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# The Faces Behind Phenomena

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## Bryn Sultana

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**INTERESTS:** My path in sociology has allowed me to further shape and perpetuate my passion for teaching solidifying my understanding of social patterns and the ways we adapt and work within society. With the constant changes and developments that we are experiencing in our everyday lives, I believe that my prospected role as a teacher can only be well performed if I have the well-rounded tools and knowledge to accommodate and educate our incoming generation.

**FUN FACT:** I've never been able to blow a bubble in gum



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**INTERESTS:** My degree in sociology has been incredibly impactful in shaping how I view the world around me and the people within it. Critically examining issues from different perspectives has allowed me to engage in conversations I might not have had the confidence or knowledge to participate in otherwise. Building my background in this interdisciplinary field has been a phenomena(l) experience that I am so grateful for.

**FUN FACT:** I tired my first fast-food burger in university

**Contemporary Reproductive Control and Population Control of Low-Income Women of Colour in the United States**  
**By: Gemma McLaughlin**

Population control is the process in which fertility, mortality, or migration is manipulated to achieve changes in a population's size or composition. This paper discusses population control in the United States in the contemporary period, specifically from the 1990s to the present, through the lens of reproductive control. The US has historically targeted low-income women of colour for reproductive control through forced sterilization and coercive use of birth control. While the language used regarding birth control changed from a method of population control to a focus on reproductive rights starting in the 1990s, this paper argues that population control by means of controlling reproductive behaviours continues to take place in the US, and disproportionately targets low-income women of colour. There have been recent cases of forced sterilization in the US including in California prisons, and the coercive use of birth control, both of which have targeted low-income women of colour. Further, this paper asserts that mass incarceration and the overturning of the *Roe v. Wade* decision are two examples of systemic and institutionalized racism in the criminal justice and healthcare systems that enforce population control over low-income women of colour by manipulating their reproduction.

*Keywords:* population control, reproductive control, women of colour, forced

sterilizations, mass incarceration, forced birth

INTRODUCTION

Population control describes the intervention of the government in fertility and mortality rates and migration. Explicit population control measures are put in place through population policies that have the intention of manipulating, by either increasing or decreasing, fertility or mortality rates or migration. Population control measures can also be more implicit, meaning that they may achieve population control over fertility, mortality, or migration in indirect and less conspicuous ways. This paper will discuss a combination of both historical explicit population control measures and more implicit measures in contemporary United States. The United States has a history of using birth control and forced sterilizations to control the reproductive behaviours and limit reproduction of women, particularly low-income women of colour (along with other historically marginalized groups like women with disabilities, women living in poverty, amongst others). This paper argues that while the discourse on birth control in the United States shifted in the 1990s from the use of birth control as a means of population control to a concern for reproductive health, the latter context continues to enforce population control, both directly and indirectly through the control of the reproductive rights of low-income women of colour. This exists today and since the beginning of the 21st century through recent illegal and concealed cases of forced sterilization and coerced use of birth control,

the criminalization of poverty, and forced births resulting from the overturning of the *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision. First, this paper will provide a brief history of the use of birth control by the United States government for global population control, the use of birth control and forced sterilizations as a mechanism for the eugenics movement, and the shift in the 1990s towards the importance of reproductive rights and health. This paper will then analyze the recent cases of forced sterilizations and coercion in the use of birth control against women of colour in the US. Third, this paper will discuss the roles that mass incarceration and the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* play as reproductive control and thus population controls.

#### BRIEF HISTORY OF BIRTH CONTROL AND FORCED STERILIZATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES

The control over the reproductive behaviours of women of colour has been linked to the eugenics movement, which seeks to limit reproduction of groups with “undesirable” traits, since the beginning of the 20th century. In 1907, the state of

Indiana passed the country’s first compulsory sterilization law and thereafter 30 different states passed similar laws. The constitutionality of these laws was upheld by the Supreme Court in 1927 (Roth and Ainsworth 2022:17). In these cases, sterilization referred to tubal ligation surgery. These laws targeted institutionalized individuals who were deemed mentally disabled or unfit to be a parent, but in practice they targeted women of colour and were performed without

consent or deceptively. For example, in North Carolina Black women accounted for 65% of sterilization procedures and by 1970, 25% of Native American women were sterilized (Ross 2017:65). Therefore, forced sterilizations starting in the early 1900s amounted to population control of women of colour, because it limited and controlled their reproductive choices to influence the composition of the population by limiting population growth among these groups.

In addition to sterilizations, the birth control pill has a close connection to the eugenics movement. Margaret Sanger was an American activist for birth control. While Sanger was a feminist and did advocate for birth control as a tool for the empowerment of women, they soon started working with members of the eugenics movement and advocated for birth control as a method of “family planning”. This discourse asserts that those in poverty (primarily people of colour) should use birth control as a way of getting their family out of poverty (Güngör and Burfoot 2022:50). These family planning programs and the medical advice that followed controlled the reproductive rights of women of colour and was an indirect method of population control. There was no real individual choice in family planning programs since medical professionals subtly coerced women of colour, specifically low-income women of colour, into using birth control methods more than White women in similar circumstances (Sasser 2018:126). The programs were used as large-scale demographic control measures to control the reproductive behaviours of particular groups like in the case of forced sterilizations, but

they were disguised in humanitarian language (ibid).

At the same time that it was controlling its domestic population growth, the US was attempting to control global population patterns. A moral panic arose in the 1950s about the threat of global population growth because of high fertility rates in developing countries. There was no empirical evidence about this risk of global population growth, but the US government was able to create moral panic which eventually spread globally and facilitated their advice to other countries. For example, when India was heading towards a famine in 1951, US President Lyndon B. Johnson refused to provide food aid because it was believed that India was not acting to combat its high fertility rate (Güngör and Burfoot 2022:59).

In the 1990s there came a distinct shift away from this discourse of population control towards reproductive health. The focal point of this shift occurred at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development. For decades, women of colour had been protesting involuntary population control measures that targeted women's reproductive rights (Kirby 2017, n.p.). The conference introduced the concepts of reproductive rights and individual choice into the discussion. From then on, the language used regarding birth control shifted from population control (and in the US case, family planning programs) to reproductive rights (ibid).

#### RECENT CASES OF FORCED STERILIZATION AND COERCED BIRTH CONTROL IN THE UNITED STATES

The discourse regarding population control shifted away from population control towards a more humanitarian discourse concerning women's reproductive rights and health. However, this paper asserts that reproductive control over women's bodies still exists in contemporary times in the US (specifically, since the beginning of the 21st century) as evidenced by recent cases of forced sterilization and coerced birth control. This reproductive control results in population control, because it represents an attempt to manipulate, by either increasing or decreasing, the reproductive behaviours of low-income women of colour while the reproductive rights of White, middle- and upper-class women remain unharmed. Rosenthal and Lobel (2020) argue that through state policies and medical advice, forced sterilization and coerced birth control is a relevant issue in the US today (371). They note that some states impose monetary penalties on families that are on public assistance if they have more children. Additionally, it has been found that US healthcare professionals are more likely to recommend to Black and Latina women that they use contraception and "avoid pregnancy", than to White women (Rosenthal and Lobel 2020:317).

There has been significant research regarding how Depo-Provera, which is a temporary sterilization drug that was opened to the market in the US starting in the 1990s, has targeted low-income women of colour for use. Depo-Provera stops ovulation for a period of three months and is provided through an intramuscular injection (Volscho 2011:674). The Government approval of Depo-Provera itself involved 'racial'

discrimination, foreshadowing its use in the US. When the sterilization drug went through clinical trials in the 1970s, it was tested disproportionately on African American women, thousands of whom had not consented to participation in the trials (ibid:675). Furthermore, Depo-Provera is still used today disproportionately for low-income women of colour. Volscho (2011) performed a study regarding the use of Depo-Provera from data drawn from surveys from the Centre for Disease Control between 2002 and 2004 (678). They found that African American and American Indian women are more likely to use the sterilization drug (12.7% and 14.9% respectively) than European Americans (Volscho 2011:682). A second critical finding is that young, low-income, low- educated, African American and American Indian women were more likely to use Depo-Provera than any other 'racial' group in similar age and monetary circumstances, thus demonstrating the intersectional characteristics of those to whom Depo-Provera is targeted (ibid:683). These findings suggest that healthcare professionals recommend the use of this sterilization drug to prevent reproduction, a form of population control, in disproportionate numbers to women of colour with low levels of education.

The coercive use of Norplant, a form of birth control that is inserted into the arm and releases progestin over five years to prevent pregnancy, has also been documented in the US. First, Medicaid, which is the US healthcare insurance for low-income people, covers the cost of getting the Norplant insertion but not the

cost of removal. As Kirby (2017) says, "the choice to use the drug is covered... but the choice to stop using it is not" (n.p.). This suggests that the low-income women of colour who are most likely to use the drug are not given full autonomy to have it removed. Depo-Provera became a substitute for Norplant due to significant side effects from the latter, thus, low-income people who have the insertion of Norplant covered on Medicaid may not be able to afford to have it removed and are forced into continued sterilization despite the dangerous side effects. Second, it has been documented in several states that women who have been convicted of child or drug abuse were offered Norplant as an alternative to serving time in jail (Kirby 2017:n.p.).

A second case of population control of women of colour is the forced sterilizations of over 100 women in a California prison between 2006-2010. These women were given tubal ligation surgery after being pressured and coerced by doctors in the prison (Roth and Ainsworth 2022:7). The majority of these cases of forced sterilizations were on Black and Latina women (Jindia 2020:n.p.).

The cases of Depo-Provera/Norplant and the forced sterilizations in the California prison exemplify contemporary population control over women of colour. Both these cases result in the prevention of pregnancy, which is a deliberate attempt to control reproduction among groups of people of colour. While they have not been implemented in the context of explicit, deliberate population control policies when forced sterilization was legal and women of colour were coerced into using birth control,



they have the same effect of limiting reproduction from particular groups with intersecting characteristics.

#### SOCIETAL CONDITIONS THAT RESULT IN THE INDIRECT CONTROL OF LOW-INCOME WOMEN OF COLOUR'S REPRODUCTION

The US has particular societal conditions that perpetuate racist ideologies and result in the controlling of reproductive rights that act as population control of low-income women of colour. While the societal conditions that will be discussed in this section are not cases of population control through forced sterilizations or coerced birth control as was discussed in the previous section, their effect is to control the reproductive decisions of low-income women of colour through indirect means that result in population control (specifically, either by limiting births or through forced birth targeted at this demographic). Systemic and institutionalized racism in the US has created a population control system whereby the fertility of low-income women of colour is manipulated and controlled by others. First, the criminalization of poverty and mass incarceration result in the disproportionate control of the reproductive rights of low-income women of colour. Since the beginning of the “war on drugs” and “war on crime” in the US in the early 1970s, the number of people in American prisons has increased exponentially. African American and Latino people are highly overrepresented in prisons (Hayes, Sufrin, and Perritt 2020:521). Women of colour are also overrepresented in prison as compared

to White women. Specifically, African American women are twice as likely to be incarcerated as White women, and whereas one in 111 White women will go to prison at some point in their life, this figure is one in 18 for African American women (ibid:522).

Mass incarceration presents an infringement on the reproductive rights of women, and women of colour bear the brunt of this infringement since they are overrepresented in prison. One barrier to reproductive rights that is created by prisons is policies that require women to pay for an abortion or the transportation cost to the hospital where the abortion would take place. However, Medicaid gets suspended when the individual is incarcerated, so poor women of colour since may not be able to afford an abortion (Hayes et al. 2020:523). Additionally, incarcerated women receive poor prenatal healthcare and are often separated from their child within a day of giving birth. Pregnant women can be kept in solitary confinement and shackled to a bed during and after labour in over 20 states, which presents significant physical risks to the mother and baby (ibid:522-23). Furthermore, the sheer fact that low-income women of colour are overrepresented in prisons presents population control because while these women are in prison, they cannot make the decision to have a child and may spend their fertile years in prison. When low-income women of colour are placed in prisons in disproportionately high numbers, the ability for them to reproduce is limited or removed completely, representing an artificial manipulation of the population composition.

The system of mass incarceration inflicts control over the reproductive health and rights of low-income women of colour and is an indirect form of population control because it limits reproduction among these groups, thus artificially controlling the growth and composition of the population. In sum, this happens by: (i) forcing women in prisons, who are disproportionately low-income women of colour, to bear children if they cannot afford costs associated with having an abortion in prison, even if the woman does not want to have a child; (ii) forcing these women to give birth under dangerous circumstances that can threaten the mother's life; and (iii) by imprisoning much higher numbers of low-income women of colour than middle- and upper-class White women, which removes the former's ability to reproduce for the time they are in prison, thus limiting the reproduction of 'racialized' groups.

The second current condition in the US that represents population control through the regulation of women's reproductive rights, specifically through forced birth, is the overturning of the *Roe v. Wade* decision by the Supreme Court. In its monumental decision in 1973, the Supreme Court secured the right to abortion across the country. On July 24, 2022, this decision was overturned, meaning that abortion became a matter that could be controlled by each state individually. 13 states had "trigger laws" in place which immediately criminalized abortion when the Supreme Court made this decision (Räsänen, Gothreau, and Lipper-Rasmussen 2022:1). This paper asserts that criminalizing abortion is a form of population control because it presents a

policy of forced birth that disproportionality impacts low-income women of colour.

Black women in the US have the highest rates of abortion. For example, in Mississippi people of colour represent 44% of the population and Black women receive 81% of abortions (Räsänen et al. 2022:2). Black women also have significantly poorer pregnancy outcomes than White women. When examining rates of infant mortality and other adverse birth outcomes, Black women have the highest rates of these outcomes of any 'racial' group in the US (ibid). Additionally, Black women are three times more likely than White women to die of partner homicide that is pregnancy-related (ibid). Banning abortion disproportionately impacts Black women, since they are most likely to get abortions, and are more likely to be put in dangerous positions of domestic violence when becoming pregnant and have poorer pregnancy outcomes but will not have the option to abort a pregnancy knowing these risks. The overturning of *Roe v. Wade* is a policy of forced birth that inflicts population control disproportionately over women of colour because of these pre-existing factors.

Accessibility of abortions when they are criminalized is unequal across 'racial' groups, meaning that the population control outcome (forced birth) of criminalizing abortions in practice affects 'racially'-disadvantaged groups the most. Wealthy, highly educated, urban women (who are mostly White) can pay to travel to another state for an abortion. However, those women who live in poverty and have lower levels of education and income (mostly women of colour) are likely unable to pay to travel for

an abortion (Güngör and Burfoot 2022:66). There is a definite 'racial' divide in this issue. Women of colour are more likely to live in poverty and a 2017 survey found that American women tend to seek abortions because they cannot afford to have a child (ibid). Furthermore, research from countries where abortion has been criminalized demonstrates that abortions continue to happen, either through women travelling to another place to have an abortion or resorting to an at-home or dangerous abortion (Räsänen et al. 2022:3). Performing an abortion under dangerous circumstances presents health risks to the women who resort to this, who are most likely to be women of colour. Thus, the effect on paper of criminalizing abortion is that all women cannot have an abortion, but in practice, low-income women of colour bear the brunt of this forced birth population control.

Population control is present in the case of the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in the US because banning abortions limits the reproductive rights of women through forced birth. This disproportionately impacts low-income women of colour since they are most likely to seek abortions and are less likely to be able to afford to travel for an abortion. Therefore, a condition of forced birth in the US presents more severe population control over low-income women of colour than middle- and upper-class White women.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, reproduction, especially among low-income women of colour has long been targeted in the US for population control purposes. In the 1960s and 1970s, this demographic was targeted

for forced sterilizations and coerced into the use of birth control through family planning programs. In the 1990s, the discourse regarding birth control shifted from a matter of population control to one of reproductive rights and health. However, population control of low-income women of colour has persisted into this period. There have been cases like the California prisons where women underwent forced sterilizations, the majority of who were Black and Latina women. Sterilization drugs like Norplant and Depo-Provera also were used as population controls by healthcare professionals to limit the reproduction of people of colour by targeting low-income women of colour to use these birth control methods.

The mass incarceration system in the US is an ongoing condition that enforces population control over low-income, women of colour. These women cannot reproduce in prisons, and since women of colour are overrepresented in prisons, it disproportionately removes 'racialized' women's ability to reproduce compared to middle- and upper-class White women. Lastly, the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* by the Supreme Court implements a policy of forced births that disproportionately impacts women of colour, since they are more likely to seek an abortion but are less likely to be able to travel to get an abortion. Thus, population control is still present in contemporary US and is perpetuated through the systemic and institutionalized racism in the criminal justice and healthcare systems that instill far greater controls over the ability of women of colour to reproduce than White women.

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**Who Gets to Perform? Analyzing TikTok Using Judith Butler's Gender Performativity Theory**  
**By: Adrianna Prattas**

In recent years, discussions around the social construction of gender have gained traction in sociology and the social world. Gender theorist, Judith Butler (1988), takes this a step further by arguing that gender is performative (519). Examples of gender performance can be seen in many different realms of contemporary social life, including on social media. However, gender performance is not supported equally amongst different social groups, as this paper examines how some social groups are permitted to perform gender on social media while others are penalized. I argue that only certain individuals, specifically cisgender heterosexual men, are permitted to perform gendered acts—and are often praised for doing so—on the social media platform TikTok. This paper will proceed as follows. First, I highlight two case studies of cisgender, heterosexual men performing the gendered act of nail painting on TikTok. Next, I look to Judith Butler's gender performativity as a theoretical framework. Following this, I analyze the case studies using gender performativity theory, and also discuss how the algorithm policies gendered acts. Finally, I discuss potential counterarguments and offer rebuttals. I conclude with final remarks on the importance of my argument and future suggestions.

The first instance of a cisgender heterosexual man expressing their painted nails on TikTok is viral TikTok content

creator Vinnie Hacker, who operates under the username [vhackerr](#). Known mainly for his suaveness and his occasional live streams, 19-year-old Hacker is a verified TikTok creator having amassed almost 14 million followers on the platform ([vhackerr n.d.](#)). In this particular video, Hacker uses a viral sound on TikTok which includes a snippet from the song “Knock Knock” by SoyFaygo—this sound is used in over 157 900 videos with Hacker's video being the most popular video under the sound ([tecca 2020](#)).

In this video, Hacker stands in front of a grey wall wearing a white tank top, a black unbuttoned shirt, and several necklaces ([vhackerr 2021](#)). Hacker begins by slowly grazing his hand over his face, highlighting his white-painted nails and the large ring on his pinky finger ([vhackerr 2021](#)). The video continues with Hacker moving the camera down his torso while continuing to face up at him, stopping at his pelvis just below his torso ([vhackerr 2021](#)). Hacker then thrusts his pelvis into the camera several times while his hand continues to cover his face and he throws his head backwards ([vhackerr 2021](#)). The video ends with Hacker's hand sliding down his chest and torso, while he also brings the camera back to just below eye-level as he lip-syncs the end of the audio ([vhackerr 2021](#)).

Currently, Hacker's video has 7 400 000 views, 928 1000 likes, 53 300 comments, and 87 500 shares, indicating its immense popularity ([vhackerr 2021](#)). Most of the comments discuss how they find Hacker and his painted nails attractive in various ways ([vhackerr 2021](#)). For instance,

under the video, commenter ddaniym writes “ok, this video is iconic,” ([vhackerr 2021](#)). Another commenter, .chloho, states “I’ve probably watched this video at least 500 times,” ([vhackerr 2021](#)). These comments are just a few of many who indicate that they find Hacker attractive and enjoyable in this video ([vhackerr 2021](#)).

Another example of a cisgender heterosexual male TikTok creator showcasing their painted nails is DanniBoii19 who has 427 400 followers ([danniboiix n.d.](#)). In this video, Danni is seen standing shirtless—showing his tattooed and toned muscles—while holding a filled blender jug, responding to the comment from the user leedzc that reads “bruh be a man stop wearing nail polish g,” ([danniboiix 2020](#)). Danni then holds up his hand, showing off his black and orange painted nails, and says “Is this a problem to you? You got a problem with it? You big mad bro. You big mad you can’t do what you want,” ([danniboiix 2020](#)). The video finishes with Danni letting out a proud laugh before drinking his smoothie as the video ends ([danniboiix 2020](#)).

Danni’s video is currently at 2 600 000 views, 497 900 likes, 7460 comments, and 10 500 shares ([danniboiix 2020](#)). Similar to Hacker’s video, the majority of the comments under Danni’s video are positive, praising him for his nail polish, saying that it makes him look attractive ([danniboiix 2020](#)). For example, the user sm0chi references Danni’s “You got a problem with it?” statement as they comment under the video “my problem is that [your hand] ain’t [around] my neck,” ([danniboiix 2020](#)). Another user, christinawilyard proclaims

“some women love it when guys wear nail polish,” as another commenter, Asalas90, agrees when they state “boys painting [their] nails is so hot !!” ([danniboiix 2020](#)). Again, these are only a few of many examples of comments where individuals are praising Danni for his use of nail polish because they find it attractive.

To explore this concept of painting nails on TikTok, I use Judith Butler’s gender performativity theory. Butler (1988) argues that gender is performative as it is an identity that is instituted through a stylized repetition of acts, such as bodily gestures (519). Butler (1988) furthers this argument by stating that gender is influenced by social sanction, and, as a concept, is historically contingent—it is fluid based on time and space—as it is in an active process of incorporating cultural and historical conventions (520-521). Butler (1988) clearly states that gender performativity theory posits that gender is a culturally constructed performance—both in prescribing how to act and how it is perceived—that is created, sedimented, and reproduced through everyday acts (524). Part of gender performativity theory discusses the gender–sex dichotomy, as Butler (1990) argues that gender and sex are indexical—their meanings are constructed in relation to one another—and neither are pre-discursive—gender and sex are as they are done, neither precedes performance (9-11).

One way to examine these TikTok creators through a gender performativity lens is to recognize their videos as performances of gender, they are performing a gendered act. The act of painting nails, or having painted nails, is historically

associated with the queer and gender non-conforming community, as well as women generally, as painted nails are regarded as feminine behaviour. Also, having painted nails is a repeated stylized act that is considered feminine, making it a performance of gender. Butler (1993) outlines this when discussing the heterosexual matrix in terms of gender performativity, which links gender and sexuality, and accounts for how people make assumptions based on what they see (27). Specifically, Butler (1993) notes that sexuality is regulated through the policing of gender, such as where gay men are negatively described as “feminine”, subsequently resulting in them being seen as “not real” men (27). However, heterosexual, cisgender male TikTok creators engaging in the traditionally feminine behaviour of having painted nails, such as Danni and Hacker, are revered for ‘breaking of gender norms.’ Danni and Hacker are not, by the public, ridiculed and referred to as gay or ‘inferior’ men for painting their nails, and instead are praised in their comments for engaging in this feminine performance.

Another critical aspect to note is how the indexical nature of gender and sex plays a role in the praise these men receive. Commenters praise heterosexual, cisgender male creators for engaging in this gendered act, such as the comments under Danni and Hacker’s respective videos, because of the indexicality of gender and sex, specifically how Danni and Hacker’s sex is contradictory to their performance. As Butler (1990) states, gender and sex are indexical because their meanings are constructed in relation to one another—the

way bodies are seen, such as masculine or feminine and queer, changes the meaning of the gender performance even for the same act (9-11).

To illustrate this, Butler (1990) discusses drag performances as they are about the distinction between anatomical sex, gender, and performance (137). This is because drag queens are typically anatomically male, and often identify as men. Still, their performances exude femininity as the source of entertainment—their gendered performance is entertaining because of the distinction between their sex, gender, and performance (Butler 1990:137). Much like drag queens, Danni and Hacker’s masculine bodies and gender give meaning to their performance of the gendered act of having painted nails because this act is contradictory to their gender, and it is this very contradiction and distinction which is revered by commenters on TikTok. Danni and Hacker’s masculine bodies and gender allow them to engage in and be praised for, the gendered act of painting their nails on TikTok, praise that is not extended to queer and gender non-conforming individuals.

Moreover, the support and sanctioning of gendered acts extend beyond just social opinion; TikTok’s algorithm itself polices creators’ gendered acts. In her chapter “Popular Doesn’t Mean Good”, Meredith Broussard (2018) dismantles the commonly held belief that algorithms are objective tools, instead explaining that algorithms are riddled with biases that discriminate against minorities (150). Broussard (2018) cites a case study in which a seemingly ‘objective’ algorithm ranks individuals’ photos on a scale of

attractiveness based on the photo's popularity (149). The results of this experiment found that the "most attractive" photos comprised of young, white, cisgender women, who all fit a heteronormative view of attractiveness, highlighting the issue of equating 'popularity' to 'goodness' as this metric leads to significant Eurocentric and heteronormative biases (Broussard 2018:149).

Some may argue that the results of this case study are an unintended consequence of accidental biases being embedded into the algorithm by the programmers and developers of the algorithm and their own unconscious biases—essentially, these biases are a 'bug' or an error in the algorithm. However, this claim of unconscious biases leading to unintended consequences does not capture the whole issue. I argue that the revealed biases are not a 'bug' or an algorithmic error, but instead are a feature of the algorithm—an intentional function of the algorithm—and the same holds true for TikTok's algorithm and the support for cisgender, heterosexual males who paint their nails.

Similar to Broussard's case, as mentioned earlier, TikTok's algorithm partially determines what is 'good' through popularity. Danni and Hacker's videos are celebrated by TikTok users with their incredible number of views, likes, shares, and supportive comments. This celebration makes the video popular, which the algorithm then interprets as 'good' and thus is worth showing to even more users who will then celebrate the content with views, likes, shares, and comments, continuing the

cycle. This relates to Butler (1990:130) and gender performativity as well because gender and its subsequent norms can be broken, destabilized, and reshaped in particular social situations. In this instance, this situation where cisgender, heterosexual men, like Danni and Hacker, are breaking gender norms by engaging in the gendered act of painting their nails, which users and the algorithm then reward by showing their content to other viewers, is a direct consequence of the algorithm's metric of popular equating 'good'.

Contrastingly, queer and gender non-conforming individuals are not afforded this same celebration on TikTok for also engaging in gendered acts, and instead are punished and suppressed by the algorithm. Through interviews with TikTok creators, Nadia Karizat and colleagues (2021) find that respondents believe creators who are part of the LGBTQ community and their subsequent content are being suppressed by TikTok's algorithm (14-15). Participants believe the algorithm does not see LGBTQ users or their content as valuable compared to cis- heteronormative content. This belief stems from the fact that LGBTQ users feel as though the algorithm was not prioritizing LGBTQ content despite deliberately engaging with content from LGBTQ creators (Karizat et al. 2021:14). Suppressed LGBTQ content shows a stark difference in how TikTok's algorithm treats cisgender, heterosexual male creators compared to queer and gender non-conforming creators. Therefore, the difference in treatment of creators illustrates how TikTok's algorithm policies gendered acts depending on the assigned sex, or presumed gender, of the



user—cisgender, heterosexual male users with masculine bodies, like Danni and Hacker, are allowed to and rewarded for engaging in the gendered act of painting their nails and performing gender. In contrast, queer bodies are suppressed for performing gender.

One potential limit to this argument, and the paper as a whole, is that it only examines TikTok and thus cannot be applied to other social media platforms. Some may argue that cisgender, heterosexual men performing gender may not receive the same celebration on other social media platforms, whether that is because of different algorithms or because TikTok is a relatively new platform compared to Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

While I agree that there certainly needs to be more research on individuals performing gender and ‘breaking gender norms’ on other platforms, studies show that this trend of celebrating cisgender, heterosexual males’ performance of gender occurs on other social media platforms as well. Researchers Maya Parkins and John Parkins (2021) examine the posts of popular social media influencers and how they portray masculinity through these Instagram posts. In this study, Parkins and Parkins (2021) do not examine the gendered act of painting nails in particular, but they do find that some of the male influencers are straying from traditional forms of masculinity and are engaging in more ‘feminine’ behaviours, such as grooming, and fashion, while also showcasing intimacy in their posts (1). Therefore, the performance of gender and ‘breaking gender norms’ from cisgender, heterosexual men is

not limited to TikTok as it is seen on other social media platforms as well.

In conclusion, in this paper, I argued that only specific individuals, specifically cisgender heterosexual men, are permitted to perform gendered acts—and are often praised for doing so—on the social media platform TikTok. This paper began with a case study highlighting two cisgenders, heterosexual male TikTok creators, DanniBoii19 and Vinnie Hacker, engaging in the gendered act of painting their nails. Next, this paper explained Judith Butler’s gender performativity theory, and then applied it to the aforementioned case study videos, followed up with a discussion on how TikTok’s algorithm policies gender. Lastly, this paper addressed and rebutted the potential limitations of this argument’s applicability. Examining how the LGBTQ+ community is suppressed for performing gender is important because when individuals are oppressed or treated as invaluable, their mental health suffers, adding to the already concerning amount of queer and gender non-conforming individuals who have a mental illness or attempt to commit suicide—treating already vulnerable people as invaluable for performing gender will make them more likely to harm themselves. TikTok ought to consider how their algorithmic suppression of queer bodies’ content, and contrasting support of cisgender, heterosexual bodies’ content, plays a role in fueling a violently heteronormative and homophobic society, effectively abusing queer and gender non-conforming individuals.

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**Fertility Control and Natalist Views Destroying the Rights of Women's Autonomy**  
**By: Beth Smith**

Abstract

In the past and present, population control policies have exploited women's autonomy to control their fertility in harmful ways. To investigate the outcomes that women face as a result of government controls on their fertility, it is necessary to understand both population and fertility policies, as well as philosophical approaches to population thought that attempts to justify their actions. Romania's pro-natalist policy reflects the male-dominated society and forced medical treatments and births that shaped their treatment of women. The one child policy in China is an anti-natalist policy that has harmed both China's economic and political systems for the worst. In addition to intergenerationally traumatizing Chinese women and leaving them physical and emotionally affected due to their treatment at attempting to lower the Chinese population. Through a comparison of the similarities and differences of both political approaches based on their incentive and deterrents, as well as implications, it is clear that an anti-natalist viewpoint is much more harmful to women's overall safety, as well as destroying women's freedom to control her own body. The key understanding in this research is that population control that interferes with basic human life and natural reproduction is a violation of women's rights and has long term negative consequences world-wide.

*Key words:*

Anti-Natalist, Pro-Natalist, Women's Autonomy, One Child Policy, Romania Abortion Ban, Thomas Malthus, Fertility Control

Population control is the goal of increasing, decreasing, or stabilizing the numbers within a country. This is often accomplished through policies and measurements that ensure the government maintains the numbers desired for the country's economic and political benefits. Controlling women's fertility is one method that governments have used to control population throughout history. When comparing Romania's pro-natalist policies to China's anti-natalist policies, both nations policies had a long-term impact on women's freedom and autonomy. Although the implications put upon Chinese women and children support the idea that anti-natalist viewpoints are more harmful to society. This is evident in the history of population control by controlling fertility rates. Also included is a comparison of both anti-natalist and pronatalist historic policies, as well as an analysis of both natalist viewpoints, as well as their incentives and deterrents. Finally, understanding how this impacted women's rights and autonomy in the past and present.

Population control is a governance objective that allows those in positions of power to dictate and control the levels of human population within a state. The reasons nations want to increase their population is because a nation's size influences income, taxes, labor power, and a more prosperous national economy (Güngör

2022 lecture 3). Population control is enforced typically due to a fear of what will come with an unwanted changing population, or issues that are currently causing problems for a state's political or economic grounds. Such as fears of food scarcity and resource issues (Güngör 2022 lecture 3). Since the beginning of population thought, ancient Greek philosophers have stated that population size has both positive and negative implications, and they have sought an ideal size. States exclude slaves, those dependent on the state, and women from these calculations (Güngör 2022 lecture 3). The lack of consideration towards women and inability to see them as human bodies within population control methods has been present since the beginning of population thought. With further research and technology governments were able to use their power over nations and society to implement policies that control the number of people women birth into a state.

As centuries passed and women were included in population size and studies, the concern for their fertility and motherhood was called into question as a means of controlling the government's preferred human population. Governments can use legislation to prohibit such fertility measures as abortion and birth control, or in some countries, imposing laws against family size and enforcing procedures that prevent women from having children, or sterilization (Hartmann 2016). Fertility control creates the perception that women's fertility has a positive or negative impact, not as a gift of life, but as a means of giving and taking. Within fertility control there is an aim to increase or decrease population, and we can

compare the two objectives as pro-natalist and anti-natalist policies. They take the freedom away from women's own autonomy throughout history to determine which of both lasting implications had a significant impact on the treatment and condition of women in fertility control situations.

To understand why there is such a focus on fertility control, we can look to Thomas Robert Malthus and his theoretical philosophies on population. Malthus' theory explains why the desire to reproduce that humans have is unable to keep with the resources and food production in a society to properly sustain all members (Marx and Engels 1953). Malthus devised a system of preventative and positive checks to explain how the world naturally corrects over population. Preventative measures included postponing marriage later in life and family planning later in life. Positive checks include what most people would consider global issues and disasters, such as infant mortality, famine, war, and human suffering that results in death (Malthus 1798). Without these checks, population grows in a geometrical ratio, while food grows in a linear arithmetic ratio. "Food is necessary to the existence of man. That the passion between the sexes is necessary and will remain nearly in its present state" (Malthus 1798).

Malthus was frequently chastised for what appeared to be an unfair view of lower-class people because he believed that the more, they procreated, the less they would be able to sustain food for their families. Resulting in more famine and social and economic problems for the rest of society. Malthus is relevant to the discussion of the

negative effects of fertility control because he believed that a utopian society would be impossible if people continued to reproduce due to the exponential growth of humans and linear growth of food (Malthus 1798). Although he can be compared because he never considered agriculture technology and advancements that allowed for better resource sharing in addition to being debunked, his theories have been influential in our understanding of population thought. Malthus clearly supports the anti-natalist viewpoint, and his debunking while still adding crucial information to population thought supports policy enactments, despite the obvious harm caused by anti-natalist policies such as China's one child policy.

The pro-natalist viewpoint can be argued to be the more difficult approach due to the mission to increase population size by any means necessary for citizens to give birth and raise large families to support the nation's labor market. Romanian pro-natalist policies, which began in 1966 in an attempt to increase their population in order to save them from economic and labour crises, are a prime example of this (Moskoff 1980). Measures taken in Romania to increase birth rates included the prohibition and contraceptive methods, as well as the government and policymakers developing programmes to change women's attitudes towards fertility (Moskoff 1980). Along with this, there are incentives, such as cash rewards for mothers with multiple children; however, these rewards are typically insufficient to sustain a family with large numbers of children. Along with many other benefits that came with maternity medals for women with multiple children. The negative

treatment of women is most visible in the decentives, and social implications imposed on women during Romania's pro-natalist policies. For example, mandatory gynaecological exams to monitor women's fertility and detect pregnancies. While also confining women who have clearly previously aborted a child if they are pregnant again (Kligman 1992). An example of unequal medical treatment is assisted reproductive technology in Romania, in comparison to other countries such as France, which has many bioethical laws governing this medical practices. In contrast, there is little to no legal framework in ART in public health care in Romania (Bretonnière 2013). This demonstrates the lack of care for women's health care and reproductive rights to be sanctioned when pro-natalist policies are involved.

The goal of pro-natalist policies supports the notion of treating women's bodies as a commodity. In Romania, we see intersectional oppression based on gender, as well as lower socioeconomic homes women with the inability for families to support up to eight children to receive cash rewards that do not begin to cover the costs of having that many children (Moskoff 1980). Yet, in order to produce an effective labour market with a growing population, they take away their right to autonomy with endless restrictions and forced medical exams, as well as a lack of sanctioning against this unfair treatment. The exclusionary society created by pro-natalists is seen in countries such as Lithuania and Poland, where negative attitudes towards women who diverge from childbearing and expanding families are enormous

(Gedvilaitė-Kordušienė, Tretjakova, and Krzyżowski 2020). According to studies on mother's attitudes towards the childless in these countries, countries such as Romania have built concrete views within their societies about how a woman is to be treated and her position within society depending on whether or not she chooses to participate in the goal of increasing the nation's population (Gedvilaitė-Kordušienė, Tretjakova, and Krzyżowski 2020). Pro-natal fertility control is to increase the nation's population, but an examination of Romania's policies reveal that fertility control may benefit the economy and a growing labour market, but at the expense of women's rights to their own autonomy over their own bodies. While also creating a toxic environment for the country and the children they are attempting to bring into the world, all in the name of increasing political and economic power.

The anti-natalist viewpoint opposes pro-natalist policies by aiming to reduce population sizes by lowering fertility rates in a country. A harsh anti-natalist viewpoint holds that life in an overpopulated nation is not worth living in because of the circumstances into which one will be born into, and thus the solution is to prevent these lives for the living and the unborn (Metz 2012). This is most evident in China's anti-natalist policies, which limit women's ability to have their own families and control their own fertility. China's one child policy was the motion to create limits and only allow a rate of one birth per couple or woman and ensured so in harmful ways. During a hearing of the committee on foreign affairs they describe the policy as an

assault on women and children, with no respect or regard to the health and safety of women and their born and unborn children, and they go on to continue to describe the horrible pain these women go through having no choice over the lives of their children (Committee on foreign affairs 2011). China's policy included forced abortions on women who were pregnant and already had a child. After the policy was implemented, woman who already had children were sterilized. Governments were forcing birth control, insertion of inter-uterine devices, and other forms of contraception. These women were facing serve fines, loss of employment, and political, social, and physical harassment for not properly complying, they were given incentives such as regular payments and high priority in health care and jobs (Robine 2013).

As time passed, the government decided that those living in Rural China could only have a second child if their first born was a girl. Urban Chinese couples were only allowed a second child if both parents were only children (Cai and Feng 2021). The one child policy caused problems for the Chinese government because of the issues with sexual composition that was mainly male, and aging population with little of a younger generation for domestic workers to employee, and labor shortages in certain careers, particularly dominant female pathways (Cai and Feng 2021). Because of these conditions, women in China have had to surrender to the Chinese government and population policies aimed at resolving political and economic issues caused by increasing population, but which have

intergenerationally harmed Chinese women and children. One can only imagine the impact that China's act of fertility control legislation had on women and families. People in China were treated as machines rather than humans, and the government and scientists applied their knowledge to the health and well-being of Chinese women as if they were not people and unborn children that they were dictating and deciding who lives (Greenhalgh 2008). This analysis is based on the observation of the population planning and control, which was the driving force for the one child policy for China to move away from its Marxian economy (Greenhalgh 2008).

These anti-natalist actions penetrated through people's homes and shaped their lives in every way. Ayushi Singh Ahluwalia (2021) describes the implications for Chinese women including the skewed sex ratio, which has created a society and culture centered around male-biased views and actions. Furthermore, the forced abortions and sterilizations led to many complications and long term mental and physical health issues for these women. In addition to harming women's mental health, abandonment, forced adoption, and female infanticide, which is the killing of infant girls, all having a significant impact on Chinese society and women. Because families needed to have boys or no children at all, young girls were killed and left on their own with little to no health care, housing, or protection. Evidently because of China's one child policy created enormous issues for the women of China which globally affects everyone, as this male dominated society and ideas seeps into the

entire world leaving lasting negative effects on the physical and mental wellbeing of women.

To fully understand the reason as to why anti-natalist policies are much more damaging than pro-natalist policies that we see in such places like Romania and China, it is crucial to analyze both their differences and similarities. Between the two nations and the consecutive effects that fertility control has had on these women one is able to see ways in which they affect women the same. As previously stated, we know that pro-natalist policies have used banning abortion, contraceptives, along with incentives and deterrents to force women into childbearing and growing large families (Moskoff 1980). This has influenced a male dominated society and took power away from women by controlling their own reproductive autonomy. Anti-natalist policies have the same effect on women by taking away women's power over themselves and shaping society to have an oppressing attitude towards women and their ability to carry, and birth a child. In addition, the banning of such fertility measures to grow the population is the primary cause of creating third world countries and creating economic and social inequalities in the world. Evident as we see with China's anti-natalist policies that created an entire national crisis of sexual composition issues and skewed their entire economy and aging population (Cai and Feng 2021). Both points of view and policy agree on the unimportance of women's rights and remove their freedom to their own autonomy, but these different natalist policies differ in the way that they oppress women.

Anti-natalist policies seek to take away a differ on the implications of what has happened to women because of these policies and the attempts to control the population. Pro-natalist policies have aimed to increase population size which left families with economic and social inequalities that continue to influence behaviors in their current society. Whereas when looking at Chinas one child policy, representing the anti-natalist view we see an effect on not only the mental health of women but extreme physical harm and social disparities. This is because of forced medical procedures, having their children stripped away from their families, and women unvalued by their own society based on their gender (Cai and Feng 2021). This evidently caused intergenerational trauma and issues as well as permanent economic and population structure issues for the nation, unlike ever seen. This differs from pro-natalist policies because in the pro-natalist situation of pushing higher birth rates women were deeply affected mental and socially, in addition to physical with the elimination of birth control and abortions as well as forced medical exams (Kligman 1992). Although in China families suffered the forced deaths of their children, the sterilization of their most natural job to reproduce, children being abandoned, a nation left with a sexual composition that was unsustainable for the economic and cultural system. Both natalist policies share the same struggles and institutional manipulation of women's rights and although they have different objectives, they share the same unfair treatment to women,

but it is in their implications where they majorly differ.

When similarities and differences between pro-natalist and anti-natalist viewpoints in Romania and China are compared, an anti-natalist viewpoint shares the same debunked and controversial views as Thomas Malthus' view concerns of a growing population. Pro-natalist policies create harmful and influential effects on women and both policies greatly effect disparities towards women in society and their rights. Although the implications that anti-natalist has had on the sexual composition of China combined with the effected lives of women attached to murder and abandonment of children is incomparably a greater effect on women. Just as Malthus viewed population growth and its harm to the resources, in Chinas case their economy as a priority, they believed that a rising population would only affect their economic system, and the lower class (Malthus 1798). There is also major effect in how recent these events were, as a developing world we expect awful events to be of the past, decades ago fitting the time frame of unresearched and past dates information, although the one child policy was not lifted until less than a decade ago. Romania lifted its ban on abortion, which represented the pro-natalist movement, in 1990. The one child policy in China ended in 2015 (Singh Ahluwalia 2021). This exemplifies the long-held discrimination and torture against women, the effects that this policy had is not history because the nation is still being forced to suffer through the implication to this day considering this attack against women.



Once a government tells a woman what she can and cannot do with her body there is evidently a problem with even stating that a policy as such violates the safety and freedom of women, even if some women were never affected. It is evident through analyzing the effects that anti-natalist and pro-natalist policies have had on women in different nations that China's one child policy left last trauma on Chinese women and was more harmful than Romania's pro-natalist policies to increase their national population. This has been proven in the analysis of the history of population control through fertility control. There is also a comparison of both anti-natalist and pronatalist historical policies, as well as an examination of both natalist viewpoints, as well as their advantages and pitfalls. Finally, consider how this has influenced women's rights and autonomy in the past and present. Measures like fertility control raise the question of what other ways governments can deprive citizens of their rights to complete their political and economic agendas. When the government enters people's homes and proposes new legislation that controls individuals' personal decisions, it must be challenged for everyone's safety and protection.

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## **Sexual Liberation in a Sexually Oppressed World**

**By: Danielle Shankman**

Sex. intimacy. Cum. Sorry, is the nakedness of this language uncomfortable? Sex clubs. BDSM. Gay sex. Oh no! How immodest to let that slip. Porn. Threesomes. Strap ons. Oops, so sorry, this is an inappropriate dinner table conversation. Please pass the salt and don't forget the birth control! The world of sex is deeply intertwined with politics.

The way sex is taught, understood, policed and embodied is constrained by political powers that are reproduced through social norms. Together they oppress sexual freedom and bodily autonomy. For centuries sex has been a mode of control. Controlling women, queer individuals and the public. It has worked to blind meanings of sex away from pleasure, experience and creativity into oppressive standards of exclusion and shame. Sex, both historically and currently, is categorized within sets of privilege. It embodies power on contentions of whose bodies are fucking and how they choose to fuck. The theoretical frameworks discussed by Gayle Rubin in her piece "Thinking Sex" help to convey these notions of sex and its connection to politics. More specifically I will use her theories on radical sex to examine the case study of queer sex detailed in Paul Preciado's "Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era" and touch on a sex scene from the award-winning film "Call Me By Your Name". These works in pairing will demonstrate how privilege and power have held harmful jurisdictions over

sex that destroy sexual liberation. I intend to exhibit how the outdated understandings of sex have contributed to the rigid internal set of politics that apply contingencies on pleasure.

Rubin's piece "Thinking Sex" uncovers the social and historical influences on the politics of sex. It deconstructs western ideas of sex and how they are rooted in oppression, power imbalances and past moral panics. Through a radical sexual perspective, Rubin's theories on the charmed circle, sex negativity and the morality of sex dissect the issues that lead to constrictive sexual culture. The charmed circle illustrates a sexual value system. The circle divided into two sections, outer and inner, dictates how sex is viewed and accepted. The outer circle demonstrates "good sex" which is categorized by traits such as heterosexual, marital, monogamous, reproductive, "vanilla" and noncommercial (Rubin, 2006. p.152). These characteristics of sex are deemed natural and moral unlike the traits that reside in the inner circle, which constitute what is valued as "bad sex" (Rubin, 2006. p.152). These characteristics such as homosexual, unmarried, promiscuous, nonprocreative, with toys, and casual may also include the use of pornography, fetish objects, or unusual roles (Rubin, 2006. p.152). The designation of value to these differing sex acts, sexualities and sexual circumstances conveys how individuals are shamed into conforming their pleasure by a constrictive scope. By attaching importance to certain sexual experiences it renegotiates pleasure by solely instituting its legitimacy by society's normalized cultures of sex that

have excluded the more extensive range of sex.

Rubin's radical sexual perspective of sex negativity displays the societal attitudes toward sex that “generally consider sex to be a dangerous, destructive and negative force” (Rubin, 2006, p. 148). Through this theory, sex is seen as inherently sinful and used as a reproduction tool completely disregarding the aspect of pleasure. Sex negativity also seeks to see genitalia as an inferior part of the human body, “less holy than the mind, the “soul,” the ‘heart’ ” (Rubin, 2006. p. 148). As Rubin exclaims, “sex is guilty until proven innocent” (Rubin, 2006. p. 148). Sex negativity sees all erotic behaviour as evil unless an exemption is established, which in our western society usually is procreation, marriage or love. Exercising eroticism within any capacity must come with pretexts that are otherwise unnecessary for other forms of pleasure such as food or television. Sex negativity has drastically impacted individuals' ability to proudly engage in sex with themselves and with others. It has also monopolized the mentalities of individuals in positions of power to normalize and legislate how sex is taught and understood (Rubin, 2006). This extends to even more progressive locations such as Ontario, where the fight to include a broader sex education curriculum, one updated from the 1990s, was met with controversy, protests and backlash (Rayside, 2010). Even our first questions of sex are met with answers undeniably fed through sex-negative frameworks, “ when a man and woman love each other very much...”. Sex negativity is a major factor

that suppresses sexual adventure and reworks what is meant to be a personal, creative and pleasurable experience into outdated ideals.

Lastly, the morality of sex describes the connection of virtue to sexual acts and experience, unlike the charmed circle, it centers its focus on embodying purity through sex (Rubin, 2006. p.154). The morality of sex appoints ethical integrity and righteousness to those who either refrain from sex or only have sex within limited contexts. It alternatively applies that those who do not live conservative sex lives are both blasphemous and immoral individuals. Immoral sex has historically been the confounder of scaring people into submission, often leading to a ruined reputation and alienation or outcasting. It serves as a highly influential element in allocating virtue within our current society as well as a political mode in which the public should aspire to behave (Rubin, 2006). These theories that Rubin investigates exemplify the methods that have oppressed sexual freedom as well as dictated who deserves to fuck and how they should fuck. They further showcase how sex has been thoughtfully categorized into manipulating and controlling sexual views and experiences which villainizes individuals who “fall outside the box”.

In Preciado’s “Testo Junky” he recounts his sexual relationship with a woman he anonymously names as “V” (Preciado, 2013). He, fueled with Testo-gel, and she, as a newly identifying lesbian woman, embark on a sexual whirlwind (Preciado, 2013). Preciado met her in 2000 while he was still identifying as a woman

and she a heterosexual woman but notes his instant attraction to her nonetheless (Preciado, 2013). Their sexual relationship begins five years later when he bumps into her once again and they meet in motel rooms to sleep casually (Preciado, 2013). By society's standards, their sex does not fall within the lines of "good", moral or natural (Rubin, 2006). Instead, it is strewn with notes of intensity, passion and "abnormality". Every aspect of their sex is constituted as "bad" or low-value sex under Rubin's charmed circle (Rubin, 2006). Their sex is queer, out of wedlock, nonmonogamous, kinky and with toys (Preciado, 2013). It graphically and beautifully chronicles orgasms, washing a 12-inch strap-on and oral sex. The very idea of this type of sex has driven people to sanction laws, behave with prejudice, commit assault and even kill (Sloane, 2014). These facets of sex are labelled abnormal, obscene and dirty. However, it is not the sex that drives these actions but how society has chosen to connotate it negatively (Ussher, 1997). Their sex, in a very raw state, embodies pleasure. It disregards every enforceable norm society has instructed them about sex and relinquishes itself from the confines of moral or conventional sex (Ussher, 1997). These conventions are what apply power to characteristics of heterosexuality and vanilla sex, and therefore withhold power to bodies who engage in sex in "abnormal" manners.

In the glow of the TV in this small motel room, this pair envelope and reconstitute pleasure and eroticism. They transform cum into holy water and baptize

themselves in a sea of "political sparkles" (Preciado, 2013. p. 97). They reteach how sex should be understood through experiencing intimacy by defying how the world suggests they have sex. In navigating these sexual encounters with stubborn nervousness from the impacts of societal teachings embedded from birth, Preciado, in this space, with this individual, is sexually liberated (Preciado, 2013). He breaks every contract on the morality of sex and allows himself to explore sex in a purely pleasure-seeking fashion. Speaking corporately is the best way to succeed at sex (Wentland & Reissing, 2014). No, I don't mean by using dildos or assuming power roles persay, I mean by opening your mind and body to what excites you (Sloane, 2014). Individuals who stray from conventional aspects of sex report having more healthy and happy sex lives (Sloane, 2014). The tie of well-being to sex is evident. Individuals who can deconstruct the cultures that judged their desires and recognize the ongoings of sexual oppression end up having better sex and perceiving it with less stress (Sloane, 2014). Evolutionary psychology recognizes the historical past of sex and sees the adaptive advantages of sexual encounters that are more casual and expressive (Wentland & Reissing, 2014). Studies suggest newer generations, who are more likely to approach sex more open-mindedly, have the highest rates of sexual fulfillment upwards of 66% (Wentland & Reissing, 2014. p.169). The rigid sexual politics that are in place to keep the public "safe" work to deprive specific individuals of pleasure, and Preciado's experience speaks to this truth.

These elements can also be exemplified through the specific aspect of homosexuality in sexual politics. Systems of oppression heavily persuade against queer sex to any extent (Ussher, 1997). The place of sexuality within sexual and political realms perpetuates longstanding heteronormative traditions that treat queer identity as blatantly offensive, and this extends to the bedroom. Perhaps this was a ploy to destroy queerness even as it lives behind closed doors, however, centuries later, queerness is alive and well yet queer sex remains seen as undignified. Through the charmed circle, the morality of sex and sex negativity, queer sex is framed as inferior (Rubin, 2006). Queer theorists evaluate how redefining the boundaries of queer sex is inherently tied to villainizing homosexuality (Adelman & Ruggi, 2016). Specifically, in sex, queer bodies are handled as “dangerous” (Rubin, 2006). By social and political norms, they are informed to hide in the cracks of society like rats. Surviving off the crumbs of little to no sex education, representation in media, or safe spaces to express their sexuality (Ussher, 1997). Queer sex is advertised and delivered with prepackaged judgment and a side of shame. There is no happiness in this meal.

As the world is viewed through a binary lens, ideas of sex follow suit (Adelman & Ruggi, 2016). “Men do the fucking, women get fucked”, “women need to be submissive”, and “giving a blowjob is a part of sex but eating pussy is negotiable” are all conceptions of virginity and sex that correspond sex roles to gender roles. As normalized sex is attached through

heteronormative practices, queer sex, as demonstrated through the morality of sex, is unnatural (Rubin, 2006). These prejudiced ideas keep 83% queer individuals closeted and from experiencing the sex they wish they could (Poitras, 2019). Once out, the surviving stigma around gay sex imposes fear on queer individuals to pursue “unnatural sex, ” ultimately leaving their sex lives unsatisfied (Rubin, 2006). Preciado’s sex with V on the other hand does not adhere to gender roles or heteronormative practices. As discussed earlier, it is “not moral”, yet it couldn't be more natural as they, by Preciado's recount, “flow as easily as water”(Preciado, 2013. p.94). When Preciado notes the element of sexual domination where “she pays, I fuck”, it comments on how their sex surpasses ideas of masculinity and femininity which populate normalized sexual domains (Preciado, 2013). This demonstrates not only how society has obscured the value system of sex acts but also how it has associated ideas of pleasure with idealized gender roles and sexualities (Ussher, 1997). Preciado and V’s sex and sexualities are shamed by negative sex, and their bodies rich in gay passion and pleasure, quite literally, screw the systems that invoke these insecurities (Preciado, 2013). This sex is dynamic and everchanging, as all sex should be. This is because it refuses to observe political agency within sexual agency. (Sloane, 2014. p. 254). The motel room becomes a palace of pleasure where the outside world cannot control their desires (Preciado, 2013). No longer do conceptions of masculinity or femininity take traditional

shape as he notes, “She loves breasts, and I love cocks. But she’s what I’m looking for. And I’m what she’s looking for. She has the cock I need, and I have the breasts she wants.”(Preciado, 2013. p. 88). When church and state refuse to give them power, they play with it between their legs. The analysis of Preciado's experience as examined through Rubin's theories illustrate how sex is embodied when freed from political and religious constraints. It also demonstrates how the force of sexual oppression works alongside societal conceptions of the “correct” way to fuck which ultimately ostracizes queer individuals. All in all, the internal politics of sex create a system that mangles understandings of pleasure and dictates which bodies should hold the authority to screw without judgment.

As sex is constrained to specific domains, the current political and social moment is itching to break free. Public spheres such as media and film are beginning to showcase the “unnatural” components of sex within mainstream arenas. In examining these concepts and conclusions to the current political moment I want to evaluate one of the most famous queer sex scenes that exhibit oppressive sexual culture. The film “ Call Me By Your Name” tells the love story of Ellio, a 17 year old Italian boy whose family houses the 24 year old doctoral student Oliver in the summer of 1983 (Guadagnino, 2017). A particular scene depicts Ellio alone in bed at a point in the movie where he is coming to understand his sexuality and attraction to Oliver (Guadagnino, 2017). With a peach in hand, he fingers a hole in the peach, throws

away the pit, and begins to masturbate with it (Guadagnino, 2017). Once finished, Oliver coincidentally enters the room as Ellio shamefully tries to hide the semen-soaked peach (Guadagnino, 2017). This scene exemplifies the guilty mentalities around homosexual desire. The peach, which symbolizes in many cultures the ass, implies Ellio's replication of sodomy. Without even participating in sex with a partner, he alone is still inflicted by societal sexual oppression (Rubin, 2006). Ellio was uncomfortable with gay sex regardless of being curious and aroused by it (Guadagnino, 2017). This is because sexual norms have instructed him that discomfort is the natural response to queerness and “abnormal” sex (Rubin, 2006). It realistically presents how queer sex is signified and understood in a heteronormative world.

Historically, homosexuality was viewed as menacing and offensive and these connotations of gay sexual desires leave queer individuals like Ellio to feel ashamed rather than liberated (Rubin, 2006). In our modern contemporary society, this film portrays gay lust with its historical inflictions and a true embodiment of sex. It displays how “abnormal” desire and eroticism can be just as beautiful and sophisticated as normalized lust (Ussher, 1997). This scene, similar to Preciado’s experience, composes unpoliced sex with pride and self-discovery regardless of how it conflicts with sex’s political ideals (Preciado, 2013). The power of the religious and political systems to control sexual freedom results in many struggles, hesitancy being one of them (Rubin, 2006).

Even though both affairs for each respective pair (Preciado and V, Ellio and Oliver) were for lack of a better word, life-changing, the way this sex was approached was no different than how a child approaches a lion in a cage; slowly and cautiously. Gay sex is neither dangerous nor toys (if handled safely) nor premarital sex. With films like these, which highlight so-called “bad sex”, we watch this caution evaporate and see how all sexual bodies regardless of fetish or sexuality, embody the passion and deserve to be explored.

While sexual politics still operate and control ideas around sex, the veil of sex is slowly thinning. Once extremely forthright, conventions of sex post-marriage have begun to disintegrate in western culture (Sloane, 2014). Newer generations are beginning to recognize the unreasonable and harmful restrictions around how sex is policed and are seeking education through online platforms and first-hand experience (Sloane, 2014). While sexual political control still profoundly influences political spheres of birth control, abortion, media etc, sex now more than ever has been given some rightful spotlight (Rubin, 2006). This sex scene evaluates sexual-political ideals and the power they hold. It captures how sexual-political agendas profoundly oppress adverse sexuality and desire and artfully culminates the impacts of the detrimental norms and mentalities that persecute individuals for how they choose to experience sex.

Overall, sex is, and has always been, political. Sex in our society lives within religious and political constraints perpetuating harmful ideals. The theories

and perspectives Rubin offers on sex help reorient how we were raised to understand and approach sex. Her work dismantles these religious and political norms that oppress sexual freedom and liberation. Particularly her theories of the charmed circle, sex negativity and the morality of sex are instrumental in illustrating how sex is controlled. The case study of Preciado’s queer sexual experience with “V”, along with the sex scene in “Call Me By Your Name”, demonstrate how sex is categorized within sets of privilege and value. They showcase how sexual politics apply contingencies to how individuals should experience pleasure and how sex is embodied through “abnormal” eroticism. This analysis showcases the fallacy in outdated conceptions of sex and presents how freeing sexual experience can be when unchained from political constraints. Further research should examine how sexual politics influence other marginalized identities such as focusing on its effect on women and reproduction. This issue spans a variety of elements in our society and highlighting them will help deconstruct the systems that uphold them. Sexual liberation is within grasp as long as we recognize the injustices society has placed on sex. We must evaluate, question and investigate these unjust politics to move toward sexual freedom for all people.

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**Sexual Violence Amongst  
Heterosexual and Homosexual Males  
in Prison Hierarchal Systems  
By: Emma Spano**

The social issue of sexual violence amongst men is overlooked at an alarming rate in present-day society. Reasonings of toxic masculinity, increased female victimization, and the ideology that men can only be perpetrators prevent any further discussion or analysis from occurring. With this being said, sexual violence in prison systems, specifically male institutions, is a growing issue that receives even less attention; inmates are seen as second-class citizens and lack any genuine support, prevention, or therapeutic services for sexual trauma that occurs behind bars. While focusing on the intersection of sexual violence and gender compounded with hegemonic masculinity, fabricated sexual identity is present in specific sexual interactions in male prisons that can translate into sexually-charged assaults, a need for power/dominance against male subordinates. In some occurrences, sexual violence represents a form of humiliation, hetero-romantic fantasies, or a way to express homosexuality, that may or may not be situational due to a deprived environment. It is essential to understand the corresponding characteristics of sexual vulnerability at the hands of heteronormative prison systems and aggressors in order to identify the motive and at-risk inmates. Inmates within male prison systems are subjected to sexual violence in an attempt to assert physical and symbolic dominance and discipline due to characteristics associated

with submissiveness or homosexuality. The prison hierarchal system is built on the foundation of power abuse, where invoking sexual violence provides sexual gratification, an outlet for derivational/situational homosexuality, or increases an inmate's dominance in an unseen masculine hierarchy.

This section outlines the structure of power structures, the purpose of masculine hierarchies in prison, and the fundamentals of power, dominance, and social control. Aggressors, or inmates commonly responsible for sexual assaults that occur, utilize power as a repressive tool, aiming to land at the top of any prison hierarchy and distribute the roles of the "powerless". For this paper, the main focus of these ideologies will focus on the basis that subordinates are controlled through sexual violence. Spade and Wilse (2015) utilize sociological concepts such as feminist theory analysis, the production of societal norms under hetero-patriarchal foundations, queer critiques, and the basis of the theorists, Foucault's, disciplinary power. The regulation of coerced or violent sexuality utilizes social control, as discussed by Foucault, to keep victims from being productive or independent. Disciplinary power is essential for this paper and the contemporary social injustice issue it presents, as it establishes the norms of bad behaviour from an inmate oppressor and enforces gender roles to determine what makes a victim vulnerable.

Physical and symbolic characteristics associated with masculine gender expression or lack thereof increase the probability of a sexual assault. Identifying and analyzing

what increases the probability of male victimization, allows for a better understanding of what makes an inmate targetable. Male inmates in the prison system who appear to have more minor physical traits than their aggressor counterparts are perceived as submissive and often associated with feminine qualities. Characteristics such as shorter height, less muscle mass, younger/underdeveloped appearance, and white, homosexual or homosexual presenting make a vulnerable target. This lack of manliness denotes that these inmates become physically victimized and easily overpowered by aggressors. According to Hensley's (2007) research findings, male victims exhibit additional predictors, including that they typically are less educated, between the ages of 18-25, exhibit mental health problems, and become recent newcomers to the prison system. With this being said, perpetrators that exhibit opposing traits, such as being more significant, older, and prison experienced, it makes them seem more intimidating and makes the task of using physical force during sexual assaults or coercion easier. Wolff and Singh (2009) support these claims, "In general, potential or actual victims of sexual violence/assault have been found to have more diminutive or effeminate physical appearance". Identifying and analyzing what increases the probability of male victimization allows for a better understanding of what makes an inmate targetable and unveils a deeper issue that we will be discussing; power dominance and repressed homosexuality.

Coerced or violent sexual attacks occur among inmates. They are often

associated with dominance versus submissiveness, where an inmate will demonstrate how much social control he has over his disciplinary subjects. Frequently, sexual violence represents a form of humiliation to gain an increased ranking amidst the masculine hierarchy present behind bars. Ellison (2011) writes, "The majority of male-on-male sexual assault is heterosexual and use sexual assault to "put people in their place" (Ellison 2011). The term 'putting people' in their place refers to the ideology that sexually charged assaults produce power/dominance or discipline against male victims that often identify as heterosexual. Ferber et al. (2017) writes "Sometimes this violence takes the form of humiliation or physical force enacted by one straight man as he makes sexual contact with another; in other cases, it may take the form of two men fantasizing about sexual violence against women". Therefore, when considering prison a violent environment, aggressors use physical force and intimidation to belittle their disciplinary subjects, otherwise considered as social control, which leads to coercive/violent sexual attacks. These attacks are not only used as sexual gratification, which will be discussed later on regarding types of homosexuality but to place victimized inmates at the bottom of power hierarchies, compounded with sharp masculine boundaries. Fleishner and Krient's Sexual Behaviour Continuum can be used to understand this argument as it, "Differentiates between voluntary and coerced sexual encounters and points out that perpetrator motivation due to past

sexual trauma or power complex.” (Morash, Jeong, Bohmert, & Bush 2012).

This continuum assists in the prediction of what makes a victim vulnerable in the eyes of a dominant inmate and makes it exceptionally easy to overpower, control, and violate gender norms. The regulation of inmates through sexual assault both ruins the mental health and independence of more minor, weaker inmates and places sexual assault victims at the bottom of the prison hetero-patriarchal system. This high masculine placement allows the aggressor to assert his manliness and show that he is not one to disrespect it or confront it, which can be for abuse of power or the possibility of repressed homosexuality or sexual motifs.

In some specific occasions concerning male sexual aggressors, a fabricated gender or sexual identity is present, resulting in subjective perceptions of sexual assault. By this, heterosexual presenting inmates or ‘manly’ inmates may harbour inner gay tendencies due to deprivation/situational homosexuality or repressed sexual trauma. Heterosexual inmates can be driven to homosexual encounters because of a lack of females/resources and adapting to the social environment they have been placed in. In terms of sexual trauma, pre-disposed male inmates enact the same behaviour.

According to *Sex, Gender, and Sexuality*, “The line between straight men having sex with men and actual homosexuality is under constant scrutiny and for straight men, violence is a critical element that imbues homosexuality...” (Ferber, Holcomb, Wentling 2017). Although some aggressors

are homosexual, some do not identify with that sexual identity but rather adapt to the long-term heteronormative environment through forced sexual activity. The fundamentals between heterosexual men and homosexual practices within prison walls is based on both situation and depravity.

An interesting concept within the idea of heterosexual men engaging in homosexual activities is that to ensure that aggressors are not ‘condemned’ or ‘targeted’ for their sexuality or situational sexuality, is to use means of violence and social control. By remaining at the top of any social structure within the prison power system, these monetary arbitrations are not questioned and set a precedent for ‘acceptable’ forms of assault and who can be used as a victim in these situations. Utilizing the vulnerable characteristics discussed prior in this paper, inmates are then perceived as homosexual regardless of their actual orientation, which can contribute to this type of social power.

The vulnerability of inmates within male prisons by means of sexual assault is determined by associated submissive or homosexual characteristics, utilizing abuse of power within hetero-patriarchal hierarchies, or an outlet for deviational/situational homosexuality. Increasing inmate dominance within masculine structures enacts the forms of humiliation and discipline to victims, which creates overwhelming amounts of trauma, distress, and fear of remaining in their suppressive assigned roles. This social issue is incredibly significant as inmates held in prison facilities are already denoted as second-class citizens in the eyes of society.

Therefore, when a sexual or physical assault occurs, it often goes overlooked and ignored. This discussion is vital to occur in this realm of sexual violence and gender norms, as it pertains to proving the probability of male victimization, discussing sexual assault prevention, and keeping the correctional facility environment safe for at-risk inmates that are both separate and apart of the LGBTQ+ community.

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## **How Gender Continues to Shape the Realms of Paid and Unpaid Work for Parents**

**By: Hanna Nawroth**

Parenting is an enduring job that demands constant emotional and physical labour; children require continuous care, socialization, and reassurance. Balancing the responsibilities of paid and unpaid work has been a challenge for parents as the expectations of parenting and the societal conceptions of children are dynamic. Paid work can be defined as a continuous commitment to the labour market (Albanese 2018:184). This ongoing labour market commitment has been predominantly available to men (Albanese 2018:184). The gendered expectations of paid work will be analyzed to illustrate the obstruction of mothers' participation in paid work. Unpaid work, in contrast, is more subjective and contains many different facets (Albanese 2018:184). For this argument, unpaid work will encompass household work and childcare. Mother's sustained completion of unpaid work will also be utilized to display the uneven responsibility of parenting. The work that goes into raising children is all-consuming; women continue to make disproportionate sacrifices in paid work environments and complete the majority of unpaid work. Albanese explicates that, historically and cross-culturally, women overwhelmingly meet the work and responsibility of caring for children (2018:188).

Despite women continually participating in the paid labour force, the societal gender roles of men and women

persist in unpaid work. Until the 1970s, widespread beliefs regarding the connections between gender and work were maintained because of different psychological orientations and family responsibilities (Leidner 1991:170). This view is not only wrong, but it also serves to keep the gendered aspects of work, labelling jobs as masculine or feminine. These ideals persist today through expectations and parental 'benefits' that prevent mothers from succeeding in the workforce while continually asserting unpaid work as mothers' work. Both spheres of paid and unpaid work serve to maintain gendered expectations; mothers continue to make disproportionate sacrifices in paid employment while completing the majority of outstanding work. These expectations amalgamate and perpetuate the gendered norms of paid and unpaid work and minimize the contributions of mothers.

The contrasting expectations of men and women in paid work have persisted despite the increasing representation of women in the workforce. The employment rates of mothers continues to increase; in 2015, 81.4 percent of women with children aged 12-17 were working (Statistics Canada as cited in Albanese 2018:184). However, mothers often make sacrifices in paid work that fathers do not have to. Men are not subject to the same expectations women are and are much more likely to have a partner that will complete the familial obligations they cannot complete because of occupational responsibilities (Ranson 2005:148). This prevents mothers from participating in male-dominated workforces because of the social obligations of the

mother to complete childbearing duties. Some policies have been implemented to alleviate the lack of resources; however, women have been the prime beneficiaries of these policies, further entrenching the gendered expectations of these services (Ranson 2005:149). Although beneficial, it exacerbates the differences in men and women with families because fathers are not utilizing these services. Women often change professions or reduce hours to accommodate their families, which men only sometimes do (Ranson 2005:163). These examples point to how women are often forced to alter their career if they want to pursue family and work, whereas men can rely on their partners to complete the domains of unpaid work.

The expectations of gender are built into the performance of certain professions. Leidner's article analyzes how gender is implicated in designing and enacting service interactions (1991:156). This is problematic because it reinforces the gender identities associated with specific careers and how workers in these positions act to align with the gendered expectations. How occupations have evolved is intertwined with the expected performance of gender (Leidner 1991:170). This has manifested in an overrepresentation of women in lower-tier service sector jobs (Albanese 2018:185). The belief that service-sector jobs better align with female personalities perpetuates the societal subordination of women and prevent success in male-dominated workforces. The juxtaposed female and male employment are reinforced when women pursue motherhood, as they are forced into more flexible, part-time work to

accommodate their familial responsibility (Albanese 2018:185). This is consistent with social structures that maintain 'male' versus 'female' job opportunities.

The lasting expectation that women complete the majority of unpaid work, aids in clarifying the lack of opportunities women receive in the paid workforce. The diversity of unpaid work is disregarded and left ill-defined – keeping it from mainstream analysis (Albanese 2018:187). Women consistently act as the primary caregiver, despite the rising levels of female 'breadwinners' (Albanese 2018:188). This points to the remaining societal beliefs that child rearing remains a female responsibility regardless of female participation in paid work. This affects how women pursue the paid workforce, as they are expected to participate according to their family life. In contrast, men are expected to participate in paid work regardless of whether they have a family. As a mother's work, this disproportionate responsibility of unpaid work emphasizes the previous points. Mothers have difficulty participating in male-dominated workforces because of the required flexibility of familial responsibilities (Ranson 2005:160). The expectation that mothers complete unpaid work emphasizes the lack of opportunity in paid work.

The interconnectedness of paid and unpaid work further gendered expectations of mothers and barricaded women from the workforce. Work has predefined masculine or feminine characteristics, reproducing gendered expectations of paid and unpaid work (Leidner 1991:158). This has been argued through an analysis of workplace

policies that benefit women predominantly, how mothers must make career choices men do not have to to balance family and a career, and the disproportionate responsibilities of unpaid work. Ranson's article illustrated how mothers utilize paternal benefits, entrenching gender in these policies, and make sacrifices in paid work to achieve familial flexibility (2009). Leidner's article was used to illustrate the natural ways paid work has been gendered and the disproportionate impacts this has on women (1991).

The assumptions of unpaid work can be utilized to highlight the responsibility of unpaid work remaining on mothers, despite the increasing participation of women and mothers in the workforce (Albanese 2018:188). This evidence amalgamates to elucidate the social location of mothers in paid and unpaid work. The contrasting masculine and feminine identities embedded in paid work maintain the prevention of mothers participating equally in male-dominated workforces. The amelioration of female participation in the workforce is necessary the challenge the gendered and occupational expectations of women and men that minimize the occupational contributions of mothers. This will challenge the assumptions of gender built into paid and unpaid facets of work that has been maintained since industrialization.

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**The Body and Power: Contesting  
Liminal Existence  
By: Jada Needles**

Throughout the last three weeks, we have philosophized our difficulty with being in a body and what this may suggest about our current political environment. Looking at the historical formations of power formed today, Garner discusses the origins of race and how it came to construct a set of characteristics that would constitute discrimination on the basis of 'scientific fact' (2010, p. 2). The discourse of scientific racism emerging in the US during the 20th century would act as a legitimate foundation to the ordering of how society is organized today. Science was marketed as a study about the body and was therefore assumed to care for the body, but beyond the spectacle is a desire for control over bodies deemed unsubstantial to the progress of humanity (Ibid). This reminds us of Haraway, as discussed in Fritsch's piece who complicates our relationship to the Earth by theorizing how human self-interest has wholly separated the mind from the heart of the planet (2016, p. 350). We must ask ourselves how we can imagine a future where we treat one another respectfully if we never learn to do it with the organisms who give us air to breathe and the space to think. While coercion, oppression and manipulation may allow one to actualize evil self-interest as an order of the world, Burfoot and Feely demonstrate that on the other side of this curtain is a coeval existence for the future (2016, p. 868). In alignment with Fritsch they both show how sexuality, gender and disability are further

extensions of the body rather than loud markers of difference from the ideal white, homosexual, able-bodied spokesperson of the 'human race'. Superiority of men to women, inability and preferential skin colour are sets of ideas with no legitimacy to claim because of the origins and inspirations of their thought (Garner, 2010). Burfoot (2014) examines her concept of the "philosophy of birth" where women are imagined as something other than machines existing solely for the creation of a patriarchal labour force (p. 177). She concretely philosophizes our current reality by reimagining our understanding of structure by placing women ahead as the creation of history itself, to understand that humans have to be born first for us to imagine history (Ibid). Inspired by Foucauldian, post-structuralist thinking she explores a feminist orientation to historical materialism to reimagine how we embody our individual purpose and identity (Ibid, p. 174). Feely in this same sense offers alternative conceptions of time to make sense of our world order, making our relationships between discourse and material worlds reciprocal rather than something forced upon us from fixed powers, as Foucault may suggest (2016, p. 869). Looking at disability, Fritsch grounds the essentialist presumptions of the body by understanding how the neutrality of being agitates politicalization and biosocial hailing to emerge (2016, p. 351). Together, they collectively see the bigger picture of the struggles we face today and conclude that there are historically biased beliefs about select bodies holding autonomy, and others existing outside this freedom.

The possibility of definition when it comes to defining the body is texturized when we understand what relations of power are responsible for us thinking of the body in many ways. A body's purpose to be just as it is, has been obstructed within a patriarchal, capitalist society. Our work methods reward those seen as ideal bodies only when placed in relation to others. Those marked as 'other' are put in a realm of liminality and a place assumed to exist outside of our idealized reality. While this space often evades how we perceive the world, it is occupied by a majority that today more than ever have the room to harness their power within this space. When we look at disability as discussed by Feely and Fritsch we understand how the bodies that occupy this space do not do so willingly. This space is formed by myself and all those that I know. These bodies are neither encouraged to dismantle the past nor motivated to occupy the future, making a motionless and helpless reality (Feely, 2016). Reading about Fritsch's personal history of being, experiencing her disability as something done to her, defines her significance as dependent on how well she can exist in the world (2016, p. 351). The way our thinking has been institutionalized as a rigid and efficient tool has demarcated our social beings to be introduced biologically, determining the merit and success we will achieve in our daily lives.

I turn to my fascination with TV shows to make sense of our relationships to another as they transparently reflect how we may come to imagine the world differently. While watching a YouTube series by Jubilee called 'Odd One Out' I watched one episode

called '6 sighted people vs one blind person' that highlighted the importance of our taken-for-granted assumptions on disability. This video inspired my analysis between the boundaries of biology and sociality. The game goes that a blindfolded group must determine through questions, conversations and assumptions who the mole is or who the blind person is. If they vote out the 'mole' the remaining players split a cash prize and if the mole avoids suspicion till the end they win all of it.

Interestingly, this video plays with the imposition of bio-hailing in a way that both evades and adheres to this imposition of power on the body (Fritsch, 2016). Her ability to avoid suspicion is primarily due to the nature of the questions which concern themselves with a surfaced exposure to disability discourse (Jubilee, 2022). Fritsch (2016) explains to us through her own experience that pondering instead about how someone becomes disconnected from the world through their disability is more informative than asking about the disability itself. Those bodies that appear healthy are seen to be able-bodied although most disabilities are internal and entirely not visually detectable. Just as in the game, no one can see blindness but hear it if they ask the right questions (Jubilee, 2022). This informs us of how disability is constructed as a form of oppression and an action against a body that grows in impact the more matrixed one's identity becomes. Our focus then, is to imagine each intersection of each individual as unique and informative to an experience of contesting and emerging out of a liminal existence into an everchanging future.

I turn here to a Deleuzian understanding of time to understand where care and control became interchangeable to governing bodies (Feely, 2016, p. 867). Understanding the motion of how bodies come to be objectified helps us to understand how this sense of time may be warped to manipulate how bodies perceive their progress through space and time. As discussed by Feely, Foucault sees how we understand discourse to be a one-way relationship to the formation of our material worlds (Ibid). In this sense, we could use the example of science as a discourse that directly informed how race relations were forced and was something we were unable to contest, as we were told that was 'fact'. Conversely, Deleuze theorizes new materialism as a reciprocal relationship between discourse and material worlds, constantly informing and trading with one another (Ibid). In this understanding, our perceptions of what we know are radicalized to be questioned for their legitimacy, which may reflect embodied values that contribute to science's continuation as a discipline. Under this conception of time we occupy a liminality which makes our existence challenging to conceptualize but inclusive in the way we imagine bodies co-existing in this space. Here disability, sex and gender are not determinants of lacking a fruitful future they are the exact steps towards it (Ibid). Such a drastic reorientation depoliticizes the individual allowing them to be somebody rather than fulfilling an expectation of what it means in our understanding, to be somebody.

Burfoot's (2014) feminist lense helps to contextualize this further in her

conception of the "philosophy of birth" (p. 176). Here, time is constantly evolving and awakened to a new beginning cycle. Her perspective is what I think the show 'for all mankind' similarly suggests. Together they question an alternate history, one which is feminine but do not believe it as the answer to our inequalities, rather an alternate perspective for understanding the fixed moment we find ourselves in today. It takes us back to 1969 and the race to the moon, except women, have done it this time. Described as "most normcore-radical shows on TV, a historical thought experiment in dad-show clothing" by Poniewozik (2022) in the New York Times, this show depicts a matriarchal reality which feels uneasy to the eyes. The conception of this show teaches us the importance of seeing the future in the past to invent the reality we wish to reside in (Ibid). Ultimately, however, seeking curiosity about women's inferior status, which has composed the entirety of our human history, teaches us the importance of the common good and kinship systems that the patriarchal regime forces us to degrade and ignore (Burfoot, 2014, p. 178). This relationship sounds similar to human's connection to the Earth, which is not coincidental. Women hold power beyond what we are even capable of imagining because we embody a social contract that adheres to the values of patriarchy to make sense of reality. What is widely apparent to me is that the more feminist discourse shines through the cracks of our broken system, the more valiant and violent efforts become to seal them away (Ibid, p. 185). The pattern shows that we learn valuable knowledge from those we have been told to ignore.

Their occupation within liminality is what can constitute our mutuality.

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## **A Comparison of the Social Model of Disability and the Capabilities Approach** **By: Jocelyn Ehlers**

The average person often views a disability as an issue with an individual's body, but this idea discounts discrimination and social barriers. The social model of disability and the capabilities approach, contrast this understanding of disability proposing that external factors create disabilities. The social model of disability conceptualizes disability as a continued disadvantage because of society's inability to accommodate those with physical impairments, thus restricting their ability to engage in social activities (Goering 2015). The capabilities approach mirrors this idea, but extends it, recognizing the diversity in an individual's abilities, to convert resources into opportunities (Thurman et al., 2019). The social model of disability and the capabilities approach are complementary, agreeing that society's social organization creates disabilities and that those with disabilities need more income and resources to function. However, the capabilities approach is more effective because it offers a more inclusive understanding of disability as recognizing the individuality and neutrality of disabilities is necessary to create equity.

Firstly, both the social model of disability and the capabilities approach agree that society's social organization creates disabilities and prevents equity. The social model of disability distinguishes between impairment and disability, arguing that impairment refers to a state of the body that is unusual, for example, lacking a limb or

organ (Goering 2015). Whereas it defines a disability as something inflicted on top of an impairment that is a function of any social, physical, or economic environment an individual enters. Disabilities are created through discrimination based on impairments and a society's inability to provide accommodations for these impairments resulting in social exclusion (Goering 2015). Similarly, the capabilities approach is divided into capabilities and functionings. An individual's set of capabilities refers to the commodities that are available to them, along with their characteristics (Mitra 2006). Functioning refers to activities and desirable states that an individual either does or enters (Mitra 2006). The concepts of disabilities and capabilities from both theories closely relate to one another, as both attribute an individual's abilities and inabilities to the external world, theorizing that society is the problem behind various issues faced by individuals with impairments. These individuals are excluded and often face problems such as poverty and discrimination due to the organization of the disabling world. Both theories concur that to fix such inequities, one step forward is to alter social organizations to be more accommodating of impairments (Burchardt 2004). Therefore, both theories concur and highlight society as the underlying cause of disabilities, rendering the need to change society's current organization.

Furthermore, both the capabilities approach and social model of disability concur that the current income distribution amongst those with disabilities and those without is disproportional and fosters

discrimination. The median income for non-disabled working-age individuals in 2010 was \$31,160, while the median income was \$20,420 for people with disabilities (Albanese 2018). The social model of disability proposes that this wage discrepancy hinders people with disabilities doubly as they are intended to live similarly on half as much income but have additional costs necessary to manage their impairment, for example, purchasing a wheelchair for an individual without legs (Albanese 2018). Similarly, the capabilities theory builds on the social model of disabilities' understanding of wage discrepancy, arguing that income is not an accurate measure of well-being (Burchardt 2004). Instead, it draws attention to the idea that impairment is not the only predetermining factor of how much income an individual needs to maintain their well-being. Factors such as age, location, and family size all contribute to the amount of money an individual requires to avoid poverty (Burchardt 2004). These factors can also contribute to an individual's ability to turn income into capabilities, referred to as opportunities in the capabilities approach (Mitra 2006). The wage discrepancies between people with disabilities and people without disabilities are essential to recognize to enact change, but it is equally important to remember that different factors contribute to income. For example, an individual's ability to manage money to turn into capabilities is based on their skill set and thus varies from individual to individual. Therefore, as the capabilities approach recognizes the individuality of money and argues that money is not directly correlated with well-being, it is more

effective at conceptualizing the wage disparity between people with disabilities and those without.

Additionally, the social model of disability and the capabilities approach to concur on the colonial prejudice experienced by disabled mothers. The social model of disability explores the discrimination and undermining experienced by impaired mothers and how their disability originates from this injustice. For example, mothers with impairments such as mobility issues often need alternative measures of lifting their babies, such as using an item of clothing or a harness to lift their child (Albanese 2018). This alternative method of attending to a child is not received well by the public, with impaired mothers often being met with withering stares (Albanese 2018). This idea is mirrored in the capabilities approach, where there is an emphasis on the type of life an individual desires to live and their capability to achieve or accomplish this life (Mitra 2006). The capabilities approach focuses on something other than the means of reaching an accomplishment but rather on whether the final goal is achieved or not (Mitra 2006). Based upon the capabilities approach's emphasis on choices and capabilities, this suggests that if an individual with an impairment chooses to become a mother and finds alternative methods to meet the requirements of this role, they should be regarded as equal to a good mother without a disability. By focusing on the result rather than the process of reaching a goal, which in this example is being a successful mother, the capabilities approach validates the experiences of impaired mothers. Even

though impaired mothers may not perform tasks the same as a mother without a disability, the capabilities approach does not dwell on this, unlike in the social model, it does not matter how the individual reached the goal just that it was acquired. The capability approach is more successful at incorporating diverse perspectives than the social model and, therefore, is more effective for understanding the experiences of disabled individuals.

Finally, the capabilities approach differs in its approach to the individualization of disability as it understands the importance of choice and accounts for daily individual experiences of impairment, a component that the social model of disability undermines. The social model of disability has often been criticized for classifying impairment as entirely separate from disability (Thurman et al., 2019). People with disabilities have said that this separation discounts their daily experiences with impairment, as impairment often has very noticeable effects on daily activities. Thus, even though the social model of disability views diversity as acceptable, neutralizing diversity is necessary which the social model fails to do because it discounts the importance of impairment (Thurman et al., 2019). In contrast, one of the central moral components of the capabilities approach is an emphasis on what an individual chooses to do and what they can do regardless of impairment (Burchardt 2004). This recognition is vital and separates the capability approach from the social model of disability as the capability model understands that because of diversity people

require different resources. Thus, providing the same resources to everyone is insufficient (Thurman et al., 2019). To achieve true equity the allocation of resources should be determined on a case-by-case basis. As previously discussed, those with impairments often require more income, and additional resources to achieve their goals. Therefore, because the capability approach understands the need for more resources for those with disabilities to achieve equity, the capabilities model is more suitable for enacting societal change.

Ultimately, the social model of disability and the capabilities approach are complementary theories that both conceptualize social organization as the foundation of discrimination based on disabilities. Although the two concur on most fundamental values, the capabilities approach accounts for the diversity of personal characteristics, which offers a more comprehensive and in-depth analysis of how disabilities are conceptualized. Some argue that the social model of disability enables those with disabilities to view themselves more positively by calling for a change in society's social organization. The capabilities approach also extends this theory recognizing the diversity in individuals' ability to form opportunities based on personal characteristics as neutral, further attributing discrimination to the social organization and allowing those with disabilities to function normally in society. Therefore, as indicated by the capabilities approach the current structure of social organizations needs to change. It is essential to neutralize disability to allow those with

disabilities to function easier and free from discrimination.

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## **How Sexualization Leads to the Deprivation of Women's Rights and Agency by the Sex Industry**

**By: Kiara Parshad**

Mainstream conceptions of women's sexual identity have heavily pandered to the male gaze. Women and girls are sexualized from an early age, making their development vastly different from men's as they are limited to being perceived and thinking of themselves as objects rather than people. The objectification of women infiltrates many other spaces, forcing them to adapt to survival methods that include sex work, especially when in less developed parts in countries and in the world. Their bodies and personhood are limited to how they can please men sexually. Pierre Bourdieu, a French sociologist is focused on social agency and structures, who developed the concept of 'Habitus' which focuses on how different people perceive the world and how the world also perceives them. His theory is genuinely relevant to the pipeline of women's sexual objectification to being exploited in the sex industry. In this paper, I will argue that the sexualization of women and girls, specifically those of a lower class, further cements them to dire situations, which opens the door for their exploitation in the sex trade. The sexualization of women restricts their agency and ability to further their development, so it is imperative to help this vulnerable group as it will help women's rights everywhere. Using Pierre Bourdieu's theories about social structure and social agency, this paper will first define and outline Bourdieu's idea of 'Habitus,' then explore the different types of capital

exploited women have, and then explore the other fields in which these women's agencies change, and lastly explore potential social and structural solutions.

To analyze how sexualization and sex work oppresses women, this paper will first outline Pierre Bourdieu's social structure theory. Pierre Bourdieu was a French sociologist who developed Habitus: "the intentional, but nonetheless socially constrained, disposition of an individual social actor to act a certain way and to make a certain kind of sense out of the social world" (Anderson 2016:281). This is like the concept of 'socialization' as people (social actors) can be grouped in similar Habitus when they are conditioned with equal opportunities and experiences (Anderson 2016). Bourdieu (Anderson 2016) also states that the concept of Habitus can be thought of as:

The agent a generating, unifying, constructing, classifying power, while recalling that this capacity to build social reality, itself socially constructed, is not that of a transcendental subject but of a socialized body, investing in its practice socially constructed organizing principles that are acquired in the course of a situated and dated social experience. Using this overall encompassing statement about what Habitus means, this paper will now look at capital and fields as essential properties.

To establish Habitus, Bourdieu looks at the kinds of capital people possess and the different fields people operate and explore their identity in. The different types of capital are economic, cultural, and social capital (Anderson 2016). Economic Capital

is the knowledge of how to accumulate the monetary income of capital, as well as the ability to gain and keep it. Cultural Capital is the "embodied disposition expressed in tastes and practices; the way you dress" and can also be the formal certifications or the objects you possess of highly valued cultural goods (ibid). Social capital is social relations and status if you have any influence or access to power and resources (ibid). When looking at the 'field,' we look at how the ability of the different forms of capital (economic, cultural, and social) depends on the field it is playing in (Anderson 2016). Field means the "local social world in which social actors are embedded and toward which they orient their actions" (ibid). An example is one's household as an essential field for one's development (ibid). Different forms of capital and different fields are essential to understand the circumstances as well as the placement of individuals in society, by using these concepts, it will show why sexualization leads to the exploitative practices of the sex industry and why it targets the vulnerable.

To understand why sex workers are heavily discriminated against, we must examine the different kinds of capital these women possess, starting with economic. Many of the women who are targeted and trafficked for the sex trade are those who have fewer resources and money. An article by Jennifer K. Wesley explores the process of objectifying women in prostitution and how their dependence on their sexual capital further emancipates them into further disenfranchisement and disempowerment (Wesely 2019). She concludes by conducting interviews of many women

living on the street. Women on the street typically do not have control over their agency over those with superior access to money and power. One of the results of this is 'survival sex'. Women are often challenged into having sex to avoid dangerous confrontations and to accumulate protection from other men (Wesely 2019). Women on the street also use their sex appeal to lure men by making them believe that they would have sexual relations, only to blindside and rob them. This is called 'viccing', while women use this as leverage against men for survival, they are still 'below' and at the 'mercy' of them. (Wesely 2019). This is a defensive strategy overall rather than an offensive one. Survival sex being their economic means is usually unsafe, as they also lack cultural and social capital. "Feelings of agency and perceptions of choice faded as it became more evident to the women that sexual capital was required currency for their street survival" (Wesely 2019). Women who lack the resources and the structure to make money safely, are more likely to be harmed, this is an essential factor to consider.

As stated before, personal capital is a necessary resource for self-protection. The less money one possesses, the more likely they are to experience violence, substance abuse, mental illness, and crime (Barner et al. 2014). A research article written by John Barner, David Okech and Meghan Camp looks at how socio-economic factors affect the treatment of underprivileged members of society and how power and affluence can withhold marginalized people's freedoms and agencies and often result in human trafficking (Barner et al. 2014). They notice

that "based on [human trafficking's] established relationship to poverty and violence, and its exploitative, profiteering nature, [it] has become the most prevalent manifestation of contemporary slavery in the world today" (Barner et al. 2014). They notice that of these people social inequality makes women and children more vulnerable and susceptible to exploitation and degradation by those who wield power and influence (Barner et al. 2014). A notable article by Kamala Kempadoo explores the sex trade and how it relates to economic capital. She notes that human trafficking for sex shows that these victims are regularly found to be women of colour from poorer nations, as Kempadoo (2001) finds that "...approximately 700,000 women (about half the population of Hawaii) and girls trafficked into Western Europe, the Middle East, Japan, Australia, and North America, 75 percent were drawn from countries in Latin America, Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia". This is significant as it shows how women are developed differently when they grow up or live in poorer countries or areas, as they are more susceptible to reliance on sexual capital sexual exploitation, which continues the cycle of violence and exploitation.

Cultural capital can refer to the items you possess, how you dress, and how you carry yourself. Culturally, poor and vulnerable women can be seen as the very commodities and objects that people possess. Girls who are at-risk, meaning girls whose livelihoods are susceptible to homelessness, racism, poverty, and addictions (to drugs and or alcohol), are more likely to be sexualized, making them

depend on their sexual capital, as the sexualization of women is such a significant cultural phenomenon according to Jennifer Wesley (2019). The core similarities of all the sex worker stories she examines seem to be privileged individuals preying on vulnerable lower-class women. Lower-class women are made apparent by the little they have, and their skin colour in poorer countries. Kamala Kempadoo (2001) notes that the global sex trade is built on the international suffering of women of colour, this is a cultural phenomenon as these Brown and Black women are presented as commodities to incite wealthy, powerful men into coming to countries and contributing to the economies. Monto and Milrod use a structural theory like Pierre Bourdieu to look at the relationship between sex workers and those who for it. They find that because sex buyers have financial independence, a quality that prostitutes and sex workers do not have makes, the selling and buying of sex ranging from consensual to non-consensual (Monto and Milrod 2020). Though some sex workers have some agency over their bodies, many do not as "prostitution can involve individuals who are not yet adults, may involve persons with developmental disabilities, and sometimes also involves force or coercion" (ibid 2020). After examining the power dynamics of sex worker and buyer, it shows how little of cultural capital sex workers possess. Instead, it shows how they become a cultural object to contain—not owning but being a piece of culture shows how the sex industry detracts and limits the growth of women. As they become devaluated, their agency gets taken away, and they have less personal freedom.

The absence of social capital is another factor that limits the development of women and girls. Socially, poor and women of colour have less influence because they are seen as property, the root cause being continued sexualization. As Wesley (2019) puts it, "on one end of the continuum are the sexualized messages girls absorb through gender socialization and identity development. The other end of the continuum represents more severe manifestations of sexualization related to victimization and violence". This 'continuum' of sexualization is rooted in the structural foundations of racism, ableism, classism, and social statuses, an example of this being the over-sexualization of African American women (ibid). An important example of their lack of social capital is their presence within the legal system. An article by Jamie Liew looks at ethnic migrant sex workers and how they are represented in legal spheres in Canada. This article cites the withholding of representation in the law regarding ethnic migrant and immigrant sex workers in the Standing Committee of Justice and Human Rights on human trafficking and sex work (Jamie 2020). Here Liew notes that this Committee never refers to or includes live dialogues and testimony from these migrant and immigrant sex workers; they "[recreate] a dialogue that sex worker advocates and researchers have about migrant and immigrant workers, rather than including testimony of this neglected group of workers" (ibid). As the legal system is a major field in which they need social capital to help them against abuses, it shows how low on the 'social hierarchy they are.

Women's development is founded in their sexualization, and detracting from their social capital is evident. To be able to navigate the world, they need to be seen as human beings and not as objects.

By looking at fields, we can look further into the problems of sexualization that women face as they navigate different environments that require other actions. The most significant area in the lives of poorer and vulnerable women are the 'streets'. Welsey (2019) observed that street life merely reproduces these gendered sexual dynamics, making women's access to other venues for survival abysmal. The criminality of 'street life' is a masculine-dominated space. In other means of criminal activity (besides sex work), women are on the bottom of social hierarchy, as they are not seen as one with the other street vendors (Wesely 2019). To make ends meet, women "engage gender as a resource for navigating male-dominated terrains, drawing 'from normative beliefs about femininity to accomplish crime'" (Wesely 2019). In the streets women come to realize the lack of power and agency they must survive on their own. They become hyper-aware of the sexual capital they have as an accessible resource to draw upon, compared to the male population who have a diverse means of navigating street life (ibid). Women on the street typically do not have control over their agency against those with special access to money and power. A woman living in the streets named Josie said she often used her sexual appeal to acquire drugs (Wesely 2019). Another field to consider when discussing sex trafficking and prostitution are third-world countries where there are many women of colour.

Sexualization of women is demeaning and restrictive but is also intensified with racialization. Prostitution in 'foreign' Asian countries are seen a lot around military bases as they are regulated and sometimes operated by these governments and military apparatuses (Kempadoo 2001). Militarized prostitution is extremely common in developing nations from Asia to Africa and to the Caribbean, as "militarized masculinity demands heterosexual sex regularly. That many women upon whose bodies and labour such constructions of masculinity depend on are of nations, "races," and ethnicities other than those of the men is a contemporary reality that cannot be neglected or ignored" (ibid). In both fields, women are disadvantaged, as they are subjected to sexualization and fetishism. The only way women can gain agency from this is to develop and utilize better social structures that can support them.

While the problems regarding the sex industry's exploitation of women does not just pertain to just street life, some solutions can come from reforms within police departments. In 2019, the police

departments in England and Wales joined together to produce new guidance on a so-called "Harm Reduction Compass" which is the policy regarding sex workers that involve their input to understand their situations best and to guide the law on how best to operate to help their livelihoods and based on differentiating circumstances (Sanders et al. 2021). This was done by working NGOs, sex workers, experienced officers, support networks and academics (Sanders et al. 2021). This article notes how the climate regarding sex work has changed over time,

from labelling all sex work as universally sinful to the modern day where sex work is interpreted through its complexities and different circumstances (ibid). The harm reduction compass will navigate officers of law through the other circumstances that prostitutes deal with, to change their course of action best to fit the various kinds of people and situations (Sanders et al. 2021). This model looks at interpersonal, communal, and situational factors of influence. Interpersonal factors include the degree to which the person has control over their bodies, or if there's coercion involved (ibid). Communal factors include what communities interact with each other, and the nature of these relations. For instance, the business community and the sex worker one both have fears of being exposed for what they indulge in or being exposed for their occupation as a sex worker (Sanders et al. 2021). Situational factors are the type of living conditions in which the individual is living (including potential drug use, homelessness, mental illness, pregnancy, or domestic violence) (Sanders et al. 2021). It looks to see to what extent criminalizing prostitution pushes the sector underground. To what extent it decreases the incentive for human trafficking (Jonsson and Jakobsson 2017). Studies have suggested that criminalized might make for an increase for trafficking women and the laws do not affect that (Jonsson and Jakobsson 2017). Is it important to look at public opinion on prostitution as it indicates social behaviours towards it as well as incentives (Jonsson and Jakobsson 2017). Using this model could be a good gateway to reform and helping

women gain agency within societal structures.

This paper argues that lower-class women are exploited through the sex industry because of their sexualization, which restricts their development and leaves them vulnerable to exploitation. Helping sexually oppressed women is vital to help women everywhere, as they are all at the mercy of sexualization. Using Pierre Bourdieu's theory of Habitus, this paper examines the different kind of capital that sex workers possess, the various fields that these women engage with, and potential solutions to their problems. The various fields that Bourdieu's theory looks at are economic, social, and cultural. Economically, these women are restricted in the avenues they can pursue. Socially they do not have much influence, and they do not have as many cultural possessions as one. Using his theory, he also explores the concept of fields, and in the case of these sex workers it is the 'streets' and the legal system. Social and structural reforms of police in England and Wales lay out potential pathways to fixing some of these issues to help women gain agency. While the sexualization of women is a widespread and daunting phenomenon, societies around the world must try to restrict its effects. With growing movements worldwide, it is about time that oppressed sex workers voice their struggles and it's about time that we listen.

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## **The Social Construction of and Response to Mental Illness through the Sociologies of Talcott Parsons and Erving Goffman**

**By: Margaret Shen**

### INTRODUCTION

During the COVID-19 pandemic, a herculean effort was made within the healthcare system and society to respond to the unprecedented strain created by the virus. Among the actions taken to curb the spread of the virus, everyday routines were amended or suspended, individuals who were particularly vulnerable at-risk were protected, and those recuperating from infection were granted accommodations to protect others and aid recovery. However, at the same time as the pandemic threatening physical health, a mental health crisis was also quietly developing. In a press release, the World Health Organization noted a 25% increase in the prevalence of anxiety and depression, with young people and women disproportionately affected, when many mental health resources were disrupted or scaled back (WHO 2022). While the starkly different responses to the physical and mental health crises may be hard to explain, the sociological approaches of Talcott Parsons and Erving Goffman can provide frameworks for understanding how society responds to mental illness. Parsons and Goffman offer differing perspectives on the social response to mental illness that can be better understood through contrasting the two sociologies. While both theorists agree that mental illness is socially defined rather than rooted in biology, the two offer different explanations based on their differing sociologies. Parsons approaches

with a recovery-oriented perspective where the mentally ill receive social and medical support. Goffman instead theorizes that the mentally ill are social labelled as so and confined to the role of the mentally ill through stigmatization.

### TALCOTT PARSONS' SOCIOLOGY OF THE SICK ROLE

For Talcott Parsons and his sociology of sickness, being sick is not biological but socially constructed. Being sick is a temporary deviant position until an individual has returned to health. For Parsons, the sick role is defined by four key characteristics. When occupying the sick role, individuals are excused from certain social obligations, excused from responsibility for their condition, expected to recover as quickly as possible from the undesirable sick role, and are aided in their recovery (Parsons 1951: 455-456). For example, an individual suffering from a concussion may be excused from obligations such as school, will not be blamed for becoming concussed, expected to recover as quickly as possible, and are provided medical aid to assist in recovery. The sick role is structural position created to address deviance, or a state of "failing in some way to fulfill the institutionally defined expectations of one or more of the roles in which the individual is implicated in the society," by giving individuals a defined space to occupy until they are healthy again (ibid: 452).

Sickness is highly medicalized in Parsons' approach, being visible with the sick role's expectation of aid in recovery, but even more clearly in the doctor role. Like the sick role, the doctor role is defined



by four key characteristics. When occupying the doctor role, individuals are expected to dedicate their efforts to patient welfare and recovery, accept abnormal expression from the patient due to their deviant position, maintain a professional attitude, and avoid personal involvement. They are given special permission to engage in medical treatment due to their specialist knowledge (ibid: 457-459). For example, a medical doctor at work would be expected to use their ability to help their patients recover expediently, accept unusual patient behaviour without judgement, and maintain a professional demeanour when interacting with patients while off duty. In exchange, they are granted special permission to decide and implement medical treatments for their patients.

While physical illness may be the most immediate application of Parsons' sick role, the theory is also applicable to mental illness. Indeed, Parsons discusses "mental cases" and the insane along with the therapists and psychiatrists that work to cure them (ibid: 456-457). Under Parsons' sociology, the mentally ill fit the sick role without much modification. Those who have mental illness or distress may be exempted from their regular obligations, are not held responsible for their mental state, and expected to work towards quickly recovering. In addition, mental health professionals fill the doctor role. Therapists, psychiatrists, and counsellors are expected to maintain professional behaviour and assist their patients in returning to a "normal" mental state or a state where the mental illness can be managed. Arguably even more so than doctors treating physical illnesses,

mental health professionals are given sanction and support for using their knowledge to cure their patients, sometimes against the patients' wills such as in cases of involuntary institutionalization.

#### ERVING GOFFMANS' SOCIOLOGY OF MENTAL ILLNESS

Erving Goffman's sociology of mental illness primarily focuses on total institutions such as asylums and how mental illness is produced through interactions and stigma. For Goffman, interactions are the cornerstone to understanding social behaviour and the production of mental illness. For understanding face-to-face interactions, Goffman introduces the concept of an encounter, which occurs at a gathering of people appearing in the context of a social situation at a social occasion, such as a conversation between two people at a dinner party (Goffman 1967: 144). In an encounter, an individual may breach the rules of interaction and commit a social impropriety by engaging in violence against others, interference against others, inappropriate verbal communication, or transmitting unusual nonverbal (ibid: 142). Disruptive social impropriety may lead to "scorn, hostility and other negative social sanctions" leading to the individual being deemed mentally ill and possibly sent to the care of psychiatrists (ibid: 137).

In interactions, stigma, or "an attribute that is deeply discrediting" or discreditable if the attribute is hidden from the attention of other individuals is produced, distinguishing the stigmatized individual from others (Goffman 1963: 3-5). While they are socially labelled as different, the stigmatized often do not feel inherently

different from unstigmatized individuals, whom Goffman refers to as normals. It is only when confronted with their stigma such as by being in the presence of normals does the stigma become real (ibid: 7). Three significant types of stigmas exist, abominations of the body, blemishes of individual character, and tribal stigmas that may be passed on such as race or religion (ibid: 4). Once their nature has been stigmatized by mental illness, the stigmatized may respond to their situation in many ways, such as making a direct attempt to correct the stigmatizing attribute, concealing the discrediting feature or its effects from being visible to avoid stigmatization, or avoiding contact with normals through social reclusion (ibid: 9-13). Examples of these may include seeking treatment that cures the mental illness, seeking treatment that conceals the effects of the mental illness such as medication. The mentally ill may also withdraw from participating in interactions where their stigmatizing attribute can be known and instead seek alternatives where they can pass as normal. Often, this means removing from face-to-face interactions and choosing other forms of interaction where a mediating third party is used or the exchange is less direct, such as preferring text conversations using internet communication platforms.

#### CONTRASTING THE SOCIOLOGIES OF PARSONS AND GOFFMAN

Parsons' and Goffman's sociologies of mental illness bear many similarities and differences. The similarities and differences in their views can be examined through two overarching topics. First, their perspectives on what mental illness should be centred on,

either a medical perspective in Parsons' theory or social stigma in Goffman's. Second, Parsons' and Goffman's positions on society's culpability in producing mental illness and effectiveness in treating mental illness, with Parsons theorizing a more supportive society and Goffman one that is directly implicated in creating mental illness.

Both Parsons and Goffman consider mental illness to be an abnormal position, a deviant position for Parsons and a stigma in the case of Goffman (Goffman 1967: 142-143). For Parsons', the mentally ill occupy the sick role, a position of deviance. Goffman considers mental illness to result from possessing discrediting attributes and engaging in social improprieties that lead to being stigmatized as mentally ill. While different in why they feel mental illness an abnormal position, the two agree on the socially constructed nature of mental illness. Parsons' sick role is a socially created position and therefore anyone occupying the role must be socially determined to be sick. At the same time, Goffman treats mental illness as something produced in social interactions. However, Parsons' favours a highly medicalized view of sickness, including mental illness, that primarily does not concern itself with why an individual has come to occupy the sick role, only that they are now in the sick role, a structural position in society created for those who become temporarily impaired. Conversely, Goffman is interested in how individuals be labelled as mentally ill through interactions with others, particularly the process of stigmatization that leads to an individual being labelled as mentally ill and how

individuals cope with the effects of stigmatization.

While Parsons and Goffman have some agreement in how mental illness is produced, their theories have significant differences in the effectiveness of medicalization and the role of society in mental illness. Like physical diseases, for Parsons, mental illness is highly medicalized. The mentally ill are placed in the sick role and on a path to recovery with the help of medical professionals. Professionals occupying the doctor role assist the mentally ill patient in recovering from their condition and becoming a healthy member of society. The role of society in Parsons' sociology is one of support. Like others occupying the sick role, the mentally ill are not held responsible for becoming so and excused from certain obligations for the duration of their illness. However, occupation of the sick role is expected to be temporary; therefore, individuals are expected to recover from their mental illness at some point. Goffman is critical of the results of the medicalized approach to mental illness, noting that psychiatry has often failed to assess or treat mentally ill behaviours effectively. Goffman is further skeptical and notes that psychiatry has limited its methods of communication to the medicalized setting to conversations in professional offices (Goffman 1967: 138).

Additionally, in Goffman's sociology, society labels individuals as mentally ill. It is in interactions with others that a person is stigmatized. Therefore society plays an active role in constructing and maintaining mental illness. In contrast, Parsons sick role does not critically examine

how a person may become mentally ill and if social factors led to their situation.

However, this does not preclude society from helping, or at least attempting to help, the stigmatized. Goffman has noted cases of individuals trying to help the stigmatized, such as the case of a physically stigmatized girl who able-bodied peers often coddled during physical activities (Goffman 1963: 15-16).

#### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Both Talcott Parsons and Erving Goffman offer theories on the status of mental illness in society. For Parsons, mental illness is akin to physical disease and to be analyzed from a medical and structural perspective. Once labelled as sick, the mentally ill are in a state of deviance and placed in the sick role where they are granted social lenience and understanding. Parsons places heavy emphasis on the role of medical institutions, with those in the doctor role providing adequate care to the mentally ill intending to help the patient eventually exit the sick role. Goffman analyzes how social interactions produce mental illness. It is in interactions with others where mental illness becomes real and it is in those interactions where individuals are stigmatized with the label of mental illness. Goffman's sociology looks at more than just a medical approach to treating mental illness, including alternatives such as masking the effects of the discrediting attribute to lessen the stigma of mental illness, or socially retreating from situations where the stigma of mental illness is made real by interactions with normals. Goffman is also skeptical of the ability of medical institutions such as psychiatry to

either understand or treat mental illness, noting their failure to understand patients and limited methods of communicating with patients.

While both Parsons and Goffman provide practical frameworks for understanding illness, particularly from a social standpoint, their theories are not without limitations and these limitations may lead to potential topics for future exploration. In particular, Parsons' sick roles expects recovery to occur while many cases of mental illness are chronic, with the mentally ill continuously occupying the sick role or alternating between being in and out of the sick role. In chronic cases, it may be helpful to explore whether social and professional support for the mentally ill would change with prolonged illness or a lack of a permanent cure. A limitation of Parson's theory is being purely focused on the social construction of mental illness and failing to consider if there may be physiological or psychological factors that may predispose an individual to becoming labelled mentally ill. It may be of interest to explore how the social process of labelling and treatment of the stigmatized may change when the reason for stigma is altered from a blemish in character to a biological attribute such as an imbalance in brain chemistry predisposing an individual to behave in ways that would typically be labelled mentally ill.

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**The impacts of Mass Wasting on the Favelas in Rio de Janeiro**  
**By: Annie McKenzie**

In recent years, there has been an influx of hazardous rainfall and mass wasting events occurring within the hillsides of Rio de Janeiro. The term mass wasting refers to the downhill movement of soil and debris under gravity (National Park Service 2019:n.p.). These events disproportionately impact the low-income individuals of Rio de Janeiro as they live in the hillsides in the “favelas”. While these events used to only occur during the rainy season, the intensity and frequency of the events have increased due to climate change. In my essay I will discuss why these events occur, who is impacted and why it is important, and I will conclude with the solutions provided by the city and my own recommendations for solving the impacts of the mass wasting events.

For years now, the city of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil has been subject to the impacts of extensive rainfalls, flooding and mass wasting events. Due to the topography of the region, the hillside favelas that are made up of low-income individuals, are disproportionately impacted compared to the rest of Rio de Janeiro. The hillside favelas are prone to the risk of landslide and other mass wasting events while the low laying favelas are prone to flooding (Hanna 2019a:n.p.). In this region, the rainy season occurs during the summer between December and April and the mixing of cold polar air with tropical air masses creates intense thunderstorms (Smyth and Royle 2000:101). The dry climate and steep terrain

is unable to absorb the large amounts of water creating mass water runoff which is normal for this region, however with humans and their settlements in the way the mass wasting events can have hazardous and even deadly outcomes (Chayle and Wayne 1995:406). In recent years these events have been increasing in severity and have even been occurring outside of the rainy season (Smyth and Royle 2000:101). This increase in severity can be attributed to climate change (Hanna 2019a:n.p.). These effects of the rainfall events can be seen in a particular event from 2011. In Rio de Janeiro an entire month’s worth of rainfall occurred within the span of two days. The mountainous areas experienced landslides that uprooted rocks and trees and destroyed much of what was in its path including any houses, roads or bridges (Alves, Lima, Emanuel 2021:3). The flow of the debris moved at 180 km/hr at its fastest speed and there were over 3,000 landslide points that occurred. 42.68% of the city’s population was affected with there being 918 deaths, 8,800 individuals left homeless and 22,500 were displaced making it the worst natural disaster in Brazil (Alves et al. 2021:3).

While the physical impacts of mass wasting, and flooding events are extremely damaging, these events also have immense impacts on those who live in the path of the natural mass wasting events. Residents of favelas are left more vulnerable due to a number of reasons. The quick and expansive growth of these neighbourhoods and the lack of enforcement of zoning laws allows for these communities to be built on susceptible lands without proper safety measures being enforced (Smyth and Royle 2000:97). The

construction standards of favelas can contribute to how severe these events are (Smyth and Royle 2000:97). In order to build the favelas, slope modification is necessary. This involves removing soil from the back of the site and depositing it at the front of the site to create a flatter area for the buildings. However this technique leads to the land being susceptible to collapse especially during heavy rain or a landslide event (Smyth and Royle 2000 :113-114). The low value of the land due to the high risk of the hillside location is what draws the development of favelas. The villas of those in higher socio-economic class are often built for aesthetic reasons rather than a need of an affordable living option (Smyth and Royle 2000:104). While the individuals in higher socio-economic classes may have the option to build in other areas, those living in the low-income favelas do not have another option so they must face the higher risks which can put them at a further disadvantage if their home is damaged due to the heavy rainfall and mass wasting events. Further, city officials and other inhabitants treat favelas as something that needs to be eradicated. This treatment further perpetuates the harmful narratives and stigmas surrounding favelas. With this treatment, the favelas will have a neglect in upkeep which will make them unstable leading to further fatalities and damage during these rainfall events (Hanna 2019a: n.p.).

After the 2011 mass wasting event, 4.8 billion dollars in damages had occurred. This led to the implementation of a recovery policy (Alves et al. 2021:3). This recovery policy included donations of food and

supplies to the affected populations and the world bank made donations for emergency aid and the reconstruction of the area (Alves et al. 2021:4). Additionally, 22,000 families had been removed from the area between 2009 and 2016 due to its dangerous nature (Barbosa and Coates 2021:1). The city of Rio de Janeiro has implemented a risk measuring program to assess which areas within the city are the riskiest in hopes to eliminate damages in these areas (Hanna 2019b: n.p.). In the 1980s, a landslide mitigation program was launched which included instruments to gage rainfall and a warning would be sent out when there was a possibility of a landslide occurring. In 2011, an early warning system was installed to give residents an audible alert of a possible landslide (Hanna 2019b: n.p.). While the system has a positive perception, many individuals stated that the warning system only allowed the city to “get rid of responsibility” if there is a disaster. The warning system is not seen as a solution to the problem and the warnings do not create a safer living environment (Melo, de Britto, Fontainha, Leiras, Bandeira 2017: 1359). Based on my research, there are a few possible solutions I would recommend in mitigating the risk of severe rainfalls and mass wasting events on favelas in Rio de Janeiro. On a large scale, mitigating the effects of and reversing climate change would provide a long-term solution to these events. By taking this action, the severe rainfall events would occur only during the rainy season rather than all year around and the events themselves, while still intense, would not be as severe as they have become with the effects of climate change. On a

smaller scale, a more immediate solution would be to increase the building standards within favelas themselves. This would ensure more structurally sound buildings on the hillside that would be able to withstand these events. Along with this more vegetation should be added to the hillsides to create stronger soils that are less likely to result in landslides. Finally an ideal solution would be to create more affordable housing within Rio de Janeiro, off the hillsides so lower income individuals do not have to live in hazardous conditions.

Overall the lower income individuals are disproportionately affected by these mass wasting events. Often, they have nowhere else to live with favelas being the only affordable housing option, so they are subjected to living in the hazardous conditions on the hillside. Additionally the city of Rio de Janeiro has provided inadequate solutions to preventing these events from occurring with only a warning system in place. To truly mitigate these events, further action including the safe construction of these communities needs to be taken which will in turn, reduce the hazards caused by mass wasting events.

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**Intersectionality and Impacts of Population Policies on Indigenous Population Control**  
**By: Mikayla Viglasky**

ABSTRACT

Indigenous people in Canada have been subject to population control through structural barriers predetermined by dominant authoritative figures. Motivations behind population control include upholding the ideal demography of white citizens with high socioeconomic standings. Structural obstacles faced by Indigenous people in Canada include systems of oppression, racism, and prejudice. Pro-natalist policies in Canada offer financial incentives to encourage reproduction rates. However, incentives are only provided to people labelled as "elites" and the ideal demography. The intersectionality of gender, race, and socioeconomic position are compromised through discriminatory systems that harm Indigenous peoples in Canada by limiting their rights in various contexts. One population control method exercised by authoritative Canadian figures includes the forced sterilization of Indigenous women. Involuntary sterilization are directly correlated with the Canadian eugenics movement, which limits the procreation of people deemed as having "unfit" genetics. Moreover, Indigenous citizens in Canada face negligible public health measures which is prevalent through observing their ongoing mistreatment.

Keywords: Indigenous, Eugenics, Socio-economic status, Pro-natalist policy, Sterilization, Marginalization, Consent

INTRODUCTION

Indigenous people in Canada have experienced significant socioeconomic disparity relative to non-Indigenous Canadians. These barriers were consciously put in place by dominant white people in positions of authority in Canada to preserve a population exclusively made up of white individuals with a high socioeconomic status. The Canadian government aimed to employ population control to maintain their conception of ideal demography by forcing Indigenous women to undergo sterilization as part of the Canadian eugenics movement. Population control in Canada is evident through pro-natalist policies that offered financial incentives to procreate to non-Indigenous Canadians that were not applicable to Indigenous peoples, despite the overall population of Canada being below the replacement level. Widespread discrimination and inadequate public health measures in Indigenous communities further portray population control with the intent to eliminate their culture and ethnicity through fatality and maltreatment. Racism, discrimination, and stereotyping are difficulties that have a negative impact on Indigenous people's physical and psychological well-being in Canada. Due to these structural barriers, they consequently experienced poor health, economic difficulties, and social disadvantages.

To help one comprehend the history of forced sterilization among Indigenous women as part of the eugenics movement in Canada, I will begin by providing background information. I then explain the forced sterilization of Indigenous women executed by eugenicist doctors to maintain



the ideal demographic composition of white elites with high socioeconomic standing. Next, I explore the access to selective pronatalist policies, which excluded marginalized Indigenous people because they did not have the same privileges as other Canadians. In this section, I also discuss how race and socioeconomic status intersect through eugenics with the discriminatory notion of Indigenous people seen as having undesirable genetics and, therefore "unfit" to reproduce. Subsequently, I discuss poor public health measures that Indigenous people encounter, such as negligence and genocide from their historically inferior status within the Canadian social system. I argue that pronatalist policies in Canada provide incentives to increase fertility rates and promote population growth, but only to those who dominant individuals have identified in positions of power as "elites" and the preferred demographic in society. Through an intersectional lens, I will explore the ways that gender, race, and socioeconomic status are understood as systems of oppression and discrimination that disadvantage Indigenous peoples in Canada by restricting their rights in a variety of contexts.

## HISTORY

The most prominent method of providing women with permanent contraception is through a medical procedure called tubal ligation for female sterilization. By closing off the tubes where fertilization takes place, tubal ligation makes female infertility irreversible. Involuntary forced sterilization occurs when a woman's

ability to reproduce is interfered with through tubal ligation without informed consent (Chaneesa et al. 2021). In the past, colonization, forced integration, and the eugenics campaign all contributed to forced sterilization in Canada. The eugenics campaign authorized the Canadian government to force sterilizations on women without their consent. In Canada, dominant people in positions of authority viewed women who were primarily white and had high socioeconomic status to be "elites" and the ideal demographic in society. On the other hand, women with lower socioeconomic status or who were members of racial minorities were singled out for sterilization. For instance, historical government practices such as the Sexual Sterilization Acts of Alberta and British Columbia resulted in the forced sterilization of Indigenous women in Canada. It took until the 1970s for these laws to be overturned (Leason 2021:1).

A board of eugenics could, according to the Acts, order the sterilization of institutionalized patients who, "if discharged without being subjected to an operation for sexual sterilization, would be likely to beget or bear children who by reason of inheritance would tend to serious mental disease or mental deficiency" (Leason 2021:1). Sterilizations were carried out under the pretense that the government was saving "unfit" Indigenous women from having larger families and more significant financial expenses, appearing to be concerned with Indigenous' interests. However, in practice, eugenics in Canada served as a method of population control and a tool to lower the expenses of implementing

effective public health measures (Chaneesa et al. 2021). The government came to the conclusion that sterilizing Indigenous women was significantly more cost-effective than making developmental changes to the social determinants of health in Indigenous communities.

Forced sterilization compromised Indigenous women's personal rights and their life trajectories. Furthermore, forced sterilization has also resulted in trauma for women, including mental and physical harm, "loss of identity and self-worth, and distrust in the healthcare system" (Chaneesa et al. 2021: 4). As a result, the Indigenous communities remain afraid of seeking medical care, which renders Indigenous women more likely to develop curable and avoidable medical disorders.

#### FORCED STERILIZATION TARGETING INDIGENOUS WOMEN

In many Canadian provinces, regulations permit sterilizing marginalized groups, especially Indigenous women. Many Indigenous women were misled into thinking that tubal ligation might be reversed or that they could still become pregnant (Collier 2017). In the early 1900s, eugenically-minded doctors forcibly sterilized Indigenous women to preserve the ideal demographic composition of white elites in society. As recently as 2017, individuals are still speaking forward with their testimonies (Rasmussen 2019:18). Indigenous women vehemently refused to consent for the operations conducted without it.

Informed consent consists of the following elements; The patient must be of sound mind and capable of making

decisions, receive adequate information, and have a sufficient amount of information discussed with them, including the diagnosis, the nature of the procedure to be done, the risks involved, the likelihood of success, and alternative treatments (Ralstin-Lewis 2005:79). Given that Indigenous women were led to believe that the procedure could be reversed, it is evident that they were not given accurate information from the health care providers and were coerced into sterilization procedures. Women's reproductive rights were stripped from the Indigenous following these non-consensual procedures. Due to the unbalanced distribution of wealth that causes a lack of resources for the poor, Canada attempted to diminish Indigenous people to ensure white elite dominance.

As a result, Indigenous women lost their sexual and reproductive rights as a result of significant structural barriers in which they had no control over. (Pegoraro 2015:162) analyzed an interview of a Cowichan woman who had undergone forced sterilization in 1952 at a clinic in Vancouver, she said:

"Doctor Goodbrand kept trying to do that operation on me when he learned that I would marry into a chief's family. He kept saying to me, 'Sarah, you don't want to marry Freddy. If you do, I'll have to fix you.' I tried to avoid him after that but the Indian Affairs people told me he was the only doctor I was allowed to see. So after I delivered my baby, Doctor Goodbrand put me under again, and when I woke up he had done the operation on me. I couldn't have any more children after that. The same thing happened to a lot of our women. He did it to

my daughter's best friend, too, that would have been in the 1970's sometime. If you were seen to be a troublemaker, you got the operation. I hear that the government was even offering any doctor \$300 for every Indian woman he sterilized, with or without her consent" (Pegoraro 2015:162). Despite the Indigenous woman who was interviewed explicitly asking to see another doctor, she was denied, put under general anesthesia, and operated on without giving informed consent. Non-consensual sterilization severely breaches human rights, medical ethics, and reproductive liberty. Furthermore, in order to preserve the intended demographic of white, high socioeconomic-status citizens in western Canada, white elites idealized laws that permit eugenics as progressive. Canada aimed to eliminate lower-class, racialized, and marginalized people by limiting reproduction within Indigenous populations.

#### INDIGENOUS REPRODUCTION IN CANADA AND SELECTIVE INCENTIVES

Since the early 1970s, Canada's replacement fertility rate has declined below the threshold fertility rate, which indicates that without immigration, the population would decrease and, therefore unsustainable.

As a result, the Canadian government is "concerned with the burden placed on the working population to support the growing elderly population" (Malak et al. 2019: 1206). Pronatalism refers to policies that encourage people to have children. With Canada being a pro-natalist country, the government has offered financial incentives

and benefits to encourage higher fertility rates.

However, these incentives were not offered to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis populations in Canada as they did not hold the same rights as other Canadians. Indigenous peoples of Canada were viewed by the government as having "undesirable elements" and efforts were made to limit reproduction among "unfit" groups (Grekul et al. 2004). Low socioeconomic status individuals and visible minorities were considered to be "unfit" groups because white elites viewed them as harmful to the Canadian economy. The eugenics program in Canada grew into a technique for population control that profoundly affected the Indigenous populations. Indigenous peoples were routinely placed under government surveillance because of prejudices about their "intelligence and mental hygiene" (Dyck and Lux 2016:484). Due to their perception of the Indigenous population as inferior, dominant white individuals in positions of power in Canada deliberately aimed to reduce the Indigenous people through forced sterilization and by excluding them from benefits that other Canadians received for having children. Although Canada was pro-natalist and concerned that the replacement fertility rate was below the threshold fertility rate, the government's primary concern was preserving the ideal population demographic of white people with a high socioeconomic standing. Due to their racial and socioeconomic status, the Indigenous communities in Canada were thus a target of discrimination and oppressive policies.

## POOR PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

The state of public health measures for Canada's Indigenous peoples has recently been analyzed due to their general poor health status. Indigenous peoples and their advocates have accused the Canadian government of negligence and genocide due to Indigenous public health measures. The root cause of negligence within the healthcare system for Indigenous peoples in Canada stems from their historical status within the Canadian social system, and being viewed as inferior by white elites.

Indigenous peoples were marginalized and suppressed due to their race and low socioeconomic status. "Hospitals have a particular place within the network of institutions and institutional practices that continue to regulate, and not infrequently imperil, Indigenous lives in colonial settler Canada" (McCallum and Perry 2018:63). Barriers of racism and inequality were upheld by healthcare professionals, which were apparent in the Indigenous populations' overall health status. Indigenous people experienced "underservice," as evidenced by the fact that they were "turned away from open beds" at hospitals (McCallum and Perry 2018:86-88). Because Euro-Canadian doctors considered Indigenous people contaminated and unsanitary, they discriminated against them by assuming they had and easily spread dangerous diseases. Despite needing medical treatment, they were denied it because of their race and socioeconomic status, which satisfied the desired demographic of the Canadian government by letting Indigenous people endure and pass away.

Dominant people in positions of power in Canada authorized poor, unequal treatment in the public health sector as a method of population control. (Waldram et al. 2006:195) states, "The construction of Aboriginal health in medical writing from the first half of the twentieth century reveals how the 'Indian problem' and Indian bodies became pathologized and infused with concerns about contagion, gender, and race." Concerns about diseases transferring from First Nations people to European settlers indicate the focus of responsibility to the Indigenous communities in Canada. Transmissible illnesses, including tuberculosis, have had substantial socioeconomic and political effects on Indigenous people in Canada. Tuberculosis is "an airborne bacterial disease" primarily affecting the lungs (Gilmour 2021:2). This illness can also lead to fatality if left untreated. Globally, minority Indigenous people are disproportionately shown to experience a disparate burden of diseases and poorer health outcomes than the comparative majority population. (Waldram et al. 2006:294) states, "In the past, there have been attempts to link Aboriginal health status to cultural or biological factors, to, in effect, 'blame the victim' for their problems." We acknowledge the disparity and unfair treatment of Indigenous people through subpar public health measures, which stems from the widespread racist misconception that Indigenous people carry infectious, easily transmissible, fatal diseases as a result of poor hygiene. This notion was ingrained in society by the dominant white ruling classes. Furthermore, by refusing to treat Indigenous people, healthcare professionals

promoted the western movement toward a predominantly white society while aiming to eradicate racialized, lower socioeconomic-status Indigenous peoples in Canada.

## CONCLUSION

I argue that pro-natalist policies in Canada offer incentives to encourage reproduction rates and population expansion but only to those labelled as "elites" and the chosen demographic in society by dominant people in positions of power. I examined the structural implications relating to gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status and how they are perceived as oppressive and discriminatory systems that harm Indigenous peoples in Canada by limiting their rights in a range of circumstances through an intersectional lens.

Considering everything, we can comprehend Canada's bureaucratic efforts to control the population and more specifically, to maintain a predominantly white population of high socioeconomic status. We explored the history of forced sterilization among Indigenous women as a form of eugenics to prevent people from having children with genetic traits deemed "unfit." We observed how, since the early 1970s, Canada's replacement fertility rate has been below the threshold fertility rate, demonstrating that the country's population would fall and become unstable in the absence of immigration. In addition to this, the marginalized Indigenous people of Canada were also excluded from pro-natalist programs since they were seen as inferior to white elites and did not possess the same rights as non-Indigenous Canadians. In essence, this proves that dominant

Canadians in positions of authority were solely concerned with increasing fertility rates of white individuals with high socioeconomic status. Furthermore, I also discussed differences in Indigenous public health measures attributable to their ethnicity and prejudices about hygiene and perceived propensity for disease transmission. Healthcare workers upheld these structural barriers, which became apparent in observing the general poor health of Indigenous people in Canada. Widespread racism and negligence in the healthcare sector were portrayed through the denial of medical services, despite having the physical capacity that allowed for more patients. Moreover, I argued that biological explanations fall short of explaining Indigenous people's healthcare challenges. Indigenous individuals face challenges in the healthcare industry because of a dynamic interplay of socioeconomic, political, and historical contexts. In conclusion, Canada evidently displayed methods of population control to eradicate marginalized, lower socioeconomic status Indigenous populations through various contexts, such as forced, non-consensual sterilization among Indigenous women, selective pro-natalist incentives offered to non-Indigenous Canadians, and inadequate public health measures faced by Indigenous people in Canada. The motive behind these efforts by dominating individuals in power was to maintain a society dominated by white people with high socioeconomic positions.

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## **GSC in the Global South: The Harmful Nature of the Surrogacy Market**

**By: Hannah Robinson**

### INTRODUCTION

Gestational commercial surrogacy (GCS) refers to the legal agreement to carry a child made between a surrogate and the prospective parent(s) (Rudrappa and Collins 2015:939). This form of surrogacy is quickly becoming a popular alternative option to the traditional method of having a baby. As regulations continue to grow stricter in western countries, many hopeful parents-to-be are turning to gestational surrogacy opportunities in the global south, where restrictions are lighter. In this paper, using India as a case study, I will argue that gestational commercial surrogacy, as a commonplace economic practice, disproportionately harms women in the global south. First, I will outline the history of global surrogacy before contextualizing the practice within the global south – specifically India. Next, the paper will discuss how GCS acts as a method of sustaining and reinforcing colonialism within the global south. Then, I will assess the effects of GCS and analyze the impact of prohibiting the practice. Without proper academia dedicated to this topic, or at the very least, awareness, it will be almost impossible to protect the women involved in gestational surrogacy in this part of the world.

### DEFINING SURROGACY

The most common form of surrogacy is “gestational commercial surrogacy”

The most common form of surrogacy is “gestational commercial surrogacy” (GCS), wherein a couple or individual’s legally-owned ova and sperm are fertilized in-vitro before being transferred into a surrogate mother’s womb (Rudrappa and Collins 2015:939). The payment provided after delivery for carrying the fetus signals the end of the relationship. In contrast, “full surrogacy” is the more traditional form, involving the artificial insemination or in-vitro fertilization of the intending father’s sperm with the surrogate mother’s egg (Sandor 2018:36). Essentially, the difference between these two types of surrogacy revolves around whether or not the surrogate mother’s egg, and thus, DNA, is being used.

GCS most often occurs in transnational contexts for two reasons. The first is that many countries within the global north – a non-geographical term used to describe developed and wealthy areas – prohibit commercial surrogacy. These bans prompts couples to search beyond their borders for places where legislative restrictions are lighter (ibid:48). Prohibition can occur based on incoherence due to multiple levels of government jurisdiction, such as how surrogacy is regulated state-by-state in the U.S. (Lozanski 2014:386). Other options include places that distinguish between different forms of surrogacy. Canada is a strong example of this option as it permits altruistic – unpaid – surrogacy but prohibits commercial surrogacy (ibid:386).

Interestingly, despite these prohibitions domestically, Canada provides “clear guidelines to facilitate the citizenship of children born” out of these transnational

inconsistency indicates an apparent contradiction that Canada supports GCS so long as it exists outside its borders. The second reason GCS often occurs translationally is that commercial surrogacy is cheaper in the global south – countries characterized by their undeveloped or developing status – making it an attractive option to travel for (Sandor 2018:48).

#### GCS IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Within the global south, in countries such as Kenya, Thailand, Nepal and India, the surrogacy market prices are varied yet consistently lower than in other parts of the world (Bandelli 2021:147). These meager costs on such a vast scale led to a several billion-dollar industry (ibid:147). The global south stands in direct contrast to places where GCS is legal in the global north - such as the United States - where the average surrogacy agreement costs upwards of \$150,000 (ibid:147).

As a case study, India stands apart as an interesting example of a country with an oversaturated commercial surrogacy market that came to a grinding halt in 2015 when GCS was banned completely (Chatterjee and Whelan 2017:222). By some estimates, pre-ban, India's market was worth two billion dollars, which is in line with its reputation for being the world's "rent-a-womb industry" (Rudrappa and Collins 2015:938).

Studies on the Indian surrogate workers found that they were motivated to do this work because of their desperation for money, and even with the disempowering conditions they had to endure, they found ways to "participate in transnational

surrogacy on terms they [found] acceptable" (ibid:942). Often, this meant that they recast surrogacy as kin work, sometimes cohabitating with other surrogate mothers in dormitories to deal with the emotional stress of the job (ibid:942). Years of GCS within India facilitate the country as being a valuable source of study, especially when looking at the effects the industry caused pre- and post-prohibition.

#### GCS AS ONGOING COLONIALISM

Using India as an example, it is possible to see how commercial surrogacy sustains and reinforces colonialist ideologies. India's GCS market "literally produces humans...while sustaining global racial reproductive hierarchies" (Pande 2016:244). This is because when couples from the global north travel to pay for surrogacy and the global south produces this child, the interaction quite literally reproduces the global north and reinforces the hierarchy between the global north and south through this process. Those within the global south are deemed good enough to grow the child in their womb so long as their DNA is not involved.

There is heavy irony in how in a country with a history full of anti-natalist policies, the GCS market is booming. Pressures from the global north – the main instigators in the labelling of the global south's fertility rates as a "global danger to be controlled at whatever cost" – persist unless these babies are for the global north (Pande 2016:244). In these cases, surrogate mothers in India are deemed as using their fertility "productively" by reproducing "children of higher classes and privileged



nations” (ibid:244). Reducing the births of those in the lower classes within the global south in favour of birthing children who will grow up in colonizer nations directly plays into global eugenic imperatives. Through this, it also sustains discourses around what births - and what people - have more value. These inconsistencies represent how colonialism is ingrained within the GCS industry, although packaged in a more palatable way.

Too often, GCS is framed as a means of global “sisterhood” whereby surrogate mothers are portrayed as altruistically motivated to help infertile women based on their female bond (Pande 2011:624). This discourse completely glosses over the inequalities between the surrogates and the women from the global north and, in doing so, effectively downplays the contractual aspect of the process. The problem with downplaying this part of GCS is that it reinforces the myth that draws both sides to the industry. It draws in prospective surrogates as the practice becomes commonplace and the money is needed. It also attracts mothers-to-be as they feel gratified that their business will help these women financially in a significant way.

However, studies have proven that the notion that surrogacy leads to this big payout, lifting families out of poverty, is false (Lau 2018:673). Surrogacy is often not the “opportunity of a lifetime” as it is often portrayed in the media and is, instead, active colonialism. This is due to how “the very structural factors rendering working-class Indian women such a good fit for surrogacy is what enables the imaginaries of

benevolence and rescue from poverty” (ibid:672). These dichotomies of “poor Indian women” and “affluent women from the global north” are then further perpetuated by sisterhood rhetorics that downplay the purpose of money in the interaction altogether. Therefore, sustaining the poverty these surrogates experience before and eventually again after performing this work ensures the cycle of Indian women participating in this underpaid work.

Examining the presence of colonialism within the context of GCS is critical to uncovering the postcolonial conditions that reinforce the paradigms of “othering” groups. Sisterhood rhetorics effectively “other” Indian surrogates from speaking up about unfair labour conditions as surrogate mothers start to believe these conceptualizations around their labour. It is critical to see that these concepts are inherently colonial and that removing surrogates from seeing their labour accurately is how global sociological understandings continue to be misrepresented. Bhambra (2013) discusses these instances where groups with a history of being “othered” and how it is critical to view current discourses from the lens through which they were written and by whom (300). Without taking steps to understand “who defines this present from which we speak?” it will be impossible to uncover the unrepresented pasts of colonialism that have led to the present conditions of surrogacy in the global south (ibid:310).

Unveiling these hidden instances of colonialism opens doors to understanding

how heavy orientalism shadow GCS in India. Orientalism is the "contributions to reproducing hierarchies between the west and the rest," whereby the division created reinforces ideologies around what – and who – is superior (Seuffert 2020:193).

Orientalisms are prevalent in the GCS industry in a myriad of ways. Research finds that despite the surrogate having no DNA relevance to the child they are carrying, “higher-class, lighter-skinned women within India are still paid more than their lower-status, darker-skinned counterparts and their behaviours [are] less heavily policed” (Lau 2018:675). These racial markers in surrogacy are reflective of how "stigma is used by individuals, communities and the state to produce and reproduce social [inequalities]" among surrogates (Tyler and Slater 2018:721). Both the orientalism and stigma present are highly reminiscent of colonialism in its simplest form and demonstrate how pervasive it is within the GCS market.

Another example of orientalism within the GCS industry is how the power imbalance in the surrogacy relationship is highly imbalanced. Through surrogacy, the global north sustains its upper hand over the global south as they continue to extract services and resources to maintain this higher status; except this time, this extraction “includes the gestation of babies and the renting of wombs” (ibid:681). This orientalism is primarily sustained through the assumption that there are “large numbers of available surrogates” whereby they are lucky to be employed (ibid:683). This assumption is then used to mislead Indian women into entering surrogacy agreements

and dissuade them from challenging their wages. This misrepresentation of the situation is orientalist in nature as it is used to legitimize the exploitation and suppression of these women, thus serving as a method of control.

Controlling people and their bodies has always been a characteristic of colonialism. Therefore, this control extending into the realm of surrogacy is no different. The extension of colonialism's history with medicine and "extracting resources from human bodies" continues into the present (ibid:678). The global north's purchase of the bodies of those in the global south is akin to the imperialism of Britain on India's people as a colony that was “plunder[ed] [for] resources are raw material to supply the colonial centre” (ibid:678). The only difference now is that while India remains a site to be extrapolated for resources, Britain as the main colonialist, has spread to include other countries from the global north. Therefore, by using the fertile bodies of Indian women, the practice of taking resources from those in the global south continues.

#### EFFECTS OF GCS

While it is clear that the practice is inherently colonialist, which is harmful in itself, whether GCS is regulated or unregulated also causes significant effects. Firstly, the actual process of being a surrogate is incredibly damaging to their physical body and mind. Often, surrogates have to give up their regular jobs to be available for the daily appointments at the clinic to "receive their hormonal injections in order to prepare them for pregnancies"

(Rudrappa 2018:1094). These injections were frequently reported to be painful and cause side effects (ibid:1094). To monitor the progress, surrogates would be subjected to frequent trans-vaginal ultrasounds, where a condom-covered probe would be inserted into their vaginas in order to image and map the changes in their reproductive organs (ibid:1094).

Many surrogates interviewed in studies on the physical impact of these procedures revealed that they “likened these transvaginal examinations to sexual assault” and often felt heavy humiliation when their body was not treated as their own (ibid:1094). Notably, these steps had to occur before they became pregnant, meaning before signing a contract. Therefore, if the IVF failed, they would be out a significant portion of lost wages and have, essentially, had to undergo this physical and emotional labour for free. This is incredibly significant as there is no monetary support for the women in these circumstances.

Additionally, these early steps and other procedures during the course of the pregnancy are not adequately captured within the sum they are given. With surrogates undergoing serious physical expectations, including several health risks and restrictions – which are frequently downplayed by fertility clinics – on top of a lack of health, legal and financial protections, surrogates almost always cannot have informed consent when agreeing to labour (Chatterjee and Whelan 2017:22). The product of this is that surrogates are consistently paid a low wage which often

leads to increased chances of acting as a surrogate again and again.

Studies done by Pande and Rudrappa reveal that “surrogacy is not usually done by the most desperate and destitute in India, but by the working-classes and/or the lower-middle-classes” wherein the money they earn is only “approximately 5 years of total family income” (Lau 2018:670). With these revelations, it is clear that a five-year financial boost is not as lucrative as it is often portrayed. With GCS marketed as a chance to lift women out of poverty, and with these conclusions disproving this claim, it is evident that wages need to be increased to be more in line with these declarations. Therefore, arguing for higher wages and understanding that surrogates and lobbyists alike should be bargaining for this is essential to better regulate this industry. If not, the current surrogacy sum is merely a Band-Aid fix to financial situations and works as a pipeline into being a surrogate multiple times.

The most significant long-term effect of GCS may be how the practice continues with its minimum protections and abysmal pay. It is important to note that even if the practice is banned domestically, it just moves. Shifting from one country to another as the new “hotspot” for GCS is the product of globalization and the prevalence of open borders. An example of this includes the shift from India to Thailand, after GCS was banned in India in 2015 (Whittaker 2016:124). Even if the industry is banned domestically, in favour of only allowing altruistic surrogacy, studies show that this allows for an even deeper exploitation of

women (Rudrappa 2018:1087). After prohibition, surrogacy broker's merely changing their parameters and instead, "moving working-class pregnant women from one country to the other to take advantage of the uneven juridical-legal terrain" (ibid:1093). This can look like "sending Indian women to Nepal and bringing Kenyan women to India" in a process where "surrogate mothers become analogous to shipping containers" (ibid:1093). Or, it can move the process underground which would mean even less protections for the women than pre-prohibition (Pande 2016:253).

#### THE IMPACT OF GCS PROHIBITION

While surrogacy, especially altruistic surrogacy, can be an amazing thing, a gift even, to infertile women who desire motherhood, it is something that is beautiful in theory and very infrequently in practice. All countries that singularly permit altruistic surrogacy ultimately end up pushing the prospective parents transnationally, as research finds that "not too many women... are willing to be pregnant for selfless reasons" (Pande 2016:253). Therefore it is crucial to understand that GCS will be pervasive regardless if it is legalized domestically or not. With this in mind, it is important to remember that simply banning GCS domestically is not a solution.

GCS transcends national borders and exists within a global market, therefore an issue that affects much of the globe needs a global dialogue. Sandor (2018) offers an "international convention" as a solution whereby women's rights to quality health care before, during, and after the pregnancy,

on top of a fair wage – regardless of whether or not the pregnancy is unsuccessful or encountered complications – should be codified into standard international agreements (52).

On top of these recommendations, Pande (2017) argues that transparency is severely lacking within the GSC industry and is desperately needed. Pande argues that financial transparency that provides opportunity for bargaining, medical transparency on every part of the process rather than a rushed overview, and transparency in the relationships where the surrogate has the opportunity to forge a long-term relationship with the baby, all lead to an increase within the dignity of labour (2017:337-340). With all of these recommendations, it is clear that they can be reasonably implemented both domestically and internationally in what is truly a global issue.

#### CONCLUSION

GCS is incredibly harmful to women in the global south. Prospective, current, and past surrogate mothers have been, and continue to be, taken advantage of by the global north. Whether it is undermining their work by poor conditions and inadequate pay, or refraining from obtaining informed consent, women of the global south continue to be abused by the GCS market. As an international market, GCS fails to be captured as a global issue. Due to this, many vulnerable women slip through the cracks as globalization opens up the borders for GCS to thrive in other places when it is unavailable or unaffordable domestically for prospective parents. Instead of needed and

critical reform, countries continue to simply ban the practice, effectively shuffling it off to another country for it to become the next baby-making industry.

An international dialogue is needed to unearth the suppressed voices of surrogate mothers who have historically been othered from historical and current issues. These conversations are needed, and needed now. A movement is vital to creating change in a way that transcends colonialist influences, "sisterhood" discourses, and saviour mentalities of the global north. Surrogacy is not an evil or immoral practice, it can be a critical solution for infertile individuals who do not have access to kin that will perform it altruistically. With this in mind, the practice is unlikely to end. Therefore, shifting the mentality away from prohibiting the practice to help the women harmed in the global south towards one of global reform, is the future of GCS. Without it, women in the global south – regardless of the country – will continue to be exploited by the global north in a never-ending extraction of resources, except this time it is people

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## **Balancing Work and Family in a Single-Earner Household**

**By: Shelby Loftus**

The relationship between work and family has been rather extensive throughout history. Societal norms and expectations are constantly changing as new standards of work and family are reproduced. Balancing work and family is one of the most prominent struggles families face. Managing competing demands from the workplace and the household has become increasingly difficult. Men and women in the workplace have often experienced difficulties upholding work-related obligations alongside raising their children and keeping up with domestic work. The ability to remain present in one's family domain depends on their work structure and organization. This includes access to flexible work schedules and work benefits such as paid work leave, health care, sufficient daycare services, etcetera. However, access to these benefits is not always applicable to everyone. Understanding the interplay between work dynamics and access to benefits allows individuals to better comprehend work-family balance disparities.

Not only have work demands been elevated by the rise of Western capitalism and technology, but it has also increased the risk of role conflict and role blurring within the family structure. Historically, work has revolved in and around the home (Sweet and Meiksins 2021:161). It resorted to different divisions of labour based on class, race, and gender. Following the Industrial Revolution, Western culture adopted a breadwinner-

homemaker arrangement, casting men and women specific roles and obligations of work and family (ibid). This redefined the economic value of women in the household within the early twentieth century and led to the assumption that women's place is in the home and men belong in the workforce (ibid). As a result, gender roles and expectations have remained highly influential in the relationship between work and family.

This paper will subsequently outline the intersections of work and family, while also looking at a case study of stay-at-home mothers and breadwinning fathers in understanding the challenges behind gendered expectations and the blurring of roles in the home and workplace.

### THE INTERSECTIONS OF WORK AND FAMILY

Work-life balance, or WLB, is the compatibility and control between one's occupation and personal responsibilities. Both individual and organizational factors can contribute to the enablement of WLB, meaning it is often subjective to one's circumstances, leading to feeling out of control in balancing these competing demands (Feeney and Stritch 2019:425). Through this, individuals must determine the time, effort, and commitment necessary to balance their work and family obligations, causing people to lose their sense of WLB once these demands take away too much time and energy from the other (ibid). There are structural and psychological dimensions that come into play when determining WLB. Structural dimensions include the given limitations on one's day, whether it be the

number of hours at the office, commute to and from work, family structures, and physical capabilities.

On the other hand, psychological dimensions include an individual's health, stress levels, life satisfaction and happiness produced from their domains (ibid).

Accordingly, Jeffrey Greenhaus, this is the incompatibility of role pressures from family domains and the workplace (Greenhaus 1988:25). Greenhaus outlines three primary forms of work-family conflicts: time-based, strain-based, and behaviour-based. Here, he identifies that when either time demands, stress symptoms, or clashing behaviours intrude or interfere with another role, it reinforces work-family conflict, also referred to as WFC (ibid). In understanding the interplay between these dimensions, one can better comprehend their levels of WLB and how they may pose barriers within the workplace and the household.

### *Flexibility*

Flexibility is crucial in mitigating the stress surrounding work and family demands (Fullner and Hirsh 2019:4). Various types of flexibility within the workplace contribute to WLB. First, temporal flexibility accommodates family demands and unexpected events, such as school closures or sick parents or children. Spatial flexibility allows workers to decide where they work, granting access to other obligations such as childcare, elder care, etcetera. Finally, scheduling flexibility provides autonomy and control to the worker, allowing them to pick and choose when and where they work (Fullner and Hursh 2019:7). Flexibility includes any form of alternative work

schedule, deviating from a traditional 9 am to 5 pm, Mondays through Fridays work week (Feeney and Stritch 2019:427). For instance, one may maintain a compressed workweek schedule, allowing for greater hours in a short timeframe and more days off (ibid). This tends to impact both temporal and spatial aspects of flexibility, granting individuals control of the daily hours worked, the ability to work remotely, and providing more free time to put towards hobbies, family matters, childcare, school events, etcetera (Feeney and Stritch 2019:428).

However, this can also create a strain between one's family obligations and the preconceived notion of an 'ideal worker' (Fullner and Hirsh 2019:4). Employees often feel the need to express work as their top priority to be considered a valuable worker. The number of hours worked is typically the dominant predictor of work-life imbalance (Feeney and Stritch 2019:428). Henceforth, while alternative work schedules do not directly correlate with achieving WLB, it does provide the freedom to manage one's work schedules and enhance their overall perception of WLB (ibid).

### *Work Benefits*

Work scheduling and flexibility are also necessary for acquiring work benefits. According to Fuller and Hirsh, "different jobs are associated with variation in the intersection of employment norms, power relations, cultural expectations, and household resources" (Fuller and Hirsh 2019:5). In this case, it is not enough to consider the importance of accessibility, but also its consequences in doing so (ibid). Yet,



this is typically dependent on the quality of the job in terms of pay and prestige. Those involved in higher-paying work grant them access to resources such as sufficient childcare, paid time off, part-time, or remote work options, health care, etcetera (ibid). The cost of additional childcare can be daunting for new parents. Hence, workspaces that offer resources and support in this area are incredibly beneficial to one's work and home life, enabling parents to work more consistent hours with little stress (Feeney and Stritch 2019:427). Also, paid time off is essential to many employees as it provides workers with added support when external aspects of their lives need immediate attention. It also ensures work productivity and commitment, reduces turnover of employees, and provides an overall healthy work environment (Feeney and Stritch 2019:426). However, contrary to the availability of these benefits, they often go underutilized.

Many workers are reluctant to claim a leave of absence with or without pay due to the fear of negative perceptions of themselves and their work ethic (Feeney and Stritch 2019:426). This may be due to the lack of encouragement towards time off within corporate cultures. Organizational demands and managerial support are critical factors in these negative perceptions (Kay November 4, 2022). For instance, there may be an expectation or norm to prioritize work over all other aspects of life, including family. In this case, time demands are often culturally driven in the workplace. Characteristics such as loyalty, productivity, and efficiency, are used as merits of commitment (ibid).

Similarly, support by managerial staff is vastly influential as it creates a positive and comfortable environment for someone to request a leave. Those in leadership roles make a difference in establishing certain norms in the workplace and subsequently can contribute to taking a leave of absence without any social or work-based penalizations (ibid). This demonstrates how access to paid sick leave and support by one's peers and organizations is essential for those involved in caregiving within the home, such as elder care or childcare (Feeney and Stritch 2019:426). These family-friendly benefits are not always fair or accessible to all workers and may fall more towards the dominant caretakers in the household. For instance, employees without children or those less involved in childcare may be put on assignments requiring more hours in the office or even those requiring travel (Kay November 4, 2022). Consequently, while these benefits are available, they are not always supported or considered fair.

#### *Gender roles*

Access to workplace benefits and flexibility depends on intersectional assets such as one's gender, race, class, religion, etcetera (Fullner and Hirsh 2019:4). Gender roles are foundational components in understanding work-family balances and conflicts within heteronormative family structures (ibid). More specifically, the rise of females entering the workplace has enhanced the concern for upholding one's identity as an 'ideal worker' and the identity of an 'ideal mother.' To understand the disparities of such workplace benefits and flexibility, one must account for the

disadvantages and inequality impacted by motherhood. Studies have shown that women's employment is more commonly considered a 'choice' but not that of men (Tracy and Rivera 2010:10). In other words, women's work is framed to be a source of fulfillment to one's identity rather than a financial necessity. Many respondents to these studies carry the idea that successful women are not suitable wives or mothers (Tracy and Rivera 2010:25). This demonstrates how the presence of gendered differences impacts the boundaries of work and family roles (Greenhaus 1988:26).

Studies have also shown that in the mid-eighties, male college graduates from Berkley did not want or plan to share equal roles within the household, nor did they want to marry a woman that would expect them to do so (Tracy and Rivera 2010:9). While this may be outdated, it brings into question as to whether these gender scripts are still present today. It also explains a lot of family structures that grew up in this time and how they may carry out such outlooks on equality in the home. But despite the more male presence in their children's lives than in their fathers' generations, women still perform a disproportionate number of domestic tasks and childcare regardless of their occupational demands (ibid). This ultimately leads to women making more career sacrifices for their families than men. Men are henceforth more likely to be excused from abstaining from family activities for work commitments. In contrast, these social norms place expectations on women to refrain from work commitments to oversee their family and household responsibilities (Greenhaus 1988:26). For

instance, men will commonly be the ones to work late or longer hours while women stay home with a sick kid. As a result, men benefit from their partners' who take on childcare and domestic work, whereas women in a similar occupational position must maintain multiple responsibilities simultaneously (ibid).

Due to these gendered expectations surrounding work and family life, women face various boundaries in achieving flexibility in the workplace. Flexibility is highly beneficial to women in more traditional family structures as much of the household, and child-oriented tasks tend to fall on them. Mothers are often stereotyped as less committed and productive which may be considered a threat to high-wage firms (Fuller and Hirsh 2019:8). Similarly, flexibility for women is dependent on one's education and job status. For instance, less educated women may be subject to jobs with more rigid schedules, hindering their access to flexibility in the workplace. They also may experience greater interruptions and not have access to sufficient resources to accommodate for external barriers, such as additional childcare (Fuller and Hirsh 2019:12). However, flexible work schedules or the ability to work from home may also be essential for women with higher education as they may uphold more demanding jobs and greater demands (ibid).

In addition, these factors significantly contribute to access to benefits and work leaves. Workplace benefits and family-friendly policies are integral for families with children or aging parents. Specifically, these are commonly interpreted as a mechanism to enhance women's

experience in the workplace and encourage support to its employees (Feeney and Stritch 2019:429). According to Feeney and Stritch, this works towards “ensuring accommodation for family responsibilities that disproportionately fall on women and promoting gender equity in the workplace” (ibid). They are reinforced to integrate more women into the workforce. Yet, this is not always obtainable for all women because women pay a much higher social cost to work than men. They are constantly striving to meet the same standards and expectations placed on men in the workplace while also upholding the expectations of women to be present in the household and maintain a family (ibid).

Henceforth, WLB and WFC are determined by one’s prescribed gender roles and pressures within the workplace and household, as well as one’s access to flexible work, work benefits, and overall autonomy in the workplace in navigating work and family responsibilities.

#### CASE STUDY OF WORK AND FAMILY

This paper will now analyze the inner workings of a single-earner family structure. In this family, there are five children with a significant age gap between the first three and the last two. The older children share a reasonably different experience growing up than the youngest two, as they grew up with two working parents who were more congruent with the working-middle class. Following the adoption of the two younger children, the mom stopped working to be present in her children's lives and keep up with household tasks. At the same time, the dad, who started

up his own automation company, had grown into one of the most successful businessmen in his town. They proceeded to live a very comfortable life together, and the more his business flourished, the more they could provide for their children. In this case, this paper will focus more on the experience of the youngest children and the dynamics between a stay-at-home mother and a work-oriented father.

Amongst singer-earner families where the father was the sole earner, most mothers were not looking for work and remained outside the labour force as stay-at-home moms (Statistics Canada 2016). Since the parents had children of their own before deciding to adopt almost fourteen years later, they were of a different generation than most parents. This instilled more traditional gender scripts and family roles throughout the upbringing of the youngest kids. In 1979, statistics showed that more than 9 of 10 non-working mothers in a single-earning family structure were stay-at-home moms (ibid). While this statistic may be considered outdated today, it demonstrates the normalization of stay-at-home mothers within this timeframe. It also outlines the persistence of gender scripts and the idea surrounding women’s work as optional or even morally inappropriate (Tracy and Rivera 2010:17). Similarly, women tend to experience work and family roles independently, while men experience them interdependently (Kay November 1, 2022). The father in this scenario also carries the familiar perspective of being a good father with being an excellent provider to the family (ibid). Henceforth, this family maintains such ideologies as the father was

the dominant breadwinner of the house and was distant to the raising of his children. At the same time, the mother took on most of the childcare and household tasks and was much more present in the children's lives than the dad.

It is also essential to recognize how the commitment to work impacts the WFB of the father. As a business owner, he would be considered highly career oriented. Partners who contain this quality are much more likely to devote high levels of time, effort, and energy to their work role, causing them to have less of an inclination to participate in the family domain as they are so preoccupied with their work (Greenhaus 1988:32). This emphasizes the presence of work-family conflicts and role theory. Role theory outlines the ways in which workers experience inter-role disputes due to the incompatibility of multiple roles (Schjoedt 2013:47). With work and family, it is sometimes difficult to meet certain expectations and demands of both roles simultaneously. Work and family conflicts can be seen through a two-dimensional lens, where work may interfere with family, or family interferes with work (ibid). As someone who is more career-oriented, they may be more susceptible to work interference with family conflict, or WFC.

One must also examine the inner workings of male entrepreneurship to understand work and family conflicts within this case study. Entrepreneurship is defined as a form of self-employment, where the entrepreneur is responsible for the development and success of their business and in seeking out new ventures and business deals or partnerships (Schjoedt

2013:50). But despite this categorization, they abide more closely to their own subculture and are not entirely interchangeable with those who are self-employed. Through this, entrepreneurs carry out numerous roles outside the business to enhance their venture and its success (ibid). Entrepreneurs also engage in greater networking to solidify business opportunities, causing them to have a more prominent role within their communities. This also allows for him to consume, maintain, and build resources in these other roles (ibid). Similarly, the father in this situation engages in various roles in his community, such as being on multiple panels for the city and the local college, as well as speaker events and conventions. He also has made a name for himself in the business world, allowing him to maintain many social and business-related relationships outside of his place of work.

In this family structure, the father was often absent due to the consumption of his work, leaving most of the domestic work and childcare to his wife. He has often been categorized as a 'workaholic,' which refers to an inner compulsion to work excessively hard (Mazzetti, Schaufeli, and Guglielmi 2014:228). Through this, he maintains a strong sense of passion and drive for the work that he has built from the ground up. It is also a result of the pressures and expectations placed on men in the workplace and the idea that they are providers of the family. For instance, the article by Mazzetti et al. states that "workaholicism is particularly prevalent in those work environments characterized by a masculine culture that encourages employees to be extremely

competitive, power-hungry, task-oriented, and fearful of failure” (Mazzetti et al. 2014: 233). This abides by the idea that those who participate in longer working hours and demonstrate commitment to their jobs express greater competence, rewards, and career advancements (Mazzetti et al. 2014:230).

This case study outlines the ways in which gender roles persist in this given family structure and the conflicts of a single- earner family. It also demonstrates the inner workings of male entrepreneurship and the correlation to ‘workaholism’ in understanding role conflict and blurring between work and family.

#### WORK-FAMILY ISSUES

Based on this understanding of WLB, the two notable challenges within this case study include role conflict and the persistence of gendered scripts within the household.

##### *Role Conflict and Role Blurring*

Workaholism is associated with several indications of overwork which lead to physical and psychological exhaustion. This creates a negative imbalance between his work and home life (Mazzetti et al. 2014:230). According to role theory, entrepreneurs are more susceptible to work-family conflicts than those who are organizationally employed (Schjoedt 2013:50). As well, the personal use of technology enables the father to maintain work tasks at any place or time, blurring the distinctions of work and home (Mazzetti et al. 2014: 228). Role blurring is a common contributor to work-family conflicts. This is defined as the difficulty separating family

and work roles (Kay November 1, 2022). Those who participate in role blurring tend to experience greater conflict between the two roles. The permeability of role boundaries is the integration of elements from one role to another (Capitano, McAlpine, and Greenhaus 2019:134). It is where an individual is physically located in one domain but psychologically in another (Capitano et al. 2019:139). This could include engagement with work-related calls or emails while outside the workplace. For instance, the father often carries out various work tasks on his mobile phone while watching his child’s sports competitions. It can also include even thinking about work- related issues or discussions. In this case, the father tends to discuss conflicts from work at the dinner table or in family conversations. Participation in permeable role blurring tends to lead to extensive work-family conflicts, and it becomes all-consuming in all areas of one’s life (Capitano et al. 2019:135).

The presence of role conflict can be alleviated through goal-oriented action strategies in achieving WFB. Work and family goals emerge from the demands of each role, which include the specific role requirements, expectations, and norms of each domain (Hirschi, Shockley, and Zacher 2019:153-154). Through this, resources are the components which help individuals meet or cope with these demands. This includes anything perceived as helpful in achieving work and family goals (Hirschi et al. 2019:154). One must also consider the various barriers to achieving these goals. This is typically interpreted through

structural terms and job characteristics, such as flexibility (ibid).

Allocating these resources allows them to use resources such as time and energy that may help to meet goals in these two domains (Hirschi et al. 2019:155). In male entrepreneurs, studies have shown that the success of their venture and roles within the community result in greater self-esteem and overall life satisfaction. This could allow for them to utilize these resources in both the workplace and family domain (Schjoedt 2013:47). One may also choose to alleviate role conflicts by either altering these resources and barriers in a way that both work and family goals can be attained simultaneously or sequencing these goals so more time and energy can be put into one before the other (Hirschi et al. 2019:157). This may include taking a more active role in childcare so that their partner can take on additional tasks or setting boundaries that allow one to give their full attention to work-related goals first and family goals afterwards, or vice versa (ibid). These action strategies are an excellent tool in achieving work-family goals and WLB. Understanding the ever-changing demands, resources, and barriers is essential, in utilizing these strategies will increase one's ability to relieve work-family conflicts (Hirschi et al. 2019:164). Henceforth, the use of goal-oriented action strategies enhances one's likelihood of acquiring a more sustainable WLB and alleviates conflicts between work and family roles.

#### *Gendered Scripts in Work and Family*

In this case study, the mother dedicated her life to raising children, which has become an integral aspect of her

identity. Even now that her older children have started to have kids of their own, she is consistently involved in childcare. While it is a privilege to be able to do so, it also creates limitations on her life satisfaction once these kids leave home. With all her children out of the house, it has become apparent that she does not know what to do with herself. Her dedication to the upbringing of her children has restricted her from maintaining other social relationships, obligations, hobbies, interests, etcetera. As a result, the mother's social status remains significantly lower than her husband's (Sweet and Meiksins 2021:160). In addition, she receives little to no social recognition for her household efforts nor any tangible rewards or pay (ibid). In this case study, the mother finds her efforts go unacknowledged or unappreciated by her partner and starts to become an expectation by her husband. For instance, since the father works throughout the day, dinner should be ready upon his arrival home from work, or child obligations such as sports, music lessons, appointments or parent-teacher meetings are placed on the mother. Through this, she also finds that these frustrations and potential resentments toward domestic work or motherhood are experienced alone and in private (ibid).

Although being a stay-at-home mom may be considered a privilege and a choice today, it stems from the presence of gendered scripts and expectations placed on women during motherhood. The construction of gendered scripts is not dependent on the individual but on societal norms and expectations. In this case, gendered scripts are not definite but rather generated and reconstructed through

language, actions and communications and acts to simplify and guide behaviours (Tracy and Rivera 2010:5-6). This is often a result of sexist and patriarchal institutions and structures within society. Traditionally, gendered scripts demonstrate the belief that men or husbands are responsible for supporting the household economically while women are built for taking care of children (Tracy and Rivera 2019:25). For instance, people often believe that women have certain qualities or strengths in childcare that men do not (Tracy and Rivera 2019:25). Consequently, the ideals surrounding motherhood become tarnished as they restrict mothers from carrying out tasks and responsibilities outside of the home without feeling a sense of guilt or being socially reprimanded for not upholding aspects of an 'ideal mother.'

These unrehearsed scripts must be acknowledged and communicated as a barrier to the relationship between women's roles in the workplace or the family (Tracy and Rivera 2010:35). As men remain at the top of the corporate ladder, they likely do not participate in conversations about gender inequality and stigmas as they feel there is more to be risked than there is to be gained in discussion the work-life challenges of women (Tracy and Rivera 2010:6). Since they benefit from these structures and systems, they may not feel as if there is much to be changed or do not want to voice any concerns in fear of losing their position of power. They are left either unaddressed or undermined by politically correct proclamations (Tracy and Rivera 2010:7). By avoiding these problematic scripts, they will continue to exist within the language

and perceptions of gender roles in work and the home. Structuration theory determines that participation in everyday discursive actions and conversations can modify these enduring structures (Giddens cited in Tracy and Rivera 2019:35). This responsibility falls on both individuals and their institutions to identify these outdated and problematic scripts. The deconstruction of these scripts through thoughtful and honest conversations can help workspaces withdraw from aversive sexism and challenge its resistance (Tracy and Rivera 2019:35). Henceforth, in order to break down the barriers of gendered scripts within the workplace and the household, both the individual and their organizations work together in dismantling the expectations of men and women's roles in the home and work.

## CONCLUSION

This paper articulates the intersectionality of work and family and the reliance on gender norms in the workplace. The case study has examined the relationship between these gender roles and single-earner family structures. It has also unpacked the attributes of male entrepreneurs and how their work commitment and orientation contribute to higher levels of conflict between work and family domains. This paper has also outlined the challenges of role blurring and gendered scripts that persist within the working world and how this can burden divisions of labour and family obligations. As a result, maintaining goal-oriented strategies and open conversations about gender equity can

minimize the imbalances of work and family and improve one's WFC and WLB.

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## **The Impact of Advertising, Manipulation, Dimensions of Social Class and Illusion of Choice on Consumer Preferences and Behaviours**

**By: Siobhan Sadler**

As consumer culture is so prevalent in our lives, examining how external factors beyond personal choice influence our consumer preferences is compelling. Consumer culture disguises our choices as expressions of freedom and individuality when we are fed a false sense of autonomy and choice by capitalist systems (Hand 2022). Marketing shapes demand and desire by utilizing mechanisms of manipulation. Our consumer “needs” are presented to us, where products are given false meaning and value for appeal (Hand 2022). We pursue false needs, which are superimposed upon the individual to repress them and encourage complacency to capitalistic control (Cutts 2019). Finally, our consumer preferences are shaped by social class, gender, ethnicity, etc. Bourdieu’s concepts of Habitus and cultural capital help explain how taste and consumer preferences are due to internalized conditioning from one’s background (Hand 2022). In explaining what drives consumer behaviour and preferences, I find that persuasion due to marketing manipulation tactics is the most convincing argument, as it is the most influential and relevant. The evolution of new marketing tactics and the power of social media presents the idea that manufactured desires, false needs, and exposure to ads dictate our consumer preferences.

One mechanism of consumer culture is the misleading representation of consumer

preferences as expressions of personal choice and freedom. Especially after World War II, it was clear that consumer culture was a mass deception posing as freedom of choice, and this concept has since progressed (Hand 2022). Our abilities to reason have continually been repressed and we have become passive consumers, uncritical of the products presented to us and how they are represented (Hand 2022). This further represses us as we buy consumer goods that are unnecessary to our lives. This confirmation establishes that the culture industry, promoting mass production of the same things, is an “agency of anti-enlightenment, parading as enlightenment” (Hand 2022). It encourages conformity over particular reasons, despite endorsing the culture as promoting individual choice and freedom. Although there may be an increase in choices everywhere for consumption, this does not mean consumers have autonomy. We become influenced to choose what others want us too, as products are purposefully designed to appear ‘personal’ and ‘unique’. One example is companies disguising themselves as different brands, particularly the recognized brand, Nestle. Nestle is known for selling chocolate like Kit-Kats and Smarties and products like Nesquik and Nespresso (Desjardins 2016). However, Nestle makes Gerber baby food and Hot Pockets, which are less obvious to the average consumer and owns the brand's San Pellegrino and Perrier (Desjardins 2016). Even products we think have unlimited choices are all owned by the same few companies. This is a real example of the illusion of choice that is displayed to consumers. Consumer culture is represented

as a cumulation of individual choice, but it is all just a façade configured to give consumers an illusion of power.

On the other hand, Bourdieu's Habitus is essential in demonstrating the relationship between social class and consumer preferences. Habitus refers to a system of lasting dispositions instilled in an individual that integrates past experiences, perceptions, and appreciations (Hand 2022). It is an outcome of recurring social experiences that characterize class and manifest as tastes, preferences and perceptions (Bourdieu 1990:56). Habitus is evident in one's consumption, as it is a result of the conditioning that a person has endured to form their current taste and preferences. During socialization, individuals conform and accept specific patterns, behaviours, and thought mechanisms that confirm their class (Ambrasat et al. 2016). Our consumption preferences mirror our social class and lifestyle, as we have been conditioned to embody this, thus exemplifying the habitus (Ambrasat et. al 2016). An individual's consumer preferences indicate predispositions and lifestyle, thus showing how consumption is shaped by social class to Bourdieu's Habitus (Hand 2022). Habitus also explains how consumption patterns can be dictated by gender or ethnicity, as these personal characteristics condition us in different ways and predispose us to specific preferences associated with these groups.

Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital is also relevant in this discussion. Cultural capital consists of particular tastes and preferences that hold social value; thus, cultural capital's value depends on public recognition (Steward 2017). Different status

groups are defined by how they conform to this membership and the consumption practices behind each group's lifestyle (Steward 2017). Cultural capital encourages the preferences of the dominant group to be understood as valuable, reinforcing the group's status (Bourdieu 1984). Bourdieu differentiates between different forms of cultural capital by discussing embodied, institutionalized, and objectified forms. Objectified forms are material consumables like music or clothing. Embodied forms are more nuanced as they are how individuals view objectified forms and the meanings they attach to them (Steward 2017). Finally, institutionalized forms are one's qualifications, titles, or relation to the labour market. In all forms, cultural capital plays a role in shaping consumer preferences. Different status groups conform to different preferences, notably higher status groups prioritizing consumption reflecting their lifestyle. One example of this is demonstrated through celebrities and designer clothing. Due to their status, they may need or desire to wear luxury items. This is an example of cultural capital in all forms. Celebrities have titles such as 'actor', giving them access to a high-status group. Their status conditions them to consume luxury items, like designer clothing. Regardless of economic value, designer clothing holds social value because of its universal meaning. Celebrities may view it as the norm or a reflection of their high status, while the public views it as a valued privilege. This also influences other group's consumption habits as groups often "define their modes of consumption concerning others" (Steward 2017:3). Higher social

classes aim to uphold their dominant position by consuming “high-value” things. In comparison, lower social classes participate by recognizing these items as valued.

Social class also dictates consumer preferences through emulation (Hand 2022). Once the lower classes begin to copy the styles of the upper classes, they cross a boundary that the upper classes have drawn and challenge class differentiation (Hand 2022). This causes the upper classes to turn away from this style and adopt a new one, differentiating them from the masses. This cycle continues, thus shaping consumer preferences in all classes. The lower classes begin to transition to styles like the upper classes, and the upper classes must find new styles to differentiate themselves.

Finally, advertising and marketing are manipulation and mass persuasion agencies that shape our consumption. This connects to Marx’s ideas of consumer society being a development of capitalist power and control. According to Marx, capitalism creates a society where the working class feels powerless and exploited, which relates to how advertisements manipulate consumers (Zuckerfeld 2017). Our needs and desires are presented to us through advertising, thus manipulating how we participate in consumption. The evolution of advertising has shifted the messages communicated to audiences and how desire is manipulated. Advertisers in the 20th century transitioned from rational claims towards emotional appeals, focusing on freedom and pleasure, further proving that consumer desire could be sufficiently cultivated and directed through ads (Hand

2022). While the individual might consciously shape processes of decision-making, they are heavily conditioned through shared group dynamics and experiences (Dawson 2005:95; Smart 2010). The objective is to manifest and direct consumer desire, while creating false needs that can never be met. This ensures that consumers remain “reasonably dissatisfied” with what they have and are stimulated to desire a new product enough to purchase it (Dawson 2005:95; Smart 2010). Advertising allows products to be marketed as individualized and unique, giving consumers a false sense of a product’s value (Hand 2022). “The function of advertising is to refill the emptied commodity with meaning,” (Jhally 1989:221; Hand 2022). This statement exemplifies the power of advertising in convincing us that we need certain things and influencing us to believe that these products will fulfill us. Advertisements encourage consumers to view products as channels to satisfy their desires, contributing to an insatiable desire culture as we seek meaning in meaningless products (Hand 2022).

These aspects of advertising make us active but not autonomous consumers, meaning we participate in consumption without making conscious, individual decisions (Smart 2010). This is shown through the marketing of cigarettes. Despite being a severe known health risk, cigarettes continued to have high sales and popularity for years. This is due to advertising tactics manipulating the decision-making of consumers. Ads for cigarette brands included statements like, “More doctors smoke camel than any other cigarette,” or

that cigarettes promote digestion and beat stress (Smart 2010:65). The public was influenced to ignore health concerns and continue smoking due to delusional and ill-informed marketing statements. Even after the first cancer concerns and the Surgeon General's report in the 1950s and 60s, cigarette consumption remained relatively stable due to advertising manipulation (Smart 2010). This demonstrates the power of marketing in mass persuasion and driving consumption.

Finally, a significant contributor to the power of marketing is how widespread and individualized it is. Especially today, advertisements are everywhere- magazines, billboards, commercials, even in subtle forms like product placement on TV (Berger 2015). Another way that advertisements target us is through social media, as platforms like Instagram and TikTok are notorious for tracking user data (Touma 2022). Consumers are individually monitored and given targeted ads based on their searches, purchases, and interactions. This makes advertisements personalized based on their interests. Simply scrolling through Instagram can expose you to multiple personalized ads, which make advertisements almost impossible to escape. Being constantly exposed to advertisements that target your interests can influence your consumption. For instance, if you want a new necklace and search for necklaces on Google, you might get an ad for a jewelry boutique while scrolling through Instagram later. This could influence and change someone's consumption choices. This is a prime example of a method of emotional

manipulation used by advertisers to control users' consumption behaviours.

Although an illusion of choice and dimensions of social class related to Habitus and cultural capital are huge contributors, mass persuasion and manipulation due to marketing is the most powerful in determining our consumer preferences. The power of marketing is shown through its ability to create false needs, manifest desire, make emotional appeals, and control consumption, whether overtly or covertly. With social media, marketing has become even more prevalent and difficult to escape. This is significant because as social media expands, marketing tactics will continue to evolve and be a significant factor in dictating public consumption.

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## **Patterns of Technology Development and Adoption: A Case Study of the Invention of VCRs**

**By: Stella Liu**

### INTRODUCTION

The observation of the home video industry, with a particular focus on the adoption patterns of the videocassette recorder (VCR) technology, there are three sequential and transformational events that highlight the historical development of VCR: 1) the format war between Betamax and VHS; 2) a surge of interest in pornographic films, and 3) the emergence of the video retail and rental market. This essay incorporates the theoretical frameworks of the social construction of technology (SCOT), arguing that patterns of technology development and adoption are contingent upon relevant social groups' (RSGs) systems of meaning, as well as the wider sociocultural and political milieu in which artifact development takes place. However, this is not to say that social dynamics alone determine technological progress. By examining how VCRs transformed the previous public experience of viewing into a private one, this essay attempts to go beyond the social deterministic perspective of SCOT and emphasizes the influence of artifacts upon social relations.

The invention of the videocassette recorder (VCR) fundamentally changed the public understanding of what a movie was and ought to be. Before the video, movies were public experiences meant to be enjoyed in the theatres. Nowadays, it has become taken for granted for consumers to possess movies as commodified goods, and watch

them at any time, at any location, and in any format they want. The broader and more flexible home entertainment options offered by the VCRs fit well with the increasingly fragmented family life, thereby redefining intimate relationships. To understand this transformation in meanings and how technological artifacts (re)construct people's knowledge about their day-to-day lives, one needs to trace back to the development of the home video industry.

In what follows, I provide an overview of the general history of the VCRs and explain the critical pillars of SCOT that are applicable to the VCRs case. First, technological development does not follow a linear path. For technology to succeed and function correctly and appear as "black-boxed", it must address social and technical problems simultaneously. Second, I emphasize the impact of deeply institutionalized social values (i.e., technological frame) on individuals' interactions with technology. Finally, I suggest that users are active agents of technological change.

### BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

VCRs might seem antiquated and have fallen out of favour today, but they were once the staple of almost every U.S. household throughout the 1990s and 2000s. As electromechanical devices, VCRs can be used for "playback, recording, and movie rental" (Wachter and Kelly 1998:224). Therefore, while explaining the history of the VCR, it can be briefly summarized into the following defining stages.

The 1970s to 1980s was a golden decade for the home video market. The

videocassette recorder, or VCR, was dominated by two incompatible and competing formats designed exclusively for home use—Sony’s Betamax and Japan Victor Company’s (JVC) video home system (VHS). In 1975, Sony became the first to introduce a home video recorder that was easy to use, small in size and affordable for average consumers called Betamax. Betamax was advertised as a “time shifting” device, a term coined by Sony’s spokesperson Akio Morita, referring to the ease of recording television programs for immediate playback or later viewing (Wasser 2001:72). This novel feature made Betamax an instant success in the consumer realm. From 1975 to 1977, Betamax accounted for the majority of VCR production. The first VCR format battle began when JVC jumped on the bandwagon and deliberately launched a development project called Video Home System (VHS) to compete with Sony’s Betamax. Despite being the first to enter and monopolize the home market, Betamax lost market dominance to VHS by 1978 and declined after that (Cusumano, Mylonadis and Rosenbloom 1992:52).

With VHS’s victory, home videos quickly proliferated across the world. However, it was the surge of interest in pornographic films that transformed the primary use of VCRs from time-shifting to playback of prerecorded cassettes. By the 1980s, X-rated cassettes accounted for 60 to 80 percent of all prerecorded sales in Germany and Britain (Wasser 2001:94). The success of the distribution of X-rated tapes not only aided the development of the prerecorded cassette market but also inspired

people to move into mainstream feature film distribution and retailing (Greenberg 2008:5). This laid the foundation for home video distribution of prerecorded cassette market.

21st Century Fox was the first studio to release films to home video. It cooperated with Magnetic Video, allowing the company to dub films onto videotape for home use only. However, the high videotape pricing led consumers to seek ways to share the initial cost of the tapes (Wasser 2001:99). As a result, renting cassettes grew in popularity, with rental shops built all over the world. The VCRs, first conceived by consumers as an extension of tv programming, were now framed as an extension of the movie theatre.

#### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Through an analysis of the invention of the home video industry, this essay aims to delineate the patterns of technology development and adoption using concepts drawn from the SCOT approach. Specifically, I focus on the idea of interpretive flexibility, relevant social groups (RSGs), and technological frames. The social construction of technology (SCOT) has shed light on the multi-directional character of technological development. Scholars working in this theoretical field provide a critique of technological determinism by suggesting that technology development and its adoption do not follow a linear path. *Technology design* is an open and flexible process facilitated by intergroup negotiations. RSGs refer to groups of individuals who “share the same set of

meanings, attached to a specific artefact” (Pinch and Bijker 1984:414). Each RSG explicitly attributes a meaning to the artifact and comes up with a specific interpretation of its use and function. Through the eyes of different RSGs, one artifact can acquire radically different definitions—an idea called interpretive flexibility. Conflicting images of an artifact can lead to controversies during the intergroup developmental process, thus resulting in multiple possible versions and designs. In this sense, technology development is always “a process of variation and selection” by RSGs (Pinch and Bijker 1984:411). Technological frames consider the ways in which deeply institutionalized social values shape people’s interactions with technological artifacts (Klein and Kleinman 2002:30). It asks questions such as: how do cultural values impact RSGs’ expectations for certain functions of the artifacts? How might structural factors affect RSGs’ system of meaning? In short, to fully understand a technology’s application and consequences, one must place it within its specific context.

#### TECHNOLOGY AS “A PROCESS OF VARIATION AND SELECTION”

Technology development and adoption is a thoroughly contingent and heterogeneous process. By attributing meanings to the artifact and coming up with specific interpretations of its use and function, RSGs produce multiple possible versions and designs of the artifacts, thus becoming agents of technological change. When entering the market, Betamax was advertised by Sony and widely adopted by consumers as a “time shifter” or “a

complement to the television” (Greenberg 2008:2). In his autobiography, Akin Morita, the chairman of Sony, articulated his dissatisfaction with “the TV networks [having] total control over people’s lives and [he] felt that people should have the option of seeing a program when they chose” (Wasser 2001:72). By making time shifting the central focus of its advertising campaign, Sony promised freedom and choices to its users. Instead of complying with the fixed broadcast schedules set by TV executives, Betamax users could now assert control of their time. Since both RSGs came to a consensus that the artifact worked for them, no further design modifications of Betamax occur, and Betamax reigned supreme in the home video market for the first four years.

However, one major consumer frustration began to mount. Morita insisted on producing a convenient, hand-sized cassette that would significantly constrain Betamax’s tape length to only one hour. Users complained about not being able to record a televised movie or an American football game in its entirety and had new expectations for the machine. The artifact now posed a problem to the two RSGs. Conflicting demands and interpretations of Betamax (i.e., portability versus applicability) led to design modifications. JVC was quick to seize this chance. In 1977, VHS was marketed in the U.S. at a price \$300 less than Betamax, with a bulkier tape that allowed for recordings of up to four hours (Wasser 2001:73). Accompanied by the mainstreaming of X-rated tapes, there was a growing demand for the purchase and rental of prerecorded cassettes. JVC immediately took over the market, making a



wide range of movies in the VHS format available in video rental stores.

In comparison, the choice of movies in Beta format was limited. As an increasing number of users were drawn to VHS, retail outlets for tape rental stocked tapes in the format being adopted by most users. New VCR purchasers, in turn, brought the video recorder that offered them the broadest access to prerecorded tapes. Economists term the development of this pattern as “network externalities”, referring to the growth of value commodity as the number of people consuming the same kind of commodity increases (Cusumano, Mylonadis and Rosenbloom 1992:57). Since then, the VHS became the dominant format and enjoyed steadily increasing sales in the US home video market.

At the time, Betamax was argued to be technically superior in image production and recording quality to VHS. The format war between Betamax and VHS had laid bare the internal contradictions and theoretical inconsistencies of technological determinism, particularly the idea that “the best technology always wins out”. SCOT argues that what constitutes the best technology depends on its social meanings for RSGs. SCOT’s principle of symmetry suggests that to explain the success of VHS, one needs to put forward sociological explanations, rather than exclusively attributing VHS’s success to its inherent technological superiority. VHS benefited from the mistakes and inflexibility of the first mover Betamax by catering to consumer preferences. It was more user-friendly because of its lower retail price, longer recording time, and wider movie

selection. Despite its larger and cumbersome design, it might seem counterintuitive that users would prefer the VHS cassette. However, SCOT suggests that VHS was intentionally designed in this way because it allowed for increased recording time. These features were exactly what people wanted at the time, and represented a solution to a particular problem. Technological artifacts come into being and are accepted through a series of complex social processes, largely due to the efforts of particular RSGs. Therefore, technology development is always “a process of variation and selection” by RSGs (Pinch and Bijker 1984:411).

#### STRUCTURAL INFLUENCES SHAPE TECHNOLOGICAL DESIGN

Here, it should be noted that I am not suggesting an agency-centric approach to technology. The SCOT perspective has privileged RSGs (or, in general, human actions) in their ability to shape technology. However, the underlying assumptions, expectations and knowledge that RSGs share about a particular artifact, which shapes their subsequent actions toward it, are structured by the specific social context within which members have been socialized. In other words, the consumer's willingness to buy VCRs as they first came out on the market was driven by broader macro-sociological factors. That is, the idea of work intensification.

Work intensification is described as putting more effort at work because of extra workload or longer working hours. From 1971 to 1992, the number of Americans who felt they had less free time increased by 22% (Wasser 2001:78). The subjective feeling of

time pressure and hurriedness coincided with an emphasis on capitalist consumerism—individuals felt pressured to keep up with the mainstream affluent consumerist lifestyle. Schor (1998:122) argued that “people care strongly...about how their consumption level compares to that of others”. They worked longer hours to earn additional income to improve their living standards, but everyone else did the same. As a result, individuals relative position remained unchanged, and the benefits associated with higher levels of consumption “dissipated because they [were] generalized” (Schor 1998:122).

At the same time, the proportion of persons working very long workweeks was on the rise (Rones, Iig and Gardner 1997:3). The absolute increase in work hours was a result of a series of political and economic changes that took place after the end of the Golden Age (i.e., the period from 1950 to 1970). Spike in oil prices, rising inflation rate, high levels of indebtedness, heightened international competition, and the shift from Keynesianism to Neoliberalism had put enormous pressure on corporate businesses to cut costs and increase profit margins. Not surprisingly, workers would disproportionately bear the burden (Schor 1991:80). While the productivity of American workers increased significantly, workers saw their real wages fall and were constantly living under the threat of unemployment (Schor 1991:80). They were forced to work longer hours or take up more jobs in order to maintain their current standards of living.

Wasser (2001:79) suggests a direct relationship exists between the way the

subjective experience of work intensifies and the consumer's desire to own a VCR. VCRs promised the freedom of choice. Sony's advertising agency promoted Betamax as “a subversive machine that would take control away from programmers and give it back to the consumers” (Wasser 2001:83). In general, VCRs offered two kinds of choices. Consumers could rearrange the broadcast programming schedule to fit their lifestyles or they can make decisions on what movies and tv shows to watch (Wachter and Kelly 1998:225). By offering product choice and time flexibility at once, VCRs created and reinforced a sense of personal sovereignty and autonomy. More importantly, VCRs appeared to be a perfect match for a new lifestyle characterized by flexible work arrangements.

Sony's campaign strategy for Betamax and the public willingness to buy VCRs was informed by the broader social and political circumstances at the time. It bred the desire for individual autonomy and freedom of choice. The effects of the technological frame on technology development, usage and implementation are also evident in the case of video renting. By 1982, rental usage became the VCR's primary function. The changing use patterns of VCRs were made possible by legal factors. The first sale doctrine of the Copyright Act explicitly states that an individual who purchases a legal copy is entitled “to sell, display or otherwise dispose of that particular copy, notwithstanding the interests of the copyright owner” (The United States Department of Justice 2020). It was legitimate to rent videotapes without the permission of the copyright owners. Law

enforcement allowed rental activities to take place, allowing the retail and rental market to flourish. At this point, there was nothing that film companies could do to prevent people from buying, selling and renting cassettes. Video rental stores started springing up all over the U.S. and immediately outpaced the number of movie theatre screens by 1986 (Wasser 2001:102). Patterns of technology development and adoption are subject to RSGs' whims and wills, whose values and beliefs are, in turn, shaped by the wider social context. RSGs' interactions with machines reflect their assumptions, beliefs and knowledge, including particular rules, rituals, and customary practices that they are subject to under a shared technological frame.

#### USERS AS ACTIVE AGENTS OF SOCIO-TECHNICAL CHANGE

The VCRs case represents a relatively rare case in which those routinely marginalized or excluded from technological domains and activities have made themselves empirically discernible and actively produced an impact on artifact development. When Betamax hit the market in 1975, it had a high price tag of over \$2000. The projected VCR users were obviously "affluent and accepted the dominant consumerist ethos" (Wasser 2001:91). However, after the mid-1980s, VCR ownership quickly expanded from the economically privileged to the working class. The change in the target market could not be solely attributed to a higher desirability of time restructuring among those who worked unsociable hours. Instead, it was a direct result of the robust rental

market. 21st Century Fox was the first studio to recognize prerecorded cassettes' market value. It sold movies on cassettes for consumer sales by partnering with the third-party product distributor Magnetic Studio. Executives imagined that consumers were film buffs willing to pay hundreds of dollars to collect film prints and believed that they "would view the tapes again and again and should pay accordingly" (Wasser 2001:97). As a result, the tapes were high-priced, ranging from \$50 to \$70 per cassette.

In comparison, the average movie ticket cost at the time was roughly \$2.23. Such a price differential provided the perfect incentive for renting activities. Different from music and paintings, whose hedonic values increased with higher levels of familiarity, appreciation of movies primarily derived from a sense of novelty. Since most people expect to watch a movie once, it did not make sense for them to pay 20 times the ticket price to watch a movie at home. What ended up happening was that people sought alternative ways to share the initial, one-time expense of the tape through rental or other exchange activities. The Copy Right Act cleared the way for a burgeoning rental trade. As sales and rentals of prerecorded cassettes became standard practices, the predominant use of VCRs changed from time-shifting to playing rented or purchased tapes. The rental market and cassette sales became strongly associated with the working class. Wasser (2001:99) refers to this changing pattern of video use and the development of the rental market as both a "subversion" and "a grassroots movement" whereby working-class individuals actively resisted, modified, and selectively adopted

technologies based on their consumption patterns and preferences.

#### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

So far, this essay has applied the conceptual framework of SCOT in explaining the historical development, usage, implementation, and trajectories of VCRs. This essay offers three critical implications. First, technology development is always a process of variation and selection by RSGs. The success of an artifact does not stem from its intrinsic technical superiority. Instead, an artifact works because the set of RSGs accepts that it works for them and views it as viable. Second, RSG's interaction with machines highly depends on the local context in which artifact development occurs. Third, far from passive recipients of technology, consumers actively resist, modify, and selectively adopt technologies based on their consumption patterns and preferences.

VCRs, once viewed as an extension to the television that enhanced established viewing patterns, were later adopted as a medium for movie rental. This was not a mere physical and technical transformation since the technical affordances of VCRs allowed both uses to be possible when they were introduced to the market. Rather, it symbolizes a transformation in meaning and the construction of new knowledge about the world. The introduction of VCRs into the domestic sphere symbolized the beginning of a time-shifting culture, where works become increasingly flexible and fragmented, and modern life, in general, becomes more hurried and unpredictable. VCRs have fundamentally changed people's

perceptions of movies from a shared experience to a private one and from a social activity to materialized goods. By changing how people interact with televisions and movies, and possibly with each other, technology actively makes a difference in the world and thus practices agency.

The case of VCRs illustrates the potential of technological artifacts in shaping individuals viewing experiences. Future research can focus on movie theatres during the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to lockdown measures and social distancing rules, major new movies were forced to release on online streaming services. With the ease of watching online movies at home (affluent individuals even have their family cinemas), will movie theatres become obsolete? Why and why not? More importantly, how can we apply the concepts of SCOT to explain contemporary technology development and adoption patterns?

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**Platform Capitalism has Fostered a New Era of Struggle and Inequality for Marginalized Groups and Globalization**  
**By: Tatyana Grandmaitre-Saint-Pierre**

With technology quickly permeating every aspect of social life, many have become dependent on technology and the access, flexibility, and simplicity it provides in everyday activities. However, this dependency has begun to extend beyond leisure activities into people's livelihoods and ability to participate in the workforce as their parents or older peers have. Despite the rising popularity of the gig economy as a result of transnational mega-corporations that avoid the legal protectionist measures in place for workers, platform capitalism has led to a rise in inequality among marginalized populations. As job precarity rises from the gig economy, significant social welfare issues, such as housing or food insecurity, also emerge because many who rely on a steady income and employment benefits suddenly find themselves unable to find work with the same stability that existed a decade ago. Guided by an examination of how these new inequalities interact and conflict with existing inequalities, the following essay will, first, use existing literature and arguments to define and contextualize platform capitalism and the gig economy and, second, explore responses to these emerging economies and the potential issues they carry for worker's rights, labour regulation, and job security. After providing context and definition to these issues, this essay will then argue that the benefits reaped from platform capitalism and the gig

economy do not outweigh the dangerous issues present in these systems and explore potential ways of moving forward.

Beginning with a definition of platform capitalism and the gig economy is necessary as one of the central issues governments, lobbyists, and other policymakers face when attempting to regulate these systems is this lack of definition in the industry. The gig economy is made possible by platform capitalism which is, quite literally, a platform that removes the employer-employee barrier, allowing people seeking services to be easily connected to service providers (Kumar, 2021: para. 4). These services are not novelties; they include services that have existed for decades, such as taxi rides now provided through Uber or personal shopping hosted on North America's Instacart.

Building off of platform capitalism, the term 'gig economy' only started gaining traction in mid-2017, with numerous academic definitions emerging in the last two years (Montgomery & Baglioni, 2020:1015). Of these, Frank Pasquale provides a detailed description of how gig economies began as a result of platform capitalism and what it means to be an employee in today's gig economy. The gig economy is a "peer economy" that promises to increase people's opportunities to work and their ability to diversify their work throughout their day by having multiple short-term, highly flexible 'gigs' or services they provide (Pasquale, 2016:312). These gigs are made possible by platform capitalism. Anyone with the correct skillset or availability can participate as often as they want without struggling to reach a

reliable customer base. This is accomplished by the 'middle-man' - platform companies.

Unfortunately, while platform capitalism and the rise of a gig economy seem promising for a generation of work flexibility and job availability, these industries are fostering waves of precarity and eliminating job stability. Precarious employment refers to employment that could be quickly terminated, does not provide consistent or livable wages, or that lacks protectionist measures for workers (Cavallini & Avogaro, 2019). Platform economies consistently shift "economic risk" from corporations, investors, and entrepreneurs onto workers themselves (Webster, 2020:514). As such, the moment that any factor relating to the precarious nature of these 'independent contractors' employment begins to emerge, such as fewer service requests, lowered wages, or other factors, they experience the burden of instability while the corporations themselves continue to find new contractors and provide 'their' services to 'their' customers through their platforms.

Precarity - whether explored with a particular focus on employment or extended to consider food, housing, income, or other precarity - also has a disproportionate impact on already marginalized communities. Pasquale argues that platform capitalism only worsens existing inequalities, widening wage gaps and limiting people's access to opportunities as a result (Pasquale, 2016:311). Pasquale uses Sara Kessler, a 'TaskRabbit' (a coined phrase referring to those who provide services through the American company of the same name), as a case study for these

widening inequalities, pointing out that the median income for a TaskRabbit in Kessler's neighbourhood was 120\$ - adding up to 480\$ a month (ibid:313). Even at face value, it is clear that this precarious work and its inconsistent wages do not provide enough stability or compensation for freelancers to survive off of that income alone, which is when the gig economy comes into play; people are expected to hold down two, three, or even more of these 'gigs' to survive, all while being denied benefits, pensions, or other compensation beyond income that traditional, secure employment provides. It is not surprising that, given this fact, individuals living in poverty, especially those with racialized identities, are disproportionately harmed by this economy.

With 20% of all racialized families, most prominently Indigenous and Black households, living in poverty in Canada (four times as many as non-racialized families), precarious work has a severe impact on their livelihoods (Canada Without Poverty, 2021). Platform capitalism only exacerbates the effects of poverty in these groups as the gig economy leads to the disappearance of benefits, loss of steady wages, and disregard for worker's rights movements to implement higher wages and improve other issues in the employer-employee relationship of the gig economy. Racialized minorities are already at a very high risk of or are already living in poverty. Yet, the gig economy yields a myriad of new social issues, and the question of who is responsible for reducing these disparities - whether that be corporations, state

governments, or individuals - has not yet been answered.

Currently, Canada's government offers some form of social assistance at every level, such as employment insurance (a benefit to accommodate job loss or temporary leave), education grants, or subsidized housing (Raymond, 2020). However, these still do not replace or compare to the income and benefits available in traditional employment. Many income welfare supplements are lost once household income reaches a certain point - a bar often far lower than a living wage. As such, people may come to rely on these forms of precarious work either because it is the only thing available or because it permits them to continue surviving with that small income combined with social welfare. These communities, then, live in threat of losing social support, streaming low-income, marginalized individuals into these precarious forms of work. The reason these individuals may be allowed to receive social welfare as platform corporations do not 'employ' people - but instead provide the means for a "self-employed workforce" of independent contractors managed by their platforms and algorithms to connect with consumers (Walker & Flemings & Berti, 2021:24,28). Thus, while a lack of definition in and around the gig economy and platform capitalism may benefit some in this case, people would not find it necessary to use this small loophole in the system if activists and policymakers were able to bolster the workers' rights movements in this industry with more certain definitions and conclusions.

The issue of what it means to be an employee, and holding employee status, is one of the most significant barriers faced by workers and activists in their reach for equality and fairness. Overall, companies are largely against what many have begun to call "classification legislation," or legislation that would require platform corporations to classify their 'contractors' and employees, subsequently mandating that each of these employees is given the minimum wages, benefits, contracts, and overall job security in accordance to their country's labour laws (Shead, 2021: para. 2, 8). If workers are to be protected and greater stability and better livelihoods are to be provided, these gig employees must no longer be viewed as disposable labour by their corporate employers, and companies must be held accountable to their business ventures as governments must be to their citizens (Lacy, 2021: para. 6). Doing so would begin to shift the financial risks of the gig economy back on to corporations and governments as opposed to individuals and pave the way for workers' rights to implement protectionist measures to reduce the strain the gig economy and platform capitalism has placed on social welfare systems.

Despite recognizing that definition, equality, and accountability are all necessary measures to creating a more worker-sustainable gig economy, there is an additional factor upholding these systems: neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is an economic ideology that praises commodification (turning goods and services into purchasable commodities), privatization (when private corporations take only government responsibilities, like healthcare), free trade,



and a lack of government interference in the economy (Monbiot, 2016). Ideological tenets such as these allow platform corporations to freely exploit labour and lax regulations while expanding their enterprises on an international scale, as neoliberalism is often used as a standard for economic development in many countries, both developed and undeveloped (ibid). The result of the extreme neoliberalism emerging today is a new ruling class - the corporate semi-sovereign, a class of mega-corporations (the Apples, Ubers, Facebooks, and similars of the world) that skirt regulations and employ incredible lobbying power to the point that they are hardly under the command of any one nation or set of laws (Pasquale, 2016:313). This new class and exploitation of power and transnationalism widens existing disparities, as corporations do not concern themselves with the labour laws or regulations in place to protect workers, and they are not held accountable in any significant way as government intervention is frowned upon in this neoliberal context. As such, these corporate semi-sovereigns continue to expand, oblivious to borders or limitations as they promise a revolutionary era of flexible, accessible work through their platforms.

Scholars that ascribe to globalization theory argue that this globalization and the international networking of neoliberal economies that foster competition and prioritize economic growth, especially considering a rise in technology exemplified by these platforms, will ultimately reduce poverty (Wade & Wolfe, 2004:444). However, there is an overall lack of

literature on the international implications of platform capitalism, even if the way that the gig economy systematically harms marginalized groups and fosters instability has been relatively well documented. Although research itself is not available, there have been many calls for change in media and journalism, with some governments beginning to bring potential legislation to the table. One such example is Sara Mojtehedzadeh's article that examines how labour advocates emphasize gig employees should be granted 'full employee' status, and that proposed legislation in Ontario that would offer them minimum wage and termination pay is a step forwards but remains inadequate (Mojtehedzadeh, 2021: para. 4-5). These calls to action and regulation will influence and potentially reduce poverty and instability, especially the disproportionate disadvantages experienced among marginalized groups, as globalization itself is now threatened by the gig economy and corporate sovereignty and can no longer accomplish the poverty reduction assumed of it by past scholars.

Ultimately, there is no real 'solution' to the gig economy. It will not disappear, and it will not change without tighter regulations and a reduction in corporate sovereignty stemming from neoliberalism. Because there is currently no way to 'solve' the issues brought about by platform capitalism, recognizing how emerging economies like the gig economy can have profound disproportionate harm on marginalized communities is crucial. The goal of this recognition and this essay is to spark interest in developing research and

gathering data on this topic that has yet to be explored extensively. In doing so, workers' rights advocates and journalists can better call for change and regulation, emphasizing the importance of holding corporations and governments accountable for the security and livelihoods of individuals. Classification legislation and overall regulation of corporate entities will inform new ways of using the technology that is currently exploiting individuals and threatening the positive nature of globalization. The overarching goal of new legislation and better recognition of the nuanced ways that technologies and new economies have permeated every aspect of social life is to foster an era where technology is a tool for equality and accessibility in their true forms as opposed to the 'accessibility' of exploitation currently promised by transnational corporations.

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# Sociology Survival Guide

A FEW QUOTES FROM SOCIOLOGY STUDENTS THAT WILL GET YOUR BRAINSTORMING...

“It’s not that you dislike having Monday 8:30am lectures, you have been socially constructed to“ - Ashley Ristau, Sociology Major, Certificate in Business

“If you have the chance to take any of Dr.Kay’s class, get on it early cause they’re unforgettable”  
- Elisa Epifano, Sociology Major

“Create a routine and plan out your schedule because professors make assignments due across all classes in the same week“ - Jade Paganelli, Sociology Major

”Knowing how to properly read an assigned reading or article will save you a lot of time and it’s way more effective when it comes to study habits“ - Matthew Sousa, Sociology Major

# A Message from the Editor

## DEAR READERS,

I want to thank all those involved in making this publication possible for the fourth year in a row and my second year taking on an editorial role in association with the Sociology Student Council. Without the help from everybody who spread the word about Phenomena on social media and through in-class presentations, we wouldn't have received an overwhelming amount of high-quality and professional submissions that have made this journal something amazing. The selected pieces best reflect the aims of our journal, offering a diversity of ideas and connections that display an array of sociology undergrads.

This journal allows students to share their opinions with a highly intelligent and capable audience beyond their classrooms, so other students and faculty members can absorb their unique research ideas. Phenomena will continue to serve as a platform for students to establish community and further immerse themselves academically in this field. While reading this journal, I hope you enjoy and appreciate the little details and essays within, as creating this journal invoked great passion and effort on our behalf.

SINCERELY,

BRYN SULTANA, JOURNAL EDITOR

Are you interested in the Sociology Student Council or becoming a  
Journal Editor for Phenomena  
for the 2023/2024 year?

Please contact [socy.dsc@asus.queensu.ca](mailto:socy.dsc@asus.queensu.ca) or  
DM our Instagram page [@sociologydsc](https://www.instagram.com/sociologydsc)

Do you have questions or comments about this year's Spring 2023  
publication?

Please contact [phenomena.queensu@gmail.ca](mailto:phenomena.queensu@gmail.ca)

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