

A STUDY ON WORKING WOMEN WITH REFERENCE TO EMPATHY AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

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Abstract

Women are and have always been actors and agents in history along with men, as also an equal participant in the process of evolution and fruition of any civilization. Since women are half and sometimes more than half of humankind, they always have shared the world stage and its activities equally with men. As such, women have always been central, not marginal, to the making of society and to the building of civilization. Women have also shared with men in preserving collective memory, which shapes the past into cultural tradition, provides the link between generations, and connects the present with the past and the future..

Keywords: Woman, Social, Empathy.

Introduction

Individuals differ in their capacity to empathize. This aspect makes it imperative for the development of an efficient tool to measure the empathic ability. Some instruments do exist to measure empathy in general population like the Interpersonal Reactivity Index the Hogan's Empathy scale and the Emotional empathy scale. Earlier, there was no research tool available to measure empathy in doctors and medical students as there was a dearth of empirical research in this field. To address this issue, Hojat et al in the year 2001, developed a scale with reasonable psychometric support, to measure level of empathy in physicians and named it the Jefferson's Scale of Physician Empathy (JSPE).

Women increasingly engage in paid employment. Labor force participation rates among women aged 25-54 across OECD countries rose from 54% in 1980 to over 72% by 2015. Studies of men's and women's employment across countries and cohorts expose two clear patterns: the work pathways of men and women diverge as parenthood approaches and diverge even further after childbirth; and women's wage trajectories and labor force participation rates exhibit rising intra-cohort variation over time. Family background and status play a measurable role in women's preparation for and decisions related to paid employment. Women with post-secondary education, a marker of higher social class, are increasingly more likely to be employed than less-educated women. Overall, social stratification, together with gender ideologies and work-family constraints, shape women's employment beliefs and behavior. The central purpose of this article is to integrate recent gender research, suggesting both social class (or 'class') and gender shape women's approach to employment, into current social psychological research on class-based identification with self versus other. Class effects may be substantially

weaker for women than for men: people in relatively low-power positions, whether due to gender or class, tend to exhibit other-oriented rather than self-oriented behavior. We also explore the possibility that women's employment beliefs and behavior may demonstrate a reversal of the class-based orientations documented in social psychology, in response to class-based pressures in the social contexts women face at work and at home. As we consider the interplay between gender and class, we rely on Wood and Eagly's definition of gender as meanings and associated expectations 'that individuals and societies ascribe to males and females.'

Gender (in contrast to biological categorizations) is rooted in the historical and enduring division of labor between women and men. As such, gender is dynamically constructed and reconstructed through psychological, interactional, institutional, and cultural means. Social class, like gender, generates meanings and expectations ascribed to objective characteristics of individuals. We adopt Cote's definition of social class as 'a dimension of the self that is rooted in objective material resources (income, education, and occupational prestige) and corresponding subjective perceptions of rank vis-a-vis others'. Social class reflects individuals' mental representations of who they are, how they should relate to others, and what they should be doing [leading], in turn, to specific patterns of action and cognition.' Social stratification into classes reflects relative economic relationships across individuals within a society, both perceived and actual. At the household level, the most common measures of class are based on household wealth and total income (earnings); individual-level indicators include own and parents' income, education, occupation, and subjective assessments.

Review of Literature

CG Roopa, (2010) Empathy forms the integral part

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of rapport in the doctor-patient relationship. It refers to understanding the other person's inner experiences and communicating the same. This has been found to be an important facet in patient care. Physician empathy has proven to be effective in enhancing patient satisfaction, improving their compliance and also increasing the physician's efficiency to diagnose and treat patients. It is all the more crucial for military medical officers to be empathic with their patients and understand the stress inherent in military life due to such factors as occupational requirements, stringent work schedules and discipline. Operational missions by the forces during war or peacetime necessitate exemplary physical health coupled with impeccable precision in mental processes. Empathic approach aids in the accurate assessment of overall fitness there by increasing the operational efficiency. A preliminary study was conducted to measure the level of empathy in a sample of medical officers and the association between empathy, personality attributes and demographic variables. 119 medical officers were administered self-report questionnaires, such as the 16 PF test, Jefferson's Scale of Physician Empathy, Marlowe Crowne Social Desirability Scale and a demographic inventory. Scores were statistically analyzed using the Student t-test, ANOVA and Pearson's product moment correlation. Results indicated an average level of empathy in this sample. Empathy was significantly correlated with some personality characteristics such as abstract intelligence, sensitivity and self concept control. A significant negative correlation with education was observed. Significant gender differences were observed in empathy, and the personality variables of enthusiasm and tension. Results have implications on the selection and training procedures of military medical officers to further enhance the quality of medical services.

Antony S.R. Manstead (2008) Drawing on recent research on the psychology of social class, I argue that the material conditions in which people grow up and live have a lasting impact on their personal and social identities and that this influences both the way they think and feel about their social environment and key aspects of their social behaviour. Relative to middle-class counterparts, lower/working-class individuals are less likely to define themselves in terms of their socioeconomic status and are more likely to have interdependent self-concepts; they are also more inclined to explain social events in situational terms, as a result of having a lower sense of personal control. Working-class people score higher on measures of empathy and are more likely to help others in distress. The widely held view that working-class individuals are more prejudiced towards immigrants and ethnic minorities is shown to be a

function of economic threat, in that highly educated people also express prejudice towards these groups when the latter are described as highly educated and therefore pose an economic threat. The fact that middle-class norms of independence prevail in universities and prestigious workplaces makes working-class people less likely to apply for positions in such institutions, less likely to be selected and less likely to stay if selected. In other words, social class differences in identity, cognition, feelings, and behaviour make it less likely that working-class individuals can benefit from educational and occupational opportunities to improve their material circumstances. This means that redistributive policies are needed to break the cycle of deprivation that limits opportunities and threatens social cohesion.

Gerhart, (2011) Social class ranks people on the social ladder of society, and in this research we examine how perceptions of economic standing shape the way that individuals evaluate the self. Given that reminders of one's own subordinate status in society are an indicator of how society values the self in comparison to others, we predicted that chronic lower perceptions of economic standing vis-à-vis others would explain associations between objective social class and negative self-evaluation, whereas situation-specific reminders of low economic standing would elicit negative self-evaluations, particularly in those from lower-class backgrounds. In Study 1, perceptions of social class rank accounted for the positive relationship between objective material resource measures of social class and self-esteem. In Study 2, lower-class individuals who received a low (versus equal) share of economic resources in an economic game scenario reported more negative self-conscious emotions-a correlate of negative self-evaluation-relative to upper-class individuals. Discussion focused on the implications of this research for understanding class-based cultural models of the self, and for how social class shapes self-evaluations chronically.

ST Rrief, (2010) A model of social empathy is described where social empathy is defined as the ability to more deeply understand people by perceiving or experiencing their life situations and as a result gain insight into structural inequalities and disparities. The three components of the model-individual empathy, contextual understanding, and social responsibility-are explored and explained. Social empathy provides a framework for more effective social policies that address disparities and support social and economic justice for all people. Social workers are well positioned to enhance social empathy, and application and suggestions for further enhancement and research are provided.

Werbel (2010) This chapter presents the premise that social class is a potent, robust, and distinct predictor of how people think and act in organizations. Drawing on theories of social cognition, I define social class as a dimension of the self that is rooted in objective material resources (via income, education, and occupational prestige) and corresponding subjective perceptions of rank vis-à-vis others. Informed by demonstrations of the psychological effects of social class, I describe how social class may shape behavior in three illustrative domains of organizational life: social relationships, morality, and judgment and decision-making. I document objective and subjective measures of social class to guide research on its effects. I conclude by discussing the risks and benefits of investigating the social class of organization members, and the potential costs for organizations and researchers who ignore social class.

Assumptions about Women and Stratification

In the stratification literature, six assumptions are made both explicitly and implicitly, about the social position of women. These assumptions are:-

1. The family is the unit in stratification system.
2. The social position of the family is determined by the male head of the household.
3. Females live in families; therefore, their status is related to the male they are attached to.
4. The females' position is equal to that of her man, at least in terms of her position in the class structure.
5. Women determine their own social status only when they are not attached to a man.
6. Women are unequal to men in many ways, are differently evaluated on the basis of sex, but this is irrelevant to the stratification system.

The first assumption is the basis of the rest five. The fate of the females in the society is determined by the fate of the males in the society.

More Privilege Means Less Empathy

That matters because, important though they be, social class and its effects can be difficult to pin down. Researchers use readily available data-education level, income and occupation, for example-as a proxy for "socioeconomic status." But these aren't perfect. If you're a Ph.D working a low-paying job, are you upper-class or lower? If your paying work is menial but you're the all-powerful president of the PTA, where are you on the social ladder? Moreover, it can be difficult to distinguish the effects of, say, occupation, from the effects of other traits. If you're underpaid and frustrated, is it because of you're working class, African-American or female?

If it's people's own perceptions of their social status that alters their thoughts and feelings, though, then it may not be so important to triangulate their social class from their personal information, and then tease the effects of class out of the mix. Instead, psychologists can just, you know, ask.

Not that corroboration does any harm, or that this is an either/or choice. (In fact, write Kraus et al., in the job-interview experiment, students' self-rating on the class ladder correlated pretty well with their parents' education levels and even more with family income.) It is, though, a reminder that social class can be psychically important without being an objectively defined physical measurement.

Conclusion

In the past few years, it has been clearly seen that the society has stratified human into two basic categories namely males and females, the male category being the dominating one. The woman part of the society has always been the disadvantaged and the one which suffers category in the society. Though social stratification deals with inequality in the society, little work on this part has been done by the sociologists on the position of women in the society as a whole. Certainly, this is one of the most obvious bases for social, economic, political and cultural inequalities.

A number of questions will arise if we consider sex-based inequality in the structure of social stratification. Therefore, the conclusion that could be drawn is that women can become a more powerful force in the society through greater participation in the labor force and their problem as a part of society will be more visible.

There is solid evidence that the material circumstances in which people develop and live their lives have a profound influence on the ways in which they construe themselves and their social environments. The resulting differences in the ways that working-class and middle- and upper-class people think and act serve to reinforce these influences of social class background, making it harder for working-class individuals to benefit from the kinds of educational and employment opportunities that would increase social mobility and thereby improve their material circumstances. At a time when economic inequality is increasing in many countries, this lack of mobility puts a strain on social cohesion. Most people believe that economic inequality is undesirable and, when presented with the evidence of growing inequality, say that they would support government policies designed to reduce it. Given that the social class differences reviewed here have their origins in economic inequality, it follows that redistributive

policies are urgently needed to create greater equality.

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