969).

Therefore, there is a need to develop an approach that is sensitive to the fuzzy and subtle character of class and its cultural, subjective and emotional dimensions. This is what I believe that a psychosocial framework is able to do. Reay states that "anxieties, conflicts, desires, defences, ambivalences and tensions within classed identities" are frequently overlooked and that "social class is not only etched

into our culture, it is still deeply etched into our psyches, despite class awareness and class consciousness being seen as 'a thing of the past'" (Reay, 2005, p. 912).

Qualitative researchers on class argue that moral evaluations of self and others often relate and respond to class (Steedman, 1986; Walkerdine and Lucey, 1989; Skeggs, 1997, 2005; Reay, 2005; Sayer, 2005). In this light, class works in relational processes that comprise "both a social filter and a key mechanism individuals utilise in placing themselves and others" (Reay, 1997, p. 226) in a strongly moralized terrain. In line with this, Skeggs defines class as a "dialogical relationship between those who judge and those, who are being judged [and between] those who can authorize their judgements and those who cannot" (Skeggs 2013, 5:27).

Another central feature of class is that it is rarely mentioned explicitly, as it is an embarrassing topic (Sayer, 2005). Instead, class usually appears as moral euphemisms (Bottero, 2004) that rely on "the process of interpretation to do the work of association" (Skeggs, 2005, p. 965).

In the present article, I intend to shed light on the emotional implications of these euphemistic classifying processes of "evaluation, moral attribution and authorization in the production of subjectivity" (p. 976) and how they are driven by neoliberal governance through risk, responsibilization and the associated morality.

My psychosocial approach is inspired by early cultural studies based on Williams' "structure of feeling" (Williams, 1958) and his argument that "it is at the level of the individual life that the cultural effects of social inequality are most apparent" (During, 1999, p. 2). I am also strongly inspired by a small feminist body of psychosocial work on class, referred to by Hey as "the 'English' school of feminist post-structuralists" (Hey, 2003, p. 321) (see for example Walkerdine, 1996, 2008; Mahony and Zmroczek, 1997; Reay, 2005, 2011), which has explored how "class has always worked its way through, on and behind us" (Hey, 2003, p. 320). The work of these scholars on class and its subjective dimensions draws on the notion of class formulated by Kuhn: "Class is something beneath your clothes, under your skin, in your reflexes, in your psyche, at the very core of your being" (Kuhn, 2002, p. 98).

Empirical cases

The empirical data I will use to illustrate my theoretical points stem from six months of fieldwork that I conducted as part of my PhD, in which I explored health practices and parenting in a class perspective. During the fieldwork, I participated in a range of events with the parents, for example, four parents' meetings initiated by the schools, seven meetings held by the local parent councils in their homes and 13 different social engagements. In addition, I conducted ten individual walk and talk interviews with mothers lasting from 30 to 90 minutes, and semi-structured in-depth interviews with six mothers, lasting from 50 to 150 minutes. I also observed 15 school-home meetings (lasting 15 minutes) and 21 introductory consultations (lasting 45 minutes) with school nurses, in addition to seven health consultations with older children at a fourth school.

When a child starts school in Denmark, parents are expected to establish a kind of community around the child's particular class. This is initiated through a range of social events with the purpose of getting to know each other and becoming friends in order to prevent bullying and social exclusion in class. In the context of "the preventative turn" (Mccarthy, 2011) and especially targeting parents due to "parent determinism" (Furedi, 2001), parents are being particularly monitored (Jensen, 2010; Lee *et al.*, 2014) and exposed to the field of judgments. These parents are, however, mostly women, as they are still, even in Scandinavia, the primary caregivers. With reference to Reay's writings, the Swedish researcher

Forsberg writes: "Parental involvement still means very different things to mothers and fathers. Fathers 'help out' and are involved 'at a distance', while their partners are given the main responsibility with few options of not being involved" (Forsberg, 2009, p. 39).

Furthermore, as children have become "loci of risk anxiety" (Jackson and Scott, 1999, p. 86), mothers in particular are subject to a close monitoring of their "ability" to "take responsibility" (Aamann and Dybbroe, 2018; Hennum, 2014) for their children's health. These circumstances make mothering practices in the context of starting school a fertile ground for exploring how a psychosocial perspective can illuminate how risk-based neoliberal governance profits from class-related emotions.

I have chosen two very different mothers as exemplary cases, Maria and Veronica. I will introduce them in the analysis, where I consider the different contexts in which the data were produced as an expression of fields of judgments.

Case 1: Feeling the convenience of entitlement

Maria has an academic education and works as a development consultant in a government agency. She was an only child in a nuclear family; her father is a bank manager and her mother is a high school teacher. She and her partner Ian, who is self-employed in the IT industry, have a six-year-old son, Birk, who is just starting school. They live in a large renovated apartment in one of the gentrified parts of Copenhagen. Maria appears cheerful, energetic and well-spoken in school and social contexts. She is a typical example of the parents I met with privileged backgrounds. They demonstrated a relaxed confidence, enjoyed themselves and conversed at ease with other parents and teachers and seemed cheery and comfortable in school-home interviews and in talks with the school nurse about starting school.

At the first formal parents' meeting, Maria offers to organize playgroups with another mother. The two mothers meet at a café, where I have also been invited. At one point they talk about the parent group and Maria says cheerfully:

"It's really exciting, a place like a school where you can say: all of a sudden there are some people here that you'd NEVER *meet at work. Or at least you wouldn't necessarily be friends with ... I mean, well, one of our friends said, 'I hope none of the parents are smokers' [laughter]. Or else: 'Well, what kind of food do they get there? Do we want our little kiddies to be in a smoky house eating sugary food on a weekday?'".* [1]

Although Maria makes a parody of her friend's remark about the other parents' smoking and eating habits, and thus seems to distance herself from the statement, she nevertheless manages to display herself as a parent who certainly does not smoke and only gives her children sweets at weekends, and who does not meet "that type of person" at work or in her social circle. Her circle of friends apparently consists of people who disapprove of parents who smoke.

In this way, the meeting between the two mothers constitutes a field of judgments in which Maria displays her responsibility by identifying children of parents with what is sometimes termed "risk behaviour" as those you would not want your child to have contact with.

The increased focus on health, as previously indicated, leads to a stricter moral regulation of society: "For centuries, the poor, the working class and immigrants have routinely been constructed as the

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[1] In Scandinavia, many parents traditionally only give their children sweets on Fridays. Likewise, many kindergartens often have a ban on sweets and food containing sugar.

Other in public health discourses and practices… On the inside of the boundary lies social order, 'Us', while the outside is 'a twilight place of outcasts, danger and pollution'" (Lupton, 1995, p. 47).

The interesting aspect from a psychosocial perspective is that Maria seems to "naturally" understand herself as one of "us" and in addition sees herself as someone with a mandate to judge parents with different risk orientations than the dominant discursive ones to which she subscribes, based on her self-presentation. We can read between the lines that those parents are irresponsible.

Here I would like to draw on Reay's further development of Bourdieu's concept of habitus in a psychosocial direction (Reay, 2000, 2004, 2015), where she adds gender and emotions to Bourdieu's analytical framework. This is in order to "develop a psychosocial understanding of habitus that allows for a better and richer understanding of how the exterior – wider social structures – is experienced and mediated by the interior, the psyche" (Reay, 2015, p. 9).

Reay interprets Bourdieu's writings as psychosocial, since he argues: "the confrontation between the habitus and the field is always marked by affectivity, by affective transactions between habitus and the field" and because he also appears to "recognise that psychological and psychoanalytic processes, as much as social and economic ones, constitute the habitus" (Reay, 2015, p. 12).

Maria's privileged position in the social structures facilitates emotions such as superiority and entitlement and a naturalized feeling for drawing moral distinctions (judging people) that place her in a favourable position: smoking and too much sugar serve as a moral euphemism for "lower class" and Maria's self-presentation underlines that she "NEVER" meets such people socially or in her academic work. This is in line with Crawford, who points out: "Healthism is a kind of elitist moralizing about what are believed to be unhealthy coping behaviors" (Crawford, 1980, p. 385).

Feeling the comfort of judging

It is also interesting, in this moralizing health and risk prevention terrain, to see how working class mothering practices are held up as the antithesis of good parenting (Gillies, 2007). Other studies have addressed how the moral regulation embedded in health discourses is grounded in class morals; health works as a euphemism for class and as a marker of respectability, in contrast to "bad" mothering, where moral deprivation and "risky lifestyle choices" are closely linked to working-classness (Aamann, 2015). Furthermore, as noted by Tyler (2013), neo-liberal governmentality works through stigma: by scapegoating "the irresponsible", processes of othering establish a position for the responsible and morally worthwhile, dealing with legitimate risks in legitimate ways. The moral devaluation of parents with other risk practices can therefore be said to further serve as a means by which Maria displays herself as responsible.

Thus, when Maria displays herself as a risk-minimizing mother to the other two people, this implies a moral judgment on the parents who perhaps smoke and regularly serve sugary food. What is striking is that the very risks that are believed to be linked to passive smoking and excessive sugar play a rather insignificant role in the conversation. The key issue appears to be to present oneself as morally responsible *through* one's concern about *other* parents' "risk behaviour".

Maria's parodic portrayal of the concerns of a "mother hen" about what kind of people other parents are shows how neoliberalism´s implied moral imperative of risk minimization permeates the relationship between the mothers within the field of judgments, where class-based distinctions are revitalized through healthism.

Feeling the joy of displaying responsible mothering

In the school-home interview, Maria tells the two teachers about the first playgroup at a local playground, where four families were invited:

"Maria describes how Lilly's parents had previously written in an e-mail that they would join, but then they did not show up at first. Later, Maria explains, the whole family turned up at the playground - it seemed they had forgotten about the playgroup appointment, and just happened to be going to the same playground! She condemns their visit to the playground as 'quite inappropriate'".

In this extract, Maria again reveals how she considers herself entitled to pass judgment on other parents. She positions herself as someone authorized with a mandate to deprecate Lilly's parents, judging them as people with less moral worth and thereby like some lower (or upper) class parents who lag behind the imperative of proper parenting.

Furthermore, Maria seems totally comfortable in the situation, displaying her involvement in her child's school and her intensive, sensitive mothering practices, which are significant features of middle-class parenting (Jensen, 2010; Hays, 1996; Reay, 1998a; Reay, 1998b; Milkie and Warner, 2014; Lawler, 2005; Vincent et al., 2008). She seems to feel no need to defend or legitimate herself.

During my fieldwork, I could clearly see that the professional middle-class parents felt a certain entitlement; they were at ease with teachers and other professionals, while also strongly displaying their parenting. However, while Maria has no difficulty in displaying herself as a respectable parent, it is quite a different matter for mothers positioned as lower class.

Case 2: Feeling the unease of being under scrutiny

Veronica is in her early 30s and works as a substitute social educator assistant. She grew up in Copenhagen with her sister and single mother, who worked as a health care assistant. She lives in a small flat in the outskirts of Copenhagen with her partner, Tommy, who is a plumber. They have a six-year-old daughter, Liza, who has just started school. They have poor finances, which they say was their own choice, although Veronica is now looking for something more permanent, "just 10-15 hours a week as a basis".

Veronica is friendly and welcoming in school and social contexts. But at the same time, she is quite defensive. She seems serious and reticent, as if she is constantly assessing the atmosphere before speaking. During the school-home interview and the talk with the school nurse, she and Liza mainly listen while the professionals talk.

I have invited myself to Veronica's flat and when I arrive the atmosphere is strained. When I walk up the stairs, all three of them are standing in the narrow doorway to greet me, but the daughter hides behind her mother and refuses to say hello. From my field notes: *"They're expecting me, but they're quite shy and embarrassed, avoiding eye contact and saying little. Veronica says apologetically, 'Seems we're just tired today'. She says she had to promise Liza that it wouldn't be on TV".*

This reference to TV is interesting in light of the growing number of makeover and parenting programmes, which typically display working-class parents with children with poor health (almost always overweight and/or with mental health problems), where a (typically psychology, not social science) expert will teach them proper, i.e. middle-class, parenting practices (Skeggs and Wood, 2011; Vander Schee and Kline, 2013). What is noteworthy is that even the daughter intuitively seems to sense the field of judgments and is therefore worried about whether a researcher's visit to the family will also

lead to a judgment (see also Aamann, 2017b). It is also interesting that the family seems to expect that they will be judged, although none of them seem to want to put themselves on display.

Feeling the pain of having one´s respectability questioned

Yeo points out how middle-class identity has historically been established through distinctions from the aristocracy and the working class, based on the ideal of the housewife as a paragon of virtue and guardian of morality (Yeo, 2005, p. 6). According to Skeggs, that meant: "Respectability became a locus for a growing sense of class identity and social superiority amongst the labour aristocracy, defining themselves against the 'rough' working class…. Respectability was organized around a complex set of practices and representations which defined appropriate and acceptable modes of behavior, language and appearance." (Skeggs, 1997, p. 46).

Furthermore, respectability, in the efforts at emancipation of middle-class women, was manifested in charity work, which consisted primarily of advice to poor mothers: "institutionalized by the pedagogy in which middle-class women were used to transmit their practices (based on a wholly different economic, timescale structure) to 'deficient' working class women" (Skeggs 1997b, p. 48).

By extension, psychosocially oriented studies and Skeggs' longitudinal fieldwork among young working-class women (Skeggs, 1997) show that the lives of low-ranking women are infested with painful experiences of a morally devaluing gaze that typically makes them aspire to be considered respectable.

Respectability thus comprises a form of institutionalized and internalized judgmental gaze that is directed both outwards towards others and inwards towards the self. Accordingly, class is lived and produced on a very intimate level on the basis of these judgments. For example, Steedman points out how class manifests itself as a morally judgmental, institutionalized gaze and how the gaze is internalized: class consciousness permeates as a fear of the moral devaluation implied by being judged as non-respectable (1986).

In light of this, Veronica and her family seem to be aware of this risk of being morally devaluated by the middle-class researcher entering their home.

Feeling the fear of being judged

A few weeks later, I interview Veronica in a local café. In this sequence, she explains to me in detail how Liza is making her own lunch box with two slices of rye bread and vegetables:

Veronica: And then the fruit, it varies: Always a banana, and then - it could be a kiwi or mandarin or an apple or something like that, you see.
Iben: Mm … so what about those fig rolls and that type of ...
Veronica: [interrupting]: No!
Iben: ... snacks?
Veronica: That's sweets!
Iben: Yeeeah - is it?
Veronica: Well, she's got - she actually just got - I was really quite unsure whether I should let go and do it or not, but I let her get one single date as well.
Iben: Mmh?
Veronica: Mmm, and so it's become part of her lunch, too - and you know, I'm kind of thinking: well, eating just one date, that'll be ok, won't it? - But actually it IS sweets. It - it's a little healthier sweets, but after all: It IS sweets.

This interview works as a field of judgments where I am being positioned as the judge (see also Aamann, 2017b) while Veronica displays her mothering practices. This can be seen in the way she stresses how independent her daughter is and in her detailed account of the healthy contents of the lunch box.

Although Veronica agrees to display her parenting practices, she seems afraid of the verdict. She does not seem to notice that I am trying to challenge her categorization of fig rolls as sweets, as I ask, in surprise and doubt, "Yeeah - is it?" Instead, it works as a basis for legitimating her mothering by highlighting it as a kind of extraordinarily restrictive mothering.

Following this, what strikes me is the way in which Veronica interrupts her own sentence three times, when telling me about the date: she has to let me know, before actually mentioning the date, that she was very concerned about whether she should "let go" and do it or not.

Veronica is displaying mothering practices in line with celebrated middle-class "tough love" (Jensen, 2010) as a mother who takes good care of the health of her daughter, restricting her desire for sweet fruit and cultivating her self-discipline (Lareau, 2011), also seen in her use of the phrase "letting go".

Thus, Veronica's apparent eagerness to display mothering practices in line with celebrated and institutionalized parenting practices and thereby perhaps to be judged as respectable might arise from her position in the uncomfortable lower end of the middle class. Elsewhere it is argued that this position causes anxiety (Crozier et al., 2011, p. 102) and a "fear of falling" (Ehrenreich, 1989), of being deemed morally inferior and thus a lower-class mother, not concerned with the health of her child and just "letting go".

Discussion: different positions causing different feelings

While Maria, who generally judged others, seemed to enjoy displaying her mothering practices, Veronica seems considerably more uncomfortable, as a person who neither wants to display herself nor be judged and who in no way sees herself as having a mandate to judge others. Skeggs and Loveday show how the working-class participants in their study were very well aware of "how they were constantly judged and de-legitimated" (Skeggs and Loveday, 2012, p. 472). To further underline this point, we see how Maria invited me to the mothers' meeting while I had to invite myself to Veronica's apartment.

Skeggs points out: "Judgement is the missing hinge between doing subjectivity and being made subject. It is the core of class relationships" (Skeggs, 2011a, 50:00). In terms of this statement, this might suggest that Maria is doing subjectivity whereas Veronica is being made subject.

In psychosocial studies, the increased prevalence of "risk" has been associated with anxiety (Woodward, 2015) and research on this often "includes exploring the external factors and the processes through which social factors become psychic and become part of a person's inner world as well as identifying what is particular about the ways in which external factors express as well as are expressed by internal fears and anxieties" (Woodward, 2015, p. 107). In light of the two cases analysed in this article, it seems that this approach tends to overlook the moral implications of risk by implying that people when managing risk only relate to the "real dangers" associated with a certain risk. In contrast to this, I will argue that the worries expressed by Maria and Veronica about "health risks" are not merely about the future threats to their child´s health, but rather attached to moral judgments.

In both cases, the health risks to be prevented through a healthy diet are secondary risks. It is very clear that "sugary food on a weekday" (Maria) and "sweets" (Veronica) are bad and should be severely restricted, but at the same time, it seems that the "urgent danger" is about morals:

Whereas Maria displays responsibility *through* the moral judgments of other, lower class parents, Veronica clearly fears this risk of being judged as a non-respectable and thereby lower-class mother.

In this way, it becomes clear that Veronica feels under moral scrutiny – e.g. in the interview, where I am interpreted as a kind of "sugar police officer" - precisely the role of the judge that Maria took in her statement about smoky houses with sugary food on weekdays. In contrast to Maria, who felt very comfortable and made strong moral judgments of other parents' health practices, Veronica seems to have to legitimate and defend herself.

According to Skeggs, the crucial question regarding class distinctions in a society is: "Whose judgements are institutionalized?", because: "It literally puts people in place" (Skeggs 2011a, 50:47). To put it simply, then, while Veronica feels she is being judged, Maria feels like a judge. This occurs because Maria's middle-class habitus is in line with institutionalized, neoliberal ideas of what is valuable, i.e. morally responsible.

Conclusion

In this article I have explored a psychosocial approach to class and neoliberalism, using two cases representing two very different mothers in order to illustrate my theoretical points. The aim has been to show how neoliberalism, defined as healthism's individualized responsibilization and risk minimization, accompanied by a pervasive regime of moral judgment, revitalizes respectability and thus class and how this is driven by emotions such as joy and fear.

I have shown how Maria considers herself to possess a mandate to morally judge other mothers, while seemingly enjoying this and displaying her own parenting practices. I have also shown how Veronica is more defensive in relation to moral judgments as she seems to feel subject to being judged by others.

In this light, the psychosocial framework holds a huge potential for the development of a new approach to the concept of class, in order to "recognize that class is always lived on both a conscious and unconscious level" because "beneath socio-economic categorization, underneath class practices, lies a psychic economy of class that has been largely invisible in academic accounts and commonsense understandings" (Reay, 2005, p. 912).

The privileged middle-class mother seems content and cheerful, being entitled, while the less privileged lower-middle-class mother is ill at ease in the various fields of judgments relevant to parental involvement, including her interaction with me as a researcher. In this light the psychosocial potential also lies in exploring how the emotional implications are drivers of the ways in which neoliberal governmentality through risk orientation heavily relies on moral judgments and thereby reproduces class.

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