

MARCH 2021

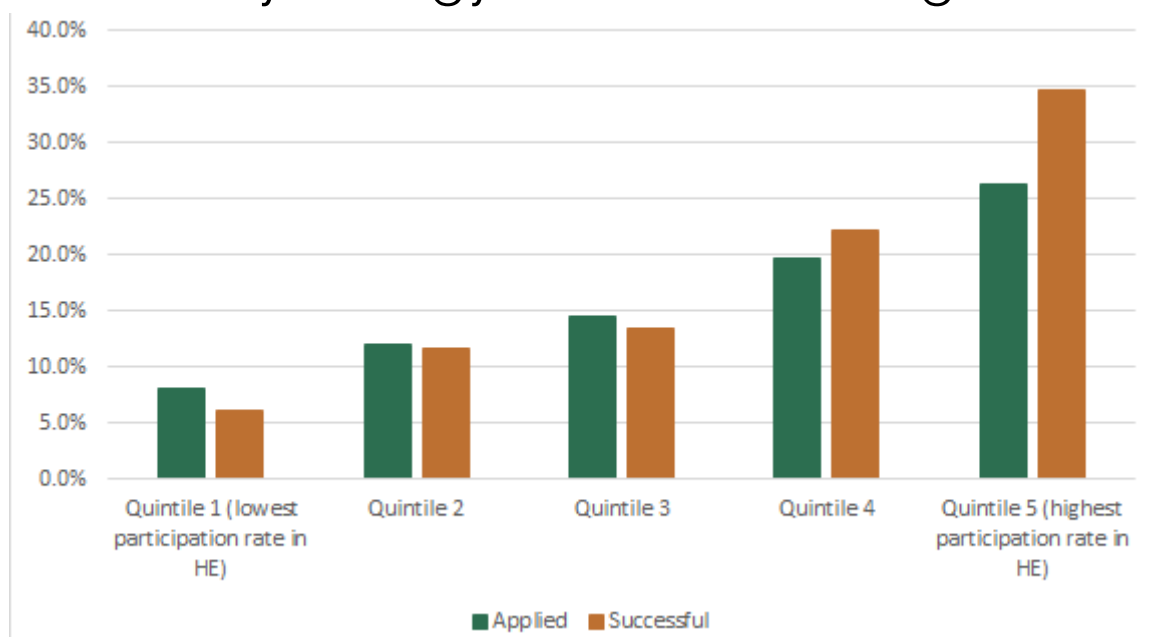
POSITION STATEMENT

TO HIGHLIGHT

The Impact of Class in Clinical Psychology

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Socio-economic Status & Applications to Clinical Psychology Doctoral Training



2019 data from the Clearing House website

SUMMARY

Being Working Class in Clinical Psychology webinars

The 'Being Working Class in Clinical Psychology' webinars were set up in summer 2020 for people at different points in their clinical psychology career. The free webinars consist of a panel of trainee and qualified clinical psychologists that identify as being working class. The panel shares their experiences of pursuing their career, training and working as clinical psychologists, reflecting on both positive aspects and challenges.

Number of Webinars:

5

YouTube Views:

5119

The following themes, reported on pages 3 - 9, are derived from a thematic analysis of the webinar transcripts, feedback surveys and #ClassClinPsych tweets.

THEME 1

Intersectionality

Visible and invisible parts of a person's identity all intersect

"There's a lot of fighting around space and people want to get a voice across [...] one person might be really interested in class, or someone else might really want to talk about race or gender identity [...] some people are privileged in some ways and disadvantaged in others."

"I've always thought of it as a moment of luck, but [...] it was a moment of my privileges helping me to [...] push on in that career. I think ashamedly I've been in that camp of 'I've gotten here because I've worked really hard'."

THEME 2

Being 'Muddle Class'

Being working class in a middle class profession

"That transition into being surrounded by folks who came from much more middle class backgrounds [...] I found it really difficult because it felt like I didn't fit in there, but as time went on, it felt like I didn't really fit into my own environment either. I found that it became more difficult to talk to friends that I went to school with."

"You spend £10 a day on hot drinks, right? [...] being poor we never had the luxury of going to coffee shops [...] I just remember the dissonance that I felt drinking it."

THEME 3

Shame

Pejorative societal narratives around being working class

"They said "don't get on that bus, it goes through a really rough estate and there are benefits scroungers and they have grotty council houses". My other friend said "oh yeah, that is [...] bus, that's where she lives". You realise you're different and that's potentially where the impostor syndrome begins."

"I was working with a psychologist who thought that if you had a chippy tea on a Friday night it was a sign of neglect".

THEME 4

Social Capital

It's not what you know, it's who you know

"The lack of knowledge about the profession and the system [...] I have found it highly difficult to understand and figure out how the system works [...] what the route to clinical psychology was [...] how to make connections with people within the profession that could support my journey by providing useful information and advice."

"It's very daunting to not have any anyone that you know who's done an undergraduate degree, never mind anything further than that."

THEME 5

Economic Capital

The impact of a lack of economic capital

"There was a point in uni where I just completely ran out of money. I didn't have the money for rent and had to go to get the student hardship fund. That was just added stress. It was just a horrible experience, not having money and having to kind of beg for money from a very, very affluent university."

"In order to afford the bus fare to get to my honorary assistant psychologist position, I would eat less during the week and save up the money to get an offer return ticket."

THEME 6

Moulding Self

Changing parts about yourself to fit the mould

"Doing presentations and stuff with people [...] speaking the Queen's English to me [...] speaking with a northern accent makes me feel a little bit inferior [...] I think on an unconscious level I definitely changed my accent throughout university."

"I tried to assimilate to middle class ways of being [e.g. accent/style of speaking/language use] because it can often feel like the only way to get into and survive within the profession."

THEME 7

Professional Values

Being working class enriches the profession.

"I think it's just unimaginable stress when you don't know where your next meal is going to come from [...] that's been a real benefit to understand that kind of stress and be able to talk about it with people I work with."

"The therapy models that we use are completely ignorant of context and where people are, what was going on for them [...] like making sense of why people don't come to appointments - because they can't afford it."

RESULTING IN

Actionable Insights

Psychology as a profession has a responsibility to promote psychological safety and actively acknowledge and address issues and barriers surrounding class, in order to effectively support both professionals and service users who are affected by class-based discrimination.

From the themes we have generated **8 Actionable Insights**, reported on pages 11-14, that might help psychology professionals to make the profession more diverse and inclusive.

ACTIONABLE INSIGHT 1

Postgraduate Study

>>> Is a first or a masters necessary? >>>

There are significant socioeconomic barriers to undergraduate and postgraduate study. Training courses and employers could consider how applicants can demonstrate their competencies.

ACTIONABLE INSIGHT 2

Selection Transparency

>>> Courses and employers could be more transparent about shortlisting and utilise contextual selection >>>

Applicants have a range of clinical and interpersonal skills. Courses and employers should be transparent about how factors are weighted during shortlisting and selection, and include contextual selection measures.

ACTIONABLE INSIGHT 3

Flexible Learning

»»» Courses and employers could offer more flexible working options »»»

Training courses and employers should embrace the learning from the pandemic to create an innovative and inclusive culture based around flexibility and supporting personal circumstances; for example exploring remote and part-time working/learning or remote interviews.

ACTIONABLE INSIGHT 4

Access to Information

»»» Greater access and quality of materials relating to careers in psychology »»»

Ensure informative resources are updated regularly, are free to access and easy to find.

ACTIONABLE INSIGHT 5

Mentoring Systems

»»» **Mentoring systems** for people who identify as being from a working class background »»»

Mentoring has been identified as a support system that would be welcomed by those who do not have access to traditional networking opportunities.

ACTIONABLE INSIGHT 6

Visibility in Schools

»»» **Increasing visibility of psychology professions at schools and colleges** »»»

Many young working class people are not aware of what a psychologist does or how to become one. Being a psychologist is not seen as a possible career path.

ACTIONABLE INSIGHT 7

Honorary Posts

»»» Phasing out voluntary and honorary assistant posts »»»

Recruitment for these roles is often unfair and based on social capital. They frequently sidestep the formal employment processes which is an issue for fairness and equality. Many individuals from a working class background cannot afford to work for free, allowing those who can to 'get ahead' and secure paid assistant posts more easily.

ACTIONABLE INSIGHT 8

Identity Discussions

»»» Open the discussion around class and privilege »»»

Over the past year ClassClinPsych have been met with a huge response to these discussions. We have seen the value of normalising conversations around personal identities, and how we carry those identities into our professional lives.

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Feedback from #ClassClinPsych Webinars

