

BSA Medical Sociology Group Conference 2016
Individual Paper - Critical Public Health

‘Nutrition Justice: Policy, Parents and Child Fatness’

It is argued child obesity in contemporary times is a product of modern capitalism - a multifactorial problem including social gradient in England.

With background concern for child health, individualising and responsabilising policy discourses place greatest burden on poorest parents. This is bound within deficit model. Whilst parents’ food practices are under the microscope, there is little research about their policy experiences and solutions.

Drawn from my PhD this paper focuses on the views of predominantly working class parents, with children, medically described as obese. The PhD, a critical policy analysis, within the local state, explores the meanings of social class in context of food-related obesity policy. Fieldwork included thirty–two interviews with policy makers and recipients. Theoretically it draws on Critical Theory and Marxism.

Hegemonic processes arise within policy producing stigma and division that penetrate community and family life. Social marketing and NCMP letters are implicated. In the context of governmentality, health anxiety is used as parents take ‘*ultimate responsibility*’. Government gives the ‘*impression*’ of helping. At the same time food companies are ‘*allowed*’ to sell unhealthy foods that saturate poor communities. There is strong

sense of nutritional injustice around children's foods and poor health: *'we don't cost anything, when they bury us'*.

In the context of democracy deficit parents believe they should inform policy. Parents articulate policy changes: universalism in child health, collectivism at community level, broad reforms of food system, distribution and employment rights. New policy direction is needed.