LA SOCIOLOGÍA DE CSUN

"We need critical hope the way
a fish needs unpolluted water."
Paulo Freire (1994)

LA SOCIOLOGÍA DE CSUN:

A Spotlight on Student Sociologists

VOLUME TWO: FALL 2024

CREATED BY STUDENTS AT THE

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AT CSU NORTHRIDGE

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Note from the
EDITOR

Thank you for joining us for another edition of La Sociología de CSUN! Once again, I had the privilege of working with some of our extremely talented students in the CSU Northridge sociology department. In one of my courses this term, I had a conversation with my professor and my peers discussing which sociologists we would have liked to meet in person. Answers varied, from the classics like Marx and Engles to more contemporary sociologists such as Bourdieu. Talking to these theorists would certainly have been a privilege, and I hope I am not alone in thinking that their perspectives on current events would be fascinating to hear. But we cannot know exactly what they would think, we can only reread those theories that have proven to be vital to the continuation of our field.

I tell this story because it made me think about how lucky I am to be surrounded by people so passionate about sociology and who, someday, people will say they wished they had the opportunity to speak to. While I would have loved to have the ability to sit with the likes of Durkheim over a cup of coffee, what I do not want to take for granted is the opportunity that I have every week to discuss the current state of sociology with students who are equally as excited as I am. Even when I am in undergraduate classes, either as a silent ISA observer or as a guest speaker, I am surrounded by sociologists in training who will no doubt become incredible contributors to the field.

This newest edition of La Sociología de CSUN hopes to be an ode to that heartfelt and energetic approach to sociology that I am fortunate enough to be surrounded by. This edition is filled with in-depth analyses of classical theorists, thoughts on the potential of social media, and even new theories. I hope you enjoy reading these students' works as much as I enjoyed working with them.

ENJOY THIS SECOND EDITION OF LA SOCIOLOGÍA DE CSUN,
SOPHIA TAYLOR
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY NORTHRIDGE

BREAKING THE STIGMA:

An Analysis of How Mental Health and Social Inequality Influence One Another

BY MARISSA TOLBERT
GRADUATE STUDENT
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

Introduction

Throughout the semester, we have covered multiple theorists that addressed social inequality as it persisted in their time. For instance, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Thorstein Veblen analyzed social inequality as it existed for women, African Americans, and the working class respectfully. Their analysis allowed us to see how different aspects of society can positively and negatively affect one another to create a perpetual state of social inequality. Though there are a variety of ways to approach social inequality as it exists in modern society, the following paper will analyze social inequality as a result of mental health status and three main variables along with three equally important sub-variables that can potentially affect in numerous ways.

Intersectional Identity Differences

A person's intersecting identities influence how society perceives them as an individual; these include, but are not limited to sex, gender, age, and race. In the patriarchal society of the United States, as well as in many other places around the world, men are at the top of the hierarchy of power; because of this, they have the most influence on how other sexes and genders are treated. In the racial hierarchy, Caucasian individuals hold the most power and with age. Within any of these hierarchical examples, the lower one rests on the totem pole, the less power and influence they will hold, which is made more when thinking intersectionally.

By applying intersectionality to the healthcare system, specifically the psychological healthcare system, we can especially see how intersectional identities affect how medical professionals treat their patients. The lower you sit within the hierarchy, the less your doctor is likely to take you seriously. For instance, African American women often die as a result of doctors and nurses that do not take their health concerns seriously due to racialized medical systems designed to discriminate against that population. These systems also affect the field of mental health, which is made more difficult because there are also

not many tests directly related to the physical, or visible, symptoms of these illnesses. Because of this, even close family and friends may ignore invisible symptoms in favor of physical symptoms that often do not manifest in relation to mental illness. Overall, the further removed one's intersectional identities are from that of the ruling classes, the more difficult it will be for a patient to receive proper psychological healthcare.

Stigma of Mental Healthcare Services

In addition to the difficulties mentioned in the previous section, there is a stigma that surrounds both mental illness and mental healthcare services as a whole. While there are those that believe wholeheartedly that mental health is a legitimate health concern, there are others that believe those with mental illness are instead exhibiting a variety of negative traits, including laziness and craziness (in the stereotypical sense of the word); furthermore, people with mental illness, regardless of their actual demeanor, are deemed to be dangerous and broken. At the same time, the stigma that people with mental illness are subjected to can negatively impact their educational and career opportunities in a variety of ways.

In academia, cliques of students can act negatively towards a specific student dealing with mental illness by ostracizing and "othering" them. Another important aspect of this is the same harmful treatment by faculty members, including professors and such. In these cases, the student with the mental illness will be negatively affected in regard to their sociability skills. By ostracizing this student, such outcomes can include an increase in the unfavorable symptoms of their mental illness, as well as a decrease in their self-esteem and levels of self-worth. Furthermore, continuous ostracism can also affect one's sociability skills because, as stated with the labeling theory, the individual will begin to believe that this behavior being exhibited toward them is well-deserved. They will begin internalizing the ostracism and "othering," and this will cause further negative impacts on their mental health. Overall, this will be detrimental to the possibility of their mental health improving, causing an everlasting cycle of deterioration of their mental health.

In the workplace, discrimination from one's boss can happen both indirectly and directly, much like professors, as covered in the previous paragraph. An example of indirect workplace discrimination based on one's mental health status can be seen when there are workplace policies written in such a way that excludes the employee quietly. For instance, there are medications out there that cause drowsiness; if this employee is required to work extended shifts into the night or for long periods of time that generally include when they are supposed to take this medication, this can be seen as indirect discrimination. A more direct form of discrimination can be seen when employees with mental illnesses are skipped over for promotions and are treated poorly by their bosses because of their diagnoses.

Economic Affluence

Regarding mental health, economic affluence is one of the largest variables that affects the entire path model. This is because it has both negative and positive influences on each individual variable; it is especially the case when looked at in conjunction with one's

intersectional identity differences. To begin with those at the top of the overall intersectional identity hierarchy hold more material wealth because of the opportunities that they are afforded to. With this comes better educational and career opportunities and more opportunities to create friendships and familial relationships that can aid in improving mental health.

These relationships come with easier access to educational institutions and better quality workplaces; these types of workplaces will be geared more towards long term career-seekers as opposed to jobs with quick employee turnarounds. In these instances, it may be more difficult to remain on top of one's sociability skills because of the extra effort and energy they must put in to continuously make these new relationships; this is because of the recurring times of low energy-related symptoms associated with mental illness.

People with mental illness that have easier and continuous access to wealth will also have better psychological healthcare outcomes. These are the patients that can afford the best therapists, medications, and psychological healthcare approaches. The more money one has, the better healthcare treatments they will have, including psychotherapy and support groups, as well as, but definitely not limited to, overall support networks but in and out of the healthcare system. Finally, those in positions to maintain their methods of wealth gain will be able to continue accessing psychological healthcare.

Opposite of this are those that may have more difficulty gaining varying levels of economic affluency. A major impact that this can have is a stop and restart approach to their healthcare. With every time that they must restart healthcare (oftentimes with a new set of professionals), they are losing the progress that they may have already made. This comes as a result, for example, of having to reshare their same mental health and medical history with new therapists. Those that may not be in a position to work a salaried job may experience high turnover rates and have to move jobs often. They may also have to work multiple jobs to stay afloat in all aspects of their life.

This not only impacts their economic status, but interrupts all variables of the path model. The lower status their jobs may have, the less healthcare benefits may be given. Working class related jobs will often stigmatize mental illness as laziness, especially when the employee is repeatedly missing work because of especially bad mental health days. People dealing with mental illness, working multiple jobs, and trying to balance an academic career may can, overall, be stretched more thinly than those socially above them because they lack the easy access that the more affluent have to necessary resources related to the path models variables.

To reiterate, social inequality results from a lack of either full or limited access to economic include. In addition to being a patriarchal society, the United States is also capitalistic; without money to buy goods and services, it will be more difficult to survive.

Propositions

The previous points can be summarized in propositional form:

1. Intersectional identity differences influence how a person will be treated because there is a hierarchy of value placed on each individual intersectional identity.

   a. Various combinations of these identities influence how healthcare professionals use diagnostic materials to aid in diagnoses.

      i. Specific combinations of these identities will negatively affect a person's access to psychological help.

2. The stigma of mental healthcare services and mental illness itself can negatively impact one's educational and career opportunities because it can result in ostracism, discrimination, and "othering".

   a. This in turn negatively affects one's sociability skills as a result of the labeling theory, because then the person believes that they deserve the ostracism, discrimination, and "othering" that is being directed towards them.

3. One's economic affluence can have either a positive or negative effect on their access to educational and career opportunities, social capital, and psychological healthcare services.

   a. Someone who has more wealth will have an easier time obtaining better educational and career opportunities, which can be beneficial because:

      i. It leads to more opportunities for socializing and creating non-material wealth for themselves through both familial and friend relationships. Better relationships with others can help reduce mental illness factors.

      ii. It leads to more opportunities for wealth gain which, in turn, increases one's access to resources that can get them necessary mental healthcare.

   b. Someone who has a low amount of wealth will have a difficult time accessing the psychological care that they need, leading to a further negative impact on their mental health.

Conclusion

There are many ways to identify and analyze social inequality as it exists in modern society. One of the root causes of social inequality in the case of this path model on social inequality as it relates to mental health and mental illness is differences in intersectional identities. Based on combinations of these intersections, society will treat you differently. If you are Caucasian, you will hold more power than someone that is African American or Latino. A man holds more social status than a woman; cisgender individuals hold more power than the gender non-conforming.

When it comes to mental health, the higher you are on the intersectional identity totem

pole, the more seriously your psychological healthcare claims will be taken to begin with. Though educational and career opportunities can lead to an increase in economic affluence, it is often that case that you need the economic affluence to make it far in either case; this can causes problems for those with mental illness that have trouble staying on top of daily educational or career responsibilities. Ultimately, those that are further removed from the top of the hierarchy that our society has created are going to face more difficulties taking care of their mental health. This results in varying levels of potential social inequality based on one's mental health as seen in our society today.

How Mental Health Influences Levels of Social Inequity Path Model

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┌─────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────┐
│ Access to       │───────▶│ Sociability     │◀───────│ Economic        │
│ Psychological   │        │ Skills and      │        │ Affluence       │
│ Care            │        │ Opportunities   │        │                 │
└─────────────────┘        └─────────────────┘        └─────────────────┘

┌─────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────┐
│ Stigma of       │───────▶│ Educational     │◀─── Economic Affluence
│ Mental          │        │ and Career      │
│ Healthcare      │        │ Opportunities   │
│ Services        │        │                 │
└─────────────────┘        └─────────────────┘

┌─────────────────┐                                   ┌─────────────────┐
│ Intersectional  │──────────────────────────────────▶│ Potential for   │
│ Identity        │                                   │ Social          │
│ Differences     │                                   │ Inequality      │
└─────────────────┘                                   │ Based on One's  │
                                                       │ Mental Health   │
                                                       └─────────────────┘
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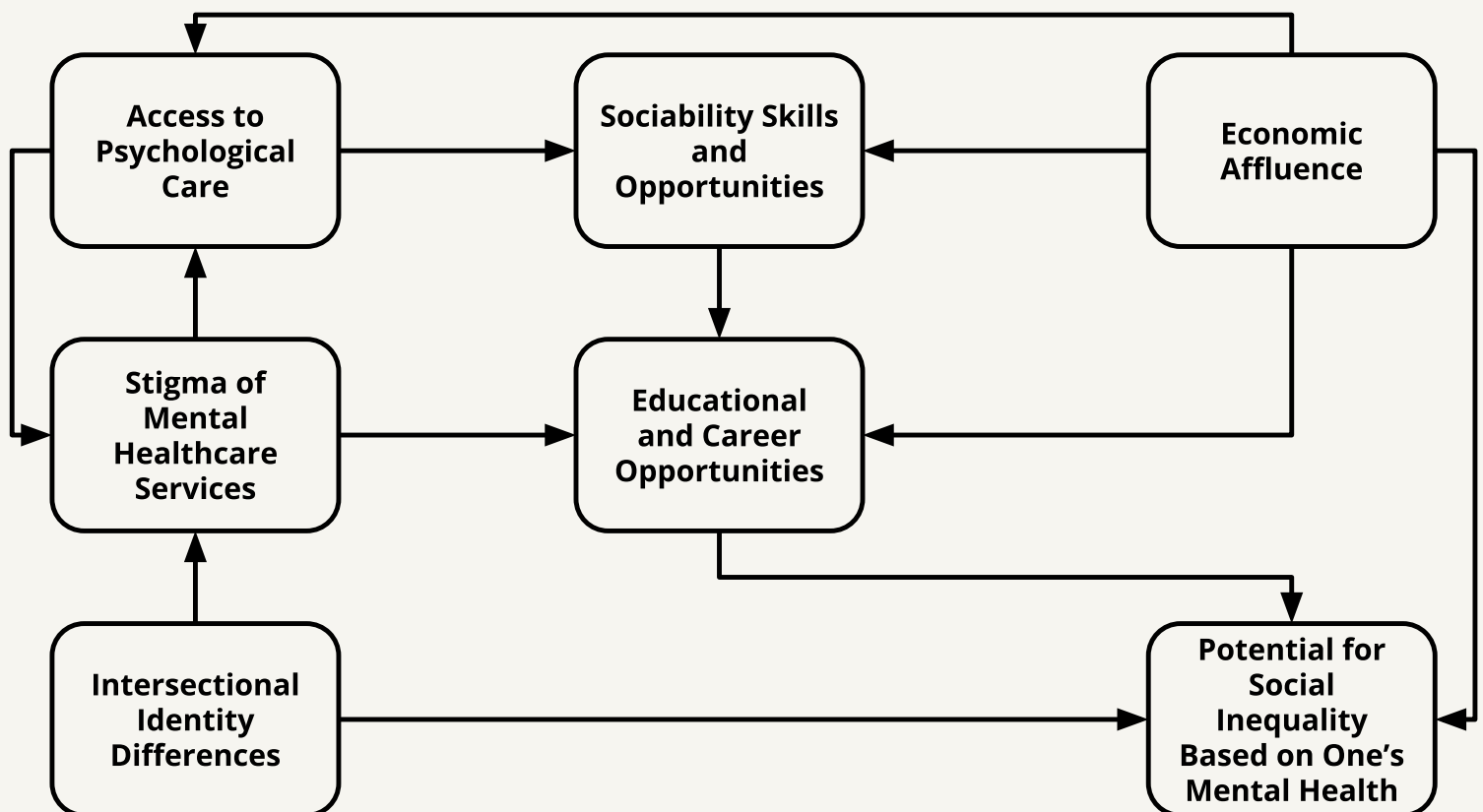
GENDERED VIOLENCE AND AI:

A Look at How AI is Used to Perpetrate Violence Against Women

BY SOPHIA TAYLOR
GRADUATE STUDENT
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

To be raised as a woman is to be raised in a society that values women only so much as they can provide for the men around them. Your body is not your own, it exists outside of you, a symbol of pleasure that is made political for the sin of existing. It is hard not to believe that, in some men's eyes, there is a wish that the person behind the woman was gone, leaving only a shell of a body that can be used and abused as needed. Huge strides have been made in women's and Assigned Female At Birth (AFAB) people's rights and autonomy, and yet as technology advances, there are advances in ways that women are systematically made into objects once more.

Perhaps nothing encapsulates this so much as the recent trend of Artificial Intelligence (AI) being used as a tool for creating pornographic images of unsuspecting women and young girls (Alaimo 2024). This trend sees largely men and young boys using this technology to make and distribute pornography of their peers, often other young girls. These deep fakes are not harmless pranks, as they are often written off as, but, in fact, have very clear victims who must live with this intrusion on their privacy and who now have to deal with the repercussions of the actions of those around them.

Judith Butler posits gender as a performance, one that we build upon through not just our own lived experiences, but through the entire history of gender that came before us (Butler 1988:521). It must be reified constantly to force people into very narrow views of identity, which are meant to serve larger systems of domination. If we consider this to be true, then we must be critical of the ways our actions and the actions of others replicate these systems. We must also be critical of how these systems influence our actions in return. When those boys committed acts of targeted gendered violence against their peers, they felt entitled by these systems to do so. Years of a gendered upbringing and a history of gendered violence in the United States and around the world lead them to believe that creating pornographic images of their peers was an act that they were entitled to. Their status as young men made them believe that

women's bodies were not extremely private, but were for shared public amusement. Not only did this system impact the ways these young men felt they could act, but it also impacted the ways that those around them reacted. They were given a slap on the wrist and written off as simply young men pulling a harmless prank. Masculinity as the dominant force then takes higher priority over the privacy and rights of the young women.

If boys are taught that they inherently deserve a position of domination over their AFAB peers, then AFAB students are also being taught that they must be in a role of subjugation. Systems of domination inherently require subjugation and through the subjugation of women, we have arrived at the situation we face today. A theme throughout Alaimo's article is the idea that agency is at once both a privilege for women and a right for men. A woman's body, her agency, is a privilege to be revoked at any moment by the dominant class. With every reification of masculinity as a form of domination, there is an equal reification of femininity as a form of subjugation. Gender is taught to young women through this lens, and so the performance of gender is often hand-in-hand with gendered oppression. When the faculty at these schools tell young boys that what they are doing is wrong, but do not take any real action to change the behaviors or the culture that allowed them to create these deep fakes in the first place, they are at the same time telling the girls that they are performing their gendered role by fulfilling the needs of the boys.

Butler asserts that gender was established as a binary to fit into heterosexual confines (Butler 1988:524). This is true in this case, but

if the boys had been creating deep fakes of other boys, there certainly would have been a different reaction not just from the school but from the outside community. A part of why this was taken as a prank instead of as a serious crime is because it was a display of boys 'fulfilling' the heterosexual binary of gender that they have been taught. The girls, though unwillingly, were being used to fulfill that same heterosexual binary, and so were also fitting into the gender roles that they had also been taught. These actions of gendered violence and violation of privacy are not radical events, as Butler describes, that go against gender expectations, but are instead a direct result of the way these boys have been taught gender throughout their entire lives (Butler 1988:526). The way they present masculinity is a reflection of the heterosexual binary that society has established.

Bringing in the idea of heterosexuality as a factor of this gendered violence means that it is important to think intersectionally, meaning Patrica Hill Collins's matrix of domination is a particularly important theory to utilize here (Collins 1990:225). This interlocking view of oppression builds upon theories of intersectionality by discussing oppression not as a singular status, but as a status that is built upon with each marginalized identity a person holds. Heterosexuality is centered in American society, so those with LGBTQ+ identities are marginalized even as they become more normalized and accepted. However, because heterosexuality and specifically masculine heterosexuality is the dominant class, it is hard not to believe that if these actions had been done by someone within the LGBTQ+ community or someone with another

marginalized identity, the repercussions would have been far more severe.

The concluding call to action that Alaimo presents is a call for adults to be educated about the harms and risks of these deep fakes. This final point about the importance of education shows just how centered in history gendered expressions are. If this incident had happened fifty years ago, would the response have been the same? Would there have been a public outcry or would it have been swept under the rug completely without thought to the ongoing repercussions that the victims faced?

Expectations of gender expression have changed, not as much as would be required to fully address this situation in a way that puts the protection of the victims as the primary concern, but enough that there was a reaction from the public at all. Gender expression can change and should change, but it takes historic action and purposeful attention to ensure it changes in a way that advances toward greater equity rather than continued oppression.

It is only because of feminist leaders such as Collins and Butler that we are able to openly discuss this kind of gendered violence today. Without those frameworks, dominant narratives that promote gender binaries and heteronormativity continue to influence young people into believing that these actions will be met with no consequences and even are simply a part of growing up. We are at a crossroads where gendered violence is easily committed through technology, but we also have the opportunity to address it as quickly and as easily. For as many of these acts of oppression that are committed, there are just as many actors addressing them at levels from the individual to policy. At moments like these, it is especially important that we are critical of these acts of gendered violence, so as to set a new gendered expectation that is not built upon domination but equity.

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MARX AND HUMAN NATURE:

Understanding Alienation and Human Nature

BY HEIDI GARAYOA
GRADUATE STUDENT
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

Before embarking on the journey of Karl Marx and his theory on the human nature, it is essential to recognize the two distinct classes that make up the world of capitalism which are: the Proletariats and the Bourgeoisie. The Proletariats are a social class that work for the means of production, while the Bourgeoisie own the means of production. These two social classes live significantly different from each other in terms of their socioeconomic and political standings in society. According to Marx, these classes' ways of thinking are not separate from their mode of production. Keeping this in mind is essential for understanding the theory on human nature as it shines a light on it. To Marx, the concept of the human nature is a "free conscious producer" (Marx, XXV), regarding a person as a "species-being" because like in nature with other living creatures, a person is not meant to be estranged and alienated from his community and be taken away his free will. Being restricted in such a way can not only be detrimental to an individual's way of living, but can also be harmful to society as it continues to be reinforced by the bourgeoisie and reproduced by the proletariat because it has been accepted as socially normal; otherwise known as "reification." Marx introduces the concept of "alienation" and its four key components as the violation of human nature. It ultimately contributes to conflict between the two social classes. The bourgeoisie allowed zero political economic representation to the proletariat class, which steered Marx to believe that eventually the power of capitalism will fall due to a "proletarian revolution" (Marx, XXVI). While such a revolution did not happen, he was quite certain the corruption the bourgeoisie had imposed on the worker's human nature would have eventually led to such an event. But he digresses, or does he?

As capitalism remains dominant today, sociologists continue to question why a revolution did not occur like Marx predicted; and if one will ever happen in the modern world? The answer to this question is uncertain, Marx explained capitalism was contradicting itself with the bourgeoisie creating their own grave diggers and fetters.

The proletariat greatly outnumbered the owners of production and were becoming conscious of the state they were in. This not only excited Marx, but the conflict was encouraged because it was the inevitable driving force in society to end exploitation.

As a result of working conditions in a capitalistic society, the working class has been isolated in various aspects of life and been made to believe that it is normal. Marx introduces "alienation" as the violation of the human nature, "...the resulting division of man against himself is not a matter of the imagination simply but of institutional reality...." (Marx, XXIV). An individual is no longer able to create freely, but instead be imposed with another man's greed. This greed has taken over society completely and violated the individual by interfering with nature.

The greediness of the Bourgeoisie created four dimensions of alienation:
1. Product of labor
2. Process of labor
3. Man's species being
4. Estrangement of man from man.

Oneself - which will be discussed later in the essay is a reference to the 3rd dimension of alienation and is discussed throughout The Marx-Engels Reader edited by Robert C. Tucker as "species being." Species-being is the instinct in humans to produce, be creative, and having pride in the process of creating their products.

The first dimension of alienation is, 'alienation from the product of labor' is the worker having no voice to what he creates. Due to the repetitiveness of worker's job,

disconnection begins. ".... he does not feel content but unhappy, doesn't develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind" (Marx, 74). Before capitalism dominated the industries, there was honesty and enjoyment with what a person chose to create for themselves and others. There was pride and feeling fulfilled with completing one's duty to society. However, this is no longer the case. Taking away freedom to choose one's role in the workplace, society creates the phenomenon that individuals are commodities.

To capitalism, the individual is not a person, they are a physical object that is replaceable. With repetition in the daily work, workers eventually become faster and produce more. For the owners of production, this extra surplus is pocketed while the workers continue with their minimum wages. As Marx writes, "...the better formed the product, the more deformed becomes the worker" (Marx, 73). Marx emphasizes the amount of production a worker is expected to maintain, which leads to the second form of alienation, 'alienation from the process of labor'. Just as the proletariat having no say in what he is producing, he also has no say in the process of what is being produced.

The work becomes meaningless as it is no longer fulfilling, and only a means for survival. "Estranged labor estranges the species from man" (Marx, 75). A variation of this quote is used frequently by Marx. The political economy increases the value of items, but devalues the worker, reality is lost and a new one emerges. A new society emerged where the worker cannot afford what he is producing, his labor is a foreign product to himself. He does not have an idea

of what he has created because of how isolated he is from the finished product.

With no ownership to anything in the world he lives in, labor has become like an external object to the worker. Pride and connections with one's occupation no longer exist. The owners of production sit back and indulge in the fruits of labor that were not produced by them and through this exploitation commence conflict within the social classes. Maintaining exploitation of the working class is one of the violations of the human nature, by ensuring workers do not receive the real wages deserved for what they produced and the bourgeoisie pocketing the surplus value keeps them steady on their throne. The proletariat are paid the bare minimum wages necessary for them to reproduce their labor, but as their speed and workload increases, their wages will not. Limiting their knowledge of this system strengthens the bourgeoisie's ability to keep exploiting more workers. This becomes a cycle and an expected way of living for both social classes.

Marx approached this issue with the solution. He tried to give the proletariat valor so they could stand up for themselves, because not only is the worker estranged from what he produces, he is also isolated from the folks around him. Capitalism strategically created a system that pits its workers against each other, unlike before when society was community oriented. Competition and social hierarchies began in the workplace and eventually replicated into society. The hostile working conditions do not make the environment warm and friendly enough to attempt friendships or bonds with coworkers, instead, "labor is shunned like the plague" (Marx, 74). This is recognized as false

consciousness because the workers are being prevented from comprehending the severity of their situation. Marx advocated for class consciousness (the solution) to the working class and make waves for a revolution to rise and overthrow the bourgeoisie.

However, capitalism is deeply saturated into a person's everyday life that a worker may be aware of their social class but choose not to rebel. For newer generations of workers, they are entering a workforce that is already blocking them off from gaining class consciousness. A pertinent example that still exists today is the belief of talking about money with coworkers is inappropriate. Labeling this topic of discussion as inappropriate has been manipulated to prevent the workers from rising together and demanding better/higher wages for themselves. Keeping in mind that the working class does not hold any political or economic power in their country, this is where Marx fails to understand the fear workers have of breaking rules or laws.

Unfortunately, it is not as easy as he writes, the proletariat are not above the law like the bourgeoisie, risking their job being taken away from them can bring consequences that affect the worker and their family. For Marx this is a social consequence of creating a broken society of individuals who do not have pride in their work or themselves and who are isolated from one another. This ultra-individualistic society can not only hurt its residents, but could backfire on the bourgeoisie. The proletariat could eventually gain class consciousness out of high desperation and seek to reclaim what is rightfully theirs. This class conflict is an

inevitable outcome to the violation of human nature that is directly from the economic system.

The intense disconnection in the workplace alienates the individual outside of work too, any potential or sparks of creativity are squashed by alienation. Through their work, the individual is continuously duplicating themselves that they do not know their actual purpose to their own life. A person has become so estranged from themselves, as a result they are torn from their normal life and programmed to fulfill the orders of the bourgeoisie. ".... his real species objectivity, and transforms his advantage over animals into the disadvantage that his inorganic body, nature, is taken from him." (Marx, 77). Their estranged labor has swallowed them whole, and they no longer recognize who they once were. For Marx, this is a consequence on the individual level. This cycle of alienation continues into what one sees today, workers work to survive and are barely making ends meet. "The relationship of the worker to labor engenders the relation to it of the capitalist, or whatever one chooses to call the master of labor" (Marx, 79). This quote reflects the interconnectedness Marx describes between the workers and the capitalists. Through control and exploitation, it sustains their power creating a society that solely benefits them.

Capitalism continues to change and contradict itself as time progresses, the bourgeoisie are not in the same boat of power as they were during the Marxian era of politics. Today exist many more wealthy individuals who do not necessarily owns means of production. All celebrities and political figures do not own factories/businesses, so where do they lie? Are they workers?

Marx's theory of human nature is the heart of his sociological theory, recognizing the social relationship between the means of production and those who control the means of production, go against nature.

The violations are broken into four key components:
1. Product of labor
2. Process of labor
3. Man's species being
4. Estrangement of man from man.

Each one highlights the specific alienation experienced by the worker to keep them at the bottom of the social hierarchy. A person is not meant to be chained and have their pride taken, the violation of alienation on human nature was imposed by the bourgeoisie and can negatively affect the proletariat individual and society. A rebellion of workers gaining class consciousness could overthrow capitalism after continuing to be convinced that they as workers are not worth anything but their minimum wages. A society of broken individuals is creating the graves for the capitalists.

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BEYOND LIKES:

Theoretical Insights into Social Media

BY JULIANA GUZMAN
GRADUATE STUDENT
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

There is no denying the power of social media in today's world. The impact of social media on our lives is enormous— "roughly seven-in-ten Americans say they use any kind of social media site" (Auxier and Anderson 2021:1). With over half of the U.S. population utilizing these platforms and the typical individual browsing for hours on end each day. Social media is reaching new heights and levels of change in our current society. Comprehending the macro level of analysis of social media patterns, from particular interpretations to broad generalizations of social behavior, can aid in comprehending the basics of society and its systems. Through an examination of three important theoretical paradigms: structural functionalism, conflict perspective, and symbolic interactionism, present distinct views and responses to many problems surrounding society's usage of social media. Understanding the changes social media is making in society is crucial to bringing awareness to the control social media has on individuals.

Structural Functionalism
According to the Functionalist viewpoint, the

component of society that should be studied within social media is how platforms are used for presenting oneself to others. A person's use of social media allows people to connect with family, friends, and others. Allowing users to post photographs and videos and participate in discussions with other users about hobbies and other interests. Users may utilize social media to connect with individuals in their region and schedule in-person activities with these groups. Social media also allows users to make and maintain contacts with individuals worldwide, allowing them to reach a far larger number than is generally feasible through non-digital methods.

In his book Social Theory and Social Structure, Robert K. Merton outlined the idea of manifest functions, latent functions, and dysfunctions. "Manifest functions are those objective consequences contributing to the adjustment or adaptation of the system which are intended and recognized by participants in the system" (Merton 1968:105). The manifest function of social media is that it creates connections and networking opportunities on the personal

and professional levels. Although all types of networking can be done throughout all social media platforms. According to LinkedIn (2017), "70% of professionals employed in 2016 were hired at a company where they had a connection" (LinkedIn 2017:1). Most professionals surveyed also believed that networking is critical to their professional success. There are career benefits when using social media for professional networking. To name a few LinkedIn and Handshake are specific networking platforms that help individuals connect with professionals in different fields. Nevertheless, as users utilize social media platforms to form personal relationships, it is also helpful to form professional networks.

As Merton explains in his book, "Latent functions, correlatively, being those which are neither intended nor recognized" (Merton 1968:105). In other words, Merton argues that unanticipated functions for a system, such as social media platforms, are latent. An unintended function of social media is users' constant surveillance. Social media offers users a platform to constantly record their daily activities while staying connected with others. It is also a tactic police agencies use to gather evidence in some circumstances. Consider the case of 22-year-old Gabby Petito, whose disappearance first caught the attention of the nation after her family filed a missing person's report after she went on a cross-country trip with her fiancé. According to the New York Times, "[t]he case has become a national sensation, in large part because of the awareness generated by people who are watching it unfold on social media" (Rosman 2021:1).This point is that influencers' whereabouts are constantly uploaded and if

they go missing their online presence may help them. Conversely, this also has made influencers more vulnerable to stalking and hate crimes. Furthermore, social media is now being used as a tool that provides users with whereabouts and constant monitoring of individuals who use it, which can have a variety of effects on a person's lifestyle.

According to Merton, "dysfunctions, are those observed consequences which lessen the adaptation or adjustment of the system" (Merton 1968:105). Merton insists that dysfunction is a negative function that will create tension in a social system. A dysfunction is that people with higher socioeconomic status (SES) are more likely to utilize social platforms for career growth. In comparison, people with lower socio-economic status have fewer internet connections, they spend less time online compared with those in higher social classes. Consequently, there are fewer opportunities to get involved on networking platforms. Yates and Lockley (2018) conclude that "[i]nternet users who are predominantly focused on social media are far more likely to have lower incomes and be members of lower socioeconomic class groups" (Yates and Lockley 2018:1310). In making this comment, the authors connect how economic capital influences levels of social media use. Therefore, lower SES means lower usage of social media, which also means that they will not be using social networking platforms for career growth. Social media platforms that are intended for networking and creating career opportunities primarily for those in higher SES. As a result, social media is an excellent tool for networking and professional advancement since it allows people who would not otherwise meet in

person to form relationships. Nonetheless, social media continues to exacerbate disparities caused by economic wealth and social status. People with lesser socioeconomic status lack the resources to network online.

The spread of misinformation is a dysfunction of social media. People from all sides of political views can share their opinions online and, in this way, can spread all types of information. Free speech in the United States is a good thing especially when spreading political news. However, it is not helpful anymore once misinformation is constantly spreading, and people do not know what is fact or what is fiction. The spread of misinformation is as old as human history, social media has changed the game by enabling people to generate misinformation easily and "spread it rapidly in an anonymous and decentralized fashion" (Chen, Xiao, and Kumar 2023:1). In eight nations, people who feel that their country's political system allows them to influence politics are also more likely to believe that social media benefits democracy. Those who see the transmission of misinformation online as a serious threat to their country are less likely to believe that social media is beneficial to democracy than those who see the spread of misinformation online as a non-existent threat. A survey asking respondents whether social media is a good or bad thing for democracy in their country showed that "[a]cross the countries polled, a median of 57% say social media has more of a good thing for their democracy" (Wike, et al. 2022:5). This indicates that a sense of threat is linked to the widely accepted belief that people can now be misled and misinformed more easily due to social media.

Individuals are less likely to investigate the accuracy of the information they find before accepting and sharing it. Since social media is always growing and spreading information, it stands to reason that it will also propagate false information. Keeping an eye out and instructing others on identifying trustworthy sources is vital to continue spreading knowledge on online platforms.

Given these points on the functions of social media, it should be noted that the intentions of social media and how it is being used now are influential to society. Social media was created to bring connections and a safe space for people to share their lives with those in their community. Now people are making new connections and building global communities, reconnecting relationships. Online platforms have now developed a professional space in which people can network and create career advancements. The digital divide and the spread of misinformation may cause issues to arise with social media platforms in the future. The constant sharing of daily life can be lifesaving or endangering one's privacy. This fixed surveillance and imbalances between social classes can be analyzed through conflict theory.

Conflict Theory

Since social media platforms are free, we should know that our attention is the product corporations want. After all, if a service is offered without charge, you are the product. Understanding how social media and the internet promote disparities across groups is made possible by conflict theory. How the media gives voice to the most influential people, constant advertising to children, and the targeted messages are

prominent behaviors influenced by capitalism. This cycle is not new and before social media television and radio were avid advertisers to the lower social classes. Conflict theory emphasizes the power dynamics and disparities that are prevalent in the use of social media. The long-term repercussions of constant advertisements and addictive algorithms assist in promoting hyper-consumerism. Social media internalizes the already prevalent class divide, and capitalism is a tool that motivates the lower classes to participate.

Conflict theory states that social structures are inherently based on power differences. Analyzing social media is essential to comprehend the inequality and connection to how digital creation in the disguise of entertainment is involved with hyper-consumption. The way people are represented in digital public matters, and raises issues of equity, particularly when elite voices predominate. According to Griffiths and Keirns, "…when elite voices predominate and act as gatekeepers. Griffiths and Keirns (2015) suggest that gatekeeping is where "[p]owerful individuals and social institutions…[determine] which forms of technology are released, when and where they are released, and what kind of media is available for our consumption" (Griffiths and Keirns 2015:1) Gatekeeping is a method of restricting access to products and services by withholding information from those with power. Therefore, the people in positions of power use the society's existing structures to gain more power further, and as mentioned in the text gatekeeping is very prevalent.

Those in control of social media platforms

hold positions of power. As a result, with power over social media comes control over messaging to millions of people, and the control of filtering content and pressure for more ads. Businesses benefit from this arrangement at the expense of consumers on social media platforms. Advantaged groups include those who own social media platforms, advertisers, potential employers, and other parties interested in selling products, such as social media influencers who are marketing a certain lifestyle. No matter how much users think they benefit from social media, they are disadvantaged groups, especially if they mistakenly believe that they control the information they have posted. On close analysis, we see that social media platforms are designed to keep the viewer engaged for as long as possible. Cookies and other similar tools customize the content and advertising from the information the user continues to provide. It should also be noted what the purpose of this advertising is and the need for social media. As more people spend time on social media platforms advertisements have become sneakier and more mixed in with all types of content. Social media is now a platform that normalizes capitalistic plans of hyper-consumption.

With the rise of the internet, social media has become a major tool for online marketing. Social media is used by both individuals and businesses to provide business prospects. Although there is research that has explored social media there are few that have emphasized the consequences of social media marketing activities. Social media is filled with constant advertisements. Therefore, this study suggests that social media marketing activities can impact

continuation, involvement, and purchase intentions by influencing social identity, perceived value, and satisfaction levels. Chen and Lin (2019) studied the interactions between social media marketing activities as they relate to social identity as well as understanding the perceived value that goes into a consumer's decision to buy a product. In their article, "The results of this study confirm that if companies can help users identify with their brand community, users' positive relationships with the brands they like can be strengthened and users may also stop purchasing competitor products" (Chen and Lin 2019:30). In making this comment, the authors argue that since social media emerged, marketing tactics and tools have undergone significant changes which can benefit businesses to use social media to build community with individuals to influence buying decisions.

TikTok is the latest platform used by influencers and content creators. TikTok is a shining example of a social media platform supported by commercial interests where watch time is crucial. The more time users spend using the application, the more popularity and revenue it receives. This application's algorithm aims to get users addicted rather than providing them with what they originally meant to obtain, which is what makes it so popular. The "For you" tab on this type of social media recommends content tailored to the viewer. The creator of an organization that has studied recommendation systems, Guillaume Chaslot, provides his study of TikTok's suggestion system in a piece written by the New York Times. As Chaslot explains in the interview, "Each video a kid watches, TikTok gains a piece of information on them. In a few

hours, the algorithm can detect their musical tastes, physical attraction, and other sensitive information. It could potentially be used to micro-target or make them more addicted to the platform" (Smith: 2021).

In making this comment, Chaslot argues that TikTok is dangerous to children due to its addiction-causing algorithms. Most of the content on your For You Page on TikTok causes this dopamine release, which might then result in an addiction to endless scrolling. The endless scrolling on these social media platforms may cause problems with attention span and make it difficult to appreciate the worth of the time you are giving it. TikTok is used daily by the youth may not seem significant now but the type of content they consume for hours a day will pile up and help them socialize.

Social media is new and the effects are starting to show. Social media disproportionately reproduces inequality in society. Consequently, the concept of continuous surveillance involved a dispersed system of observation points and no direct communication with the people being monitored. People use social media and are essentially unaware of when they are being watched in a panoptical setting. Incidentally, they internalize the implicit social constraints of the system and respond appropriately. These days, our movements are recorded by digital security cameras, and our cell phones and even facial recognition software are used for constant surveillance. Similarly, current strategies for the surveillance of individuals stem from Jeremy Bentham and Michel Foucault's contributions to panoptic monitoring which, "is surveillance imagined as a form of

constant monitoring in which the observation posts are decentralized and the observed is never communicated directly" (Griffiths and Keirns 2015:1). In other words, panoptic surveillance is ongoing monitoring. In which the observer is separated from the observed and never directly interacts with them. Social media is used the same in which frequent surveillance with an unknown observer can be used to exert social control over society. In addition to using digital security cameras, observers may also follow individuals using their cell phones and even social media. Everything that is shared, discussed, and enjoyed is data collected from an individual's digital footprint. One's internet reputation affects one's future, and how others see them and feel about their digital footprint. Consequently, people in power can use surveillance and frequent usage of social media as tools for surveillance and control. Social media reinforces the current class divide, and capitalism serves as a motive for the lower classes to join.

Ultimately, the symbolic meaning of social media, as well as the patterns that differ between platforms, are based on a variety of technological and social signals. Platforms such as TikTok and YouTube are video-based and popular among younger generations whereas older generations prefer text and news-based sites such as Twitter and Facebook. The language and jokes reflect each generation's unique communication styles and understanding. The symbolic significance of social media can be changed by both platform features and user connections. The following is symbolic interactionism and how social interaction is symbolic and processed in terms of the

meanings that people assign it.

Symbolic Interactionism
Social media affects users' interactions and how people interpret each other's behaviors. Every action and icon has a symbolic meaning on social media platforms and individuals use these meanings to interact with others. Although we are staying connected through social media, the platform itself might serve as a symbol since people without access to it risk being marginalized. The rise of social isolation can relate to the rise in social media as the usage of social media platforms increases, and how online over in-person connections is prioritized. According to Canete and Pandey (2021), "transfiguring a person's real presence into a digital presence, the social media has also created an existential isolation that draws a person away from others while digitally connecting" (Canete and Pandey 2021:193). In other words, social media may lead to separation from real-life relationships while maintaining virtual connections. Social media is more than just a platform for people to communicate and exchange messages; it also allows them to create their virtual communities. Social media is a new agent of socialization.

The symbolic meanings of social media, as well as the patterns that differ between platforms, are based on a variety of technological and social signals. According to Vogels, Gelles-Watnick, and Massarat (2022), 95% of teens reported using YouTube, and 65% reported using TikTok stating that platforms such as TikTok and YouTube are video-based and popular among younger generations. Pew Research (2022) also reported that 32% of teens use

platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp. This points out that teens do not prefer text and news-based sites such as Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp. The language and connections reflect each generation's unique communication styles and understanding. The symbolic significance of social media can be changed by both platform features and user connections. Symbolic interactionism proposes that social interaction is symbolic and processed in terms of the meanings that people assign it. Besides the different platforms themselves, the symbols and interactions created on each platform should be analyzed.

Symbolic interactionists research social interaction with an emphasis on self-awareness, symbols, and negotiated order. The way social networking sites behave as a mirror allows users, particularly teens, to be recognized and get feedback. To use social media sites one should become acquainted with the vocabulary and symbols individuals use to indicate purpose and emotion with terms such as block: take action to prohibit a user from contacting or seeing a profile, add: to make a new friend, and the For you page: A stream of videos that an algorithm selects for a user to view. The different ways that people are taught to interact online are different from an interaction in real life. The cycle usually starts when a user decides to share a post or video in which their followers will view this content and decide whether they like it. Then interactions and connections are made through this post, where discussion can be made in the comments. Overall, the way of interacting gives users the choice to be as anonymous as they want, since they get to choose their

username and photo. Social Media use has changed the order in which interactions are made in which an individual's post is like offering oneself in exchange for receiving comments.

A video can be viewed by many people, yet they will all interpret and interact with it differently. Those with newfound anonymity may choose to spread negative comments and express their dislike for the video. At the same time, others who may enjoy the content will follow the creator and become fans. Some online communities are created by the shared likes or dislikes of certain content. However, social media is like most other structures in American society a byproduct of capitalism, where the need for profit determines how it is created and used. Users become a commodity sold to advertisers when social media companies rely on user engagement and data collecting to make money. When thought of this way, social media does not become just a silly application that the younger generations use, but an unconscious reminder to users to spend their money. With concepts like the Tik Tok Shop and Facebook Marketplace in which buying products from the platform is encouraged it becomes easier for users to buy the products that they are being promoted. The new evolution of social media interactions that started as a place to connect with communities has now become a large platform filled with commercials. This cycle of hyper-consumerism should remind individuals to be more mindful of interpersonal interactions and understand how social media impacts mental health. Adolescents are exposed to a platform for self-expression, sociability, and networking through social media. Although addiction to

social media can relate to the constant need for entertainment catering to the users' needs which can become numbing and desensitize users from reality. As explained in the article when, "[a]sked about the idea of giving up social media, 54% of teens say it would be at least somewhat hard to give it up" (Vogels, Gelles-Watnick, and Massarat 2022:3). This argues that the youth themselves understand that it would be challenging to give up social media. Therefore, this addictive behavior, which adults in their lives may have long-term effects on the youth. Young kids who are chronically addicted to anything frequently struggle with a variety of concerns, including behavioral problems, mental health problems, and difficulty forming healthy peer connections. Most notably, persistent addiction can rewire a youth's brain to always seek out instant satisfaction.

Social media affects the development of youth in society. and understanding sociological theories around social media is crucial to combating these issues. Socialization starts once children can comprehend patterns and learn behaviors. Therefore, the most crucial time for youth is the moment of cultural and social formation. When creating a sense of social identity, adolescents will spend most of their time examining and reflecting on the general beliefs and behaviors they see. The youth is spending a good amount of their time online. Accordingly, the Pew Research Center states, "97% of teens reported they use the internet daily" (Vogels et al. 2022:8). In other words, technology use has risen, and it is affecting teenage behaviors. The youth are learning how they fit in society and with constant exposure to the social class system.

Those in power then use these emotions to take advantage to rule over the lower classes by spreading their beliefs. At an individual level, the interactions and new rules online impact an individual's mental health. This can be through new forms of socialization, constant use of social media, or even worsening pre-existing issues. Consequently, with new forms of research being issued on the effects of social media, users are being exposed to the long-term effects it has on society.

Social media affects individuals' mental health. To the point of affecting physical well-being. According to the National Library of Medicine, "[s]tudies consistently highlight that use of social media... appears to contribute to increased risk for a variety of mental health symptoms and poor wellbeing, especially among young people (Naslund, Bondre, Torous, and Aschbrenner 2020:8)." This points out that social media contributes to youths mental health to some degree. Hence, the youth are not lazy just dealing with the mental health impacts of social media. These social behaviors of staying connected online have more power over their users than what is believed, that the users have the choice in their consumption. The recommended videos, advertisements they see, and the data they share, are all created and fueled to motivate hyper-consumption of material goods or other experiences funded by money. Social media users, especially the youth, may experience negative repercussions as a result of this power imbalance since they are susceptible to hazardous material exposure, targeted advertising, and cyberbullying.

The inequality of social media is that those

who do not have access to it are also faced with repercussions. Youth from underprivileged families, for instance, might not have the same access to or resources to utilize social media in an efficient manner, which puts them at a disadvantage in terms of social capital and networking possibilities. There is a digital divide in which children are influenced by their peers to be involved on social media to stay up with the trends. Those who are well-informed through social media are now in higher positions and those who do not follow the trends then become outcast and susceptible to bullying. The disparities faced by the users and influencers are prevalent because when a person who is not well known becomes highly influential they are also likely to face heavy repercussions and discrimination against employers. The external issues that social media causes can have adverse effects on mental health. Social media creates connections with individuals, so in some cases, social media becomes an outlet for those facing mental health issues. They can connect with others in similar situations which may provide comfort. As stated, "With the widespread use of social media among individuals living with mental illness combined with the potential to facilitate social interaction and connect with supportive peers (Naslund, et al. 2020:6)." In other words, social media becomes an outlet of support for individuals.

The analysis of social media through the sociological theoretical perspective demonstrates the impacts that social media has on our society. While social media's initial design was to connect users on the platform, the way that it has evolved perpetuates the pre existing inequalities in

society. Far from the inherent issues of social media's impact on individuals, this paper gives a well-rounded outlook and understanding of the connections between social media platforms and social structures. After analysis, this paper sheds light on the overlooked impacts that social media has on society.

Individuals profit from social media because it allows them to expand their social networks and stay in touch with relationships. It also serves as a platform for professional development and advertising. Instead of focusing on the influence of social media on people, we may get a broader knowledge of how social media platforms interact with societal institutions. This research uses theoretical analysis to highlight the influence of social media on society which is often disregarded. As social media networks' impact grows, so does their control.

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A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARSONS AND GOFFMAN

BY ARMANDO GONZALEZ
GRADUATE STUDENT
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

Talcott Parsons and Erving Goffman are two of the most well-known and influential theorists in sociology. Parsons' The Social System and Goffman's Asylums both demonstrate how an individual's role in a given society is constructed through their daily interactions. One of Parsons' main contributions to the field of sociology was his theory of the social system. There are mechanisms (socialization and social control) that join forces to maintain the social system. Goffman on the other hand focuses more specifically on individuals and their experiences in mental asylums. Although their work concentration differs, Goffman's portrayal of asylums can be understood as an application of Parsons' concept of the social system. Some of Parsons' concepts such as the ego, roles, alter, and the definition of the situation can be used to illuminate Goffman's analysis.

Parsons' concept of socialization can be used to enhance one's understanding of Goffman's depiction of asylums. The process of socialization and social control work together as a unit, and they are defined as "mechanisms involved in the processes of 'normal' functioning of the social system" (Parsons 1951:205). This normal functioning is important for the social interaction between two or more individual actors. Socialization is a mechanism of the social system that moves toward internalization, it is the process through which we internalize the culture and values of a society. According to Parsons, socialization is when agents engage in a particular kind of learning in preparation for a specific role. For Parsons the socialization of children is extremely important as children can be molded more easily than others. Parents teach their children how to behave and act in ways that are deemed socially acceptable.

Much like Goffman's Asylums, mental patients quickly learn about what is considered socially acceptable and how to behave properly. The patients are forced to internalize particular values about the kind of individual that they are supposed to be. For instance, in asylums Goffman mentions that the medical staff deflates a patient's claims about why they are in the mental

hospital and why they should be released and every time their claims are deflated their "sense of what a person ought to be and the rules of peer-group social intercourse" pressures the patients to "reconstruct [their] stories" (1961:162). The medical staff counters a patient's remarks by bringing up past events and information of a patient in order to ensure a significant amount of internal social mobility in the asylum. In these institutions Goffman states, "the orderly fulfillment of normative expectations in patient society is partly made possible by strategic measures that have somehow come to be institutionalized in mental hospitals" (1961:130). The staff in mental hospitals are supposed to implement strategic measures by teaching patients how to act according to the norms and expectations of the mental institution. Individuals who are in asylums are cut off from the world and this institution thus becomes a world of its own where the patients are re-socialized. In these intuitions an individual's conception of themselves has to align with the institution in which they reside and they, therefore, lose any freedom or autonomy.

Social control is a powerful mechanism of the social system which can be used to better understand the experiences of patients in Goffman's Asylums. For Parsons social control regulates human behavior which is essential to establishing conformity to the rules, norms, and expectations within society. Social control moves against what is called deviance, deviance is when an individual or group of people behave or act in a way that goes against social norms and expectations. Social control stops individuals or groups of people from acting or behaving in ways that challenge the system. Parsons talks about social control and the use of rewards and punishments which serve to influence one's behavior. A present-day example could be seen with public littering. If a person smiles at someone who is picking up trash and says "good job", that is a reward for conformity. Similarly, if an individual is throwing stuff on the floor (littering), someone else might yell at them for not conforming to societal norms. This negative interaction is then seen as a form of punishment for deviance. People use rewards and punishments as mechanisms to socially control what others do and in doing so they are also trying to influence others' behaviors and encourage them to act in ways that are socially acceptable and expected. For Parsons this kind of social control through the use of rewards and punishments is necessary as it can lead to uniformity of behavior.

Much like Parsons, in Goffman's Asylums mental institutions use rewards and punishments as mechanisms to socially control patients. Individuals are expected to act or behave in a way that does not deviate from societal norms. When individuals deviate from societal norms and expectations then they can end up in an asylum. Individuals placed in asylums are forced to take on a new role and sense of self. When a mental patient disobeys house rules in the asylum then the patient will, "receive stringent punishments expressed in terms of loss of privileges; for obedience, he will eventually be allowed to reacquire some of the minor satisfaction he took for granted on the outside" (Goffman 1961:148). These house rules and rewards and punishments are put into place in order to control the actions and behaviors of the mental patients.

Patients in an asylum are individuals who committed offenses against a domestic establishment, workplace, church, or in a public region (Goffman 1961). The individual is thus omitted to an asylum where they are re-socialized and controlled. This is an example of how Parsons' concept of social control is applied to Goffman's Asylums where mental institutions are placed to fix an individuals' deviant behavior.

Parsons discusses how individuals have roles in society through their daily interactions and these roles can change based on the situation and how that situation is defined. Parsons refers to roles as the ego and when talking about the ego it is also important to mention alters. The ego is the self and having a sense of one's self. We become who we are in our roles by having interactions with others which Parsons calls alters. The ego, the self is continuously interacting with alters and it is through those interactions that the self comes to learn who we are supposed to be as an individual. In Goffman's Asylums, individuals take on the role of the mental patient meaning that the ego would, in this case, be the mental patient and the alters are who the patient interacts with which is the complainant (person who takes action against an individual which leads to that individual's hospitalization), the mediator (doctors, psychiatrists, medical staff), and the next-of-relation (the person that the patient depends on the most). Based on the situation an individual's role can change, which we can see when Goffman says "the self-arises not merely out of its possessor's interactions with significant others, but also out of the arrangements that are evolved in an organization for its members" (1961:148).

Goffman is similar to Parsons here as there are already pre-existing social systems that move people inside an organizational context to act or conduct one's self in a particular way.

For Parsons and Goffman, the process in which situations are defined are on-going sociological problems. Parsons' view of the definition of a situation is something already pre-established. Whereas, Goffman asserts, that it is an individual's interactions that come to define the situation they are in. In asylums, patients must adapt themselves in terms of the ward system. A system in which their status determines the graded living arrangements. Where the worst levels are given minimal privileges and the best are provided with more human interaction, recreational activities, and better living conditions (Goffman 1961). The patient contains a certain role based on their place in the ward assignment and the "assignments to a given ward is presented not as a reward or punishment, but as an expression of his general level of social functioning, his status as a person" (Goffman 1961:149). The patient may believe that their place in the ward and in the asylum is an indication of who they are. In Goffman's Asylums he discusses how based on an individual's ward assignment the patients are given different roles. An individual who has the role of a medical professional has more power than the individual who has the role of a patient, and this power is seen through the medical professional's ability to assign a patient to a specific ward and define that situation. Goffman talks about how the meditators use their role to define the situation because their role is more powerful than the role of the pre-patient. The mediators highlight the

benefits and positive outcomes of mental facilities to the pre-patient and their next-of-relation so that they consider hospitalization to be the best course of action in addressing the pre-patient's deviant behavior(s) (Goffman 1961). Goffman talks about the power dynamic between the mediator and patient as the meditator in the asylum exercises their knowledge and authority to both define the situation and institutionalize the pre-patient.

Parsons' and Goffman's work differ greatly from one another, however, Goffman's analysis of asylums can be better perceived through the application of Parsons' theory of the social system. Parsons' socialization and social control concepts are mechanisms of his social system, this helps to explain the way mental patients in Goffman's Asylums are forced to be re-socialized and controlled. The patients must behave and act in ways that are normal and expected as well as internalize certain values which should keep them from deviating from society. Parsons' concepts such as roles, ego, and alter as well as the interactions between the ego and alter can help one better comprehend the roles individuals have in Goffman's Asylums. Additionally, Parsons' concepts such as defining the situation are helpful in providing a greater understanding of Goffman's work and analysis as the mediators in asylums have a more powerful role than the patients and are thus able to define the situation. What is most compelling, is that comparing Parsons and Goffman is an example of how applying one theorist's theory can help better understand the analysis of another theorist.

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MASCULINITY, POWER, AND CHANGE

BY ARIANNA PASSAN SANZ
GRADUATE STUDENT
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

Connell and Messerschmidt

Masculinity is a concept that encapsulates the intricate interplay of gender dynamics within society, encompassing a broad spectrum of social behaviors, actions, and roles attributed to men, along with the associated societal meanings. Masculinity is not an immutable construct inherent in an individual's physicality or personality traits. This is supported by Connell and Messerschmidt as they describe masculinity as "not a fixed entity," instead, masculinities represent dynamic patterns of behavior achieved through social interactions and, as a result, may vary based on the prevailing gender dynamics within a specific social context, environment, and culture (2005:836). In the context of sociology, power is a fundamental concept denoting the capacity of individuals, groups, or institutions to exert influence, control, or authority over others in the broader social and political structures within a given society. This influence encompasses the ability to make decisions, shape societal norms, allocate resources, and enforce regulations. Power manifests in multifaceted forms such as political, economic, social, and cultural power, and often operates within intricate systems of hierarchy, inequality, and social organization. The study of power within sociology delves into its distribution, maintenance, legitimization, and contestation across diverse societies and social environments. Together masculinity and power have been recognized in research as having a relationship. This finding lends itself to our understanding of hegemonic masculinity as it assumes the dominance of non-hegemonic masculinities (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Extensive research demonstrates that masculinities are not static but rather dynamic and subject to transformation. Challenges to the prevailing norms of masculinity are frequent, and adaptations in response to these challenges are equally prevalent (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005:835). To gain insights into the evolving nature of masculinity that depart from original framings, Connell and Messerschmidt believe it is imperative to reconsider our approach to analyzing and framing hegemonic masculinity. This reevaluation should particularly encompass

aspects such as the hierarchy of gender, the geographical variations in masculinities, the embodiment of social roles, and the fluid dynamics within masculinity itself.

Hegemonic Masculinity

Hegemonic masculinity was defined as the prevailing pattern of actions and behaviors, not merely a set of role expectations or an identity, that facilitated the ongoing dominance of men over women (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005:832). Moreover, it is a concept that examines how men position themselves within the framework of the gender hierarchy while simultaneously validating the use of masculinity to rationalize dominance and inequality. Hegemonic masculinity was differentiated from other forms of masculinity, particularly subordinate masculinities and it should not be construed as the statistical norm, as only a minority of men might adopt it (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005:832). However, it undeniably represented the prevailing societal norm for masculinity shaped by external social factors like culture and other institutions. It was supposed to represent the embodied and most esteemed manner of "being a man" at the time, mandated that all other men align themselves with it, and provided ideological justification for the subordination of women (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005:832). Hegemonic masculinity is embodied by individual men and serves to sustain societal frameworks and ideologies that reinforce gender hierarchies that work in favor of men. This concept is deeply woven into various social institutions, including family, government, education, and the economy which serve to reject ideas of hegemonic masculinity as being self producing. Men who enjoyed the privileges of patriarchy without necessarily embodying a pronounced form of masculine dominance could be seen as exhibiting a complicit form of masculinity and it was in connection with this particular group, as well as compliance among heterosexual women, and others that the notion of hegemony held the greatest significance (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005:832). Ultimately, hegemonic masculinity plays a pivotal role in understanding men's dominance over marginalized groups of all kinds highlighting "ascendency over force" (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005:832). Its influence underscores the importance of critically examining and challenging the power dynamics it perpetuates within different contexts because it is not the same in all locations. With that being said, Connell and Messerschmidt urge a discussion of critiques about hegemonic masculinity such as its connection to toxicity so that we can retain what is most important about it and begin to reformulate our understandings.

Hegemonic Masculinity and Beliefs of Toxicity

It is important to note that definitions of hegemonic masculinity do not inherently imply the use of violence or toxicity, but many beliefs hold onto this notion and while it is not an absolute truth it can definitely be reinforced by it (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005:832). One reason for this rejection would be because it is difficult to perceive how the notion of hegemony would maintain relevance if the dominant group were characterized solely by traits such as violence, aggression, and self-centeredness. These attributes may imply domination but they would scarcely embody hegemony, which inherently involves the incorporation

of specific ideas concerning active participation by other groups (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005:841). Moreover, this assertion still finds validation in numerous narratives recounting instances of violence or toxicity perpetrated by men against women, and even against other marginalized communities, including LGBTQ+ individuals that work to perpetuate gender norms born out of the patriarchy. For example, Machismo is a cultural and social concept often associated with traditional gender roles, particularly in some Latin American cultures. It represents a set of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that emphasize and exaggerate traditional male characteristics and traits, such as dominance, assertiveness, toughness, and a sense of entitlement. Additionally, but not always, it has also been related to domestic violence in marriages or partnerships as facets of enacting this form of masculinity. It is important to note that hegemonic masculinity is not a uniform, unchanging entity; rather, it adapts and manifests differently in various contexts, especially geographical and culturally. Moreover, it is not representative of all men's lifestyles, choices, behaviors and actions.

While certain practices associated with hegemonic masculinity are readily apparent, Connell and Messerschmidt also highlight the existence of "other mechanisms of hegemony that operate through invisibility, shielding a dominant form of masculinity from criticism" (2005:835). This revelation sheds light on the enduring prevalence, formidable strength, and pervasive influence of hegemonic masculinity within society. In media portrayals of men, for example, various themes and images have been explored, including the interplay of sports and war imagery. The concept of hegemony has played a crucial role in making sense of the diversity and selectivity of these media representations. Commercial sports, in particular, have been a focal point in the portrayal of masculinity within the media, and the emerging discipline of sports in sociology has also found the concept of hegemonic masculinity to be highly relevant (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005:833). This concept has been instrumental in understanding the appeal of physically intense, confrontational sports, which serve as an enduring symbol of masculinity. Additionally, it has been used to analyze the prevalence of homophobia often observed in sporting environments and other institutions. Pascoe's (2007) research on masculinity in high schools illuminates the ways in which male students employ behaviors, such as the use of sexually explicit jokes, as manifestations of them attempting to assert their masculinity and affirm their sexuality. Social institutions, like schools, provide areas for young men to recognize sexuality as a pivotal component of their identity that works in tandem to legitimize their masculinity. The interpersonal dynamics among boys, characterized by talk around sex and the use of sexist or homophobic jokes at the expense of women and LGBTQ+ individuals, play a crucial role in this process and come off as toxic. These interactions serve as a platform for young men to not only showcase and reaffirm their identities to themselves and others as men but, most importantly embodying the heterosexual man—which is at the core of normative sexuality. Talking about sex then becomes an integral part of their social interactions because it serves as a

mechanism through which these growing individuals conceptualize and demonstrate their adherence to societal norms of masculinity as they relate to heteronormativity (Pascoe 2007). These conversations take place within a context where others are present to observe and evaluate their actions which not only include other students but also faculty like teachers which further emphasizes the significance of such communication and demonstration in the construction and validation of their masculinity.

Moreover, transgender men often find themselves compelled to conform to traditional norms of hegemonic masculinity in order to validate their identities as authentic men (Phillips and Rodgers 2021). This compulsion or peer pressure may lead to the adoption of compensatory behaviors, aimed at mitigating their perceived divergence from hegemonic masculinity. An example of such compensatory behavior could involve transgender men engaging in overtly exaggerated anti-feminist sentiments, often as a defense mechanism to avoid potential conflicts with other men. Deviating from these norms can expose them to the risk of being "outed" and subjected to potential acts of violence. To be acknowledged as men, transgender individuals often recognize the need to adhere to the same standards imposed on cisgender men, refraining from expressing disagreement with or challenging sexist or homophobic discourse they encounter (Phillips and Rodgers 2021). Within male social circles, these interactions are often seen as rites of passage, serving as a means for both transgender and cisgender men to assert their masculinity and have their

actions deemed as characteristic of what it means to be an authentic man. These performative behaviors serve as a means to demonstrate their similarity to cisgender, heterosexual men and to establish their credibility, while also functioning as self-protective mechanisms to avoid alienation and conflict. Unfortunately, these behaviors can inadvertently reinforce toxic norms that perpetuate and legitimize gender disparities, all in an effort to steer clear of potential violence and discrimination. Transgender men recognize that, despite their attempts to validate their manhood, hegemonic masculinity still tends to marginalize and subordinate them. Nevertheless, they are aware that conforming to these norms can offer them greater access to opportunities, particularly in areas like the workplace, where gender-nonconforming individuals and women are often overlooked. This further relates to how nonbinary individuals are often compelled to navigate the complexities of their gender identity in order to secure resources at the risk of also facing discrimination and violence. However, trans men understand that they can often access these resources more readily by aligning themselves with conventional notions of maleness. Therefore, it is crucial to recognize that toxicity and force should not be exclusively attributed to hegemonic masculinity because non-hegemonic and subordinate groups engaging in masculinity can also engage in hegemonic practices.

Embodiment
In addition, it is crucial to spotlight the role of bodies as agents of social practice, particularly concerning appearance (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). The masculine physical body has become inextricably

linked with attributes such as facial hair, closely cropped hairstyles, muscularity, and a preference for dark clothing, among others. Notably, for some transgender men, adhering to these physical markers of masculinity holds significant importance. Deviating from these appearance norms may subject them to the risk of rejection, humiliation, and the perception of inadequacy in terms of their masculinity. This underscores the intricate relationship between body aesthetics and the power of societal expectations of gender identity concerning what masculinity should look like. Physical behaviors like consuming meat and engaging in daring behaviors and risks such as the stunts depicted on the popular show Jackass also become associated with expressions of masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005:851). Cultural validation, the prominence of certain discourses, institutional establishment, and the relegation or undermining of alternative approaches to masculinity are well-documented characteristics of prevailing forms of dominant masculinity in society (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005:846).

Women in the Construction of Gender
Furthermore, a critical lens on the institutionalization of gender inequalities and social dynamics reveals their profound role in the perpetuation of inequalities, as expounded by Connell and Messerschmidt (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005:848). It is essential to acknowledge that gender inequalities are not solely propagated by men; women also contribute to their reproduction and sustenance. This phenomenon is epitomized by the concept of "emphasized femininity," which was founded in tandem with earlier

conceptualizations of hegemonic masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005:848). This concept underscores the asymmetric positioning of masculinity and femininity within the overarching gender framework (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005:848). Women can actively or passively endorse patriarchy by reinforcing prevailing gender norms and embracing biases and values that align with traditional gender roles. For example, in a workplace seminar where a group of female employees are tasked with selecting a leader for a collaborative project. In this scenario, one of the female employees, influenced by societal expectations of assertive male leadership, may subconsciously favor a male colleague over a female colleague who exhibits equally strong leadership qualities. This subtle bias, rooted in traditional gender norms, could lead to the selection of the male colleague as the project leader, thereby perpetuating the gendered hierarchy of leadership roles within the organization. This illustration highlights how deeply ingrained gender norms can influence decision-making processes, resulting in the reinforcement of gender inequalities even when women are involved in the decision-making process.

Geographic Dimension
Furthermore, a nuanced comprehension of the geographical dimension of masculinities necessitates the acknowledgment of the intricate interplay between the construction of hegemonic masculinity and the multifaceted dynamics operating at the local, regional, and global levels (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005:835). For example, research on the hybridization of masculinity has begun to understand the strategic borrowing of elements of gay masculine

identities as well as the agency of subordinated masculinities, however Connell and Messerschmidt believe that there is little evidence to support it has become hegemonic at the global level (2005:845). In endorsing an analytical framework, the authors advocate for the discernment of the idiosyncratic influences exerted by each level while also recognizing their profound interconnectedness. This perspective underscores the paramount significance of geographical location as a pivotal determinant (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005:850).

Overall, to my understanding, masculinity does not define a particular category of men and it is not fixed but instead it signifies a manner in which men position themselves through the use of discursive practices highlighting a dynamic within a social process that is much more fluid and can be practiced differently. These dynamics can change across time, location, culture, and society. Most importantly, hegemonic masculinity need not be the most common pattern of masculinity embodied by boys and men; rather it emphasizes a hierarchy, the fact that there are multiple masculinities, and that it is a configuration of practices involving sexuality, the body, and differences geographically. Another supported idea by Connell and Messerschmidt is that the hierarchy of masculinities is a pattern of hegemony and not a pattern of domination based on force (2005:846). The initial formulations emphasized the potential for shifts in gender dynamics, importantly suggesting that the prevailing pattern of masculinity could be challenged. This challenge could arise from women's resistance to patriarchal norms and from

men embracing alternative forms of masculinity. Extensive research has corroborated the concept of the historical construction and reconstruction of dominant forms of masculinity. These shifts necessitate the adoption of novel strategies in gender relations, such as the emergence of "companionate marriage," leading to the redefinition of socially esteemed forms of masculinity, exemplified by the shift from the "Victorian patriarch" to the more contemporary domestic partner (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005:846). We see this in social media today with partnerships consisting of equal work and effort amongst other changes seen by women and men supporting the possibility for change.

Bridges and Pascoe
Bridges and Pascoe also highlight the relationship between masculinity and power. Specifically, hybrid masculinities function in a manner that not only perpetuates existing structures of gender, racial, and sexual inequalities in contemporary society but also conceals these ongoing processes (Bridges and Pascoe 2014:247). "Hybrid masculinities" denote the discerning integration of aspects related to different marginalized and subordinate forms of masculinity, and occasionally, femininity, into the gender expressions and identities of privileged men (Bridges and Pascoe 2014:247). Research on hybrid masculinities supports the emergence and consequences related to transformations in masculinities. It further illuminates how heterosexual White men employ adaptable forms of masculinity to assimilate aspects of marginalized and subjugated masculinities, ultimately bolstering their own claims to manhood. This posits that although these hybrid

masculinities may alter the outward appearance of masculine identities, they do not fundamentally challenge the existing gender hierarchy and, in some respects, may even reinforce it. Through the utilization of discursive distancing, strategic borrowing, and fortifying boundaries, White men employ hybrid masculinity as a means to obscure the recent shifts in the expression of masculinity, enabling them to sustain and mask their privilege and perpetuate inequalities (Bridges and Pascoe 2014).

Discursive Distancing
Hybrid masculine practices frequently function in a manner that establishes some separation or "discursive distancing" between young, heterosexual, White men and hegemonic masculinity, allowing some of them to position themselves away from existing structures of privilege and inequality (Bridges and Pascoe 2014:250). Nevertheless, as men move away from the dominant form of masculinity, they also tend to align themselves with it, although this alignment is often less overt. The ability of heterosexual White men to flexibly embrace and appropriate elements from various cultural contexts blurs the boundaries of inequality. This blurring, in turn, makes it more challenging for marginalized groups to discern and address these inequalities effectively. Participating in "Walk a Mile in Her Shoes" marches, an event aimed at raising awareness about domestic violence, involves men donning high-heeled shoes and walking a mile. This act, which involves men showing solidarity with women and wearing attire traditionally associated with women, might appear to distance them from the sexism and gendered dominance associated in hegemonic masculinity. However, as the

authors point out, the men taking part in this march can unintentionally perpetuate gender inequality while actively striving to combat it (Bridges and Pascoe 2014). Their interactions during the march reinforce aspects of gender inequality that serve as a foundation for domestic violence. Male participants make jokes about wearing women's clothing, boast about their ability to walk in heels, and make remarks about same-sex attraction–– creating that space between themselves and feminine elements. These jests linguistically align the participants with hegemonic masculinity, even though their actions may seem to distance them from it. As this process unfolds in various manners, such as in politics or in the media, Bridges and Pascoe, unlike Connell and Messerschmidt, assert that this demonstrates its presence at local, regional, national, and global scales (2014:252).

Strategic Borrowing
Hybrid masculinities often rest on the belief that the masculinities accessible to young, heterosexual, White men lack significance when compared to those of various "Others" whose identities were shaped through struggles for rights and acknowledgment. In reality, cultural appropriation plays a pivotal role in the formation of hybrid identities. Research on hybrid masculinities sheds light on how individuals in privileged social positions strategically incorporate elements from marginalized groups such as feminine behaviors and subordinated masculinities, positioning themselves symbolically within socially subordinated categories (Bridges and Pascoe 2014). Through this process, White men can present themselves as "victims" making it more challenging to discern inequality (Bridges and Pascoe

2014:252). Studies emphasizing the limited awareness among White individuals, who are often cisgendered, regarding their capacity for racial adaptability through hybrid identities, reveal notable distinctions from the experiences available to marginalized and subordinate communities (Bridges and Pascoe 2014). Patricia Hill Collins argues that "Authentic Black people must be contained – their authentic culture can enter White-controlled spaces, but they cannot" (Collins 2004:177). By strategically borrowing elements of performative "styles" associated with various marginalized and subordinate "Others," shows the side of consequence of masculinity transformations. Consider the example of a renowned musician, like Harry Styles, who has adopted feminine or androgynous fashion choices as a means to signal his alignment with progressive values and his willingness to challenge traditional gender norms. His actions, since leaving his former boy band, One Direction, have propelled his career and expanded his fan base due to his abrupt and flashy transformation. Styles appears to be questioning conventional ideas of sexuality and gender while at the same time embracing styles associated with marginalized groups. In doing so, this creates the "discursive distancing" that Bridges and Pascoe mention that allows him to create some separation from his inherent privilege and authority using elements tied to marginalized communities like women, gay men, non-binary people and others. Nonetheless, these actions may also be interpreted as performative, as someone like Harry Styles employs hybrid masculinity to camouflage the privileges and power inherently assigned to him. In doing so, he reinforces social and symbolic boundaries that serve to obscure his advantages. While adopting these fashion styles, actions, and behaviors, he may not actively challenge the institutional structures within the music industry that perpetuate gender disparities. Paradoxically, his actions could contribute to the continuation of these gender inequalities, especially if he remains silent during pivotal moments, or supports individuals who have been implicated in inappropriate and hurtful actions or behavior. Thus, hybrid masculinities have the potential to both conceal and perpetuate existing power dynamics while reproducing inequalities in unique and nuanced ways.

Contemporary actions of hybrid masculinities from this lens to my understanding, shows that rather than challenging inequality, it instead becomes muddled or blurred creating a situation where it becomes increasingly difficult for marginalized groups to clearly identify and effectively confront these inequalities. It further harms them or marginalizes them and continues to benefit groups who already hold so much power and privilege. This relates to Tony Silva's (2017) study that highlights White, heterosexual-identified men from rural southern areas appropriating specific elements of sexuality commonly associated with gay or bisexual men. Since upholding normative masculinity is crucial for social integration in rural regions, asserting a heterosexual identity becomes particularly vital in reinforcing this conventional masculinity. "Bud-sex" captures unique sexual interpretations in these rural men's experiences. I found this part specifically interesting "Probably because I am sexually attracted to myself. . . . David echoed, "I would lean primarily

towards White guys that are more or less like me" (Silva 2017:63). The participants overwhelmingly preferred to have sex with men like themselves who identified as masculine, White, and straight. This quote is interesting because it emphasizes how powerful the importance of these characteristics is for their interpretations of attaining normative masculinity whilst still holding to their straight identity even when the practice to attain masculinity through sex with other men in itself can be seen as gay or bisexual practices. Gay and bisexual men face humiliation, violence and discrimination through homophobic acts while the bud sex men maintain protection through distance. Through strategic borrowing and discursive distancing with gayness or bi-ness together grants these groups of men more power and privilege. In the context of "bud sex," these men engage in same-gender sexual encounters with individuals who share not only their gender but also their race, class, and sexuality. The concept of Whiteness plays a pivotal role in the context of bud-sex, serving to strengthen the participants' perception of their straightness and conventional rural masculinity (Silva 2017:62). Interestingly, despite the fluidity of sexuality that is largely supported today, which offers support in understanding that it exists on a spectrum, these men still insist on being regarded as solely straight individuals who practice conventional masculinity. Furthermore, they normalize their experiences by maintaining secrecy and selectivity in their choice of sexual partners (Silva 2017:66). These men validate their own sexuality as normative by framing bud sex as a purely a pleasure-driven interaction devoid of emotional connection, which they believe is reserved for

relationships with women. Among the married heterosexual male participants, their perspectives on engaging in same-sex encounters outside of their marriages serve to reinforce their heterosexual masculinity and also "do not count as cheating" (Silva 2017:67). While the men that engage in bud sex are undeniably challenging conventional gender and sexual distinctions through their discourse, they are concurrently reinforcing divisions between gay and straight orientations, as well as the intricate systems of power, inequality, gender, race, and sexuality.

Conclusion

The intricate relationship between masculinity and power serves as a lens through which we can discern the ways in which gender dynamics are in a state of perpetual flux which not only uncover transformation of emerging masculinities but also highlight specific consequences related to some. Men strategically employ symbolic representations of masculinity and dominance to assert their control over women, and marginalized groups, perpetuating hierarchical structures that compel conformity and label deviation as inferior. These concepts not only maintain established privileges for certain groups, mainly White, but also shield them from scrutiny. To effectively address and combat these dynamics, there must be an evolving interpretive framework that recognizes the transformative nature of masculinities and their capacity to challenge gender inequality. By deepening our comprehension of these concepts and their intricate interplay, we pave the way for a more inclusive and equitable society, where traditional power structures are dismantled, and gender

equality is not just a goal but a tangible reality. The evolving interpretive framework, as suggested, must also be accompanied by ongoing research and dialogue that keeps pace with the ever-changing landscape of gender dynamics and evolving masculinities and femininities. By integrating these multifarious strategies, we can hope to foster a society where masculinity and power are no longer used to obscure gender orders but rather become instruments for dismantling inequalities and championing true gender equality.

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KARL MARX
The German Ideology

BY TOM ESPINOZA
GRADUATE STUDENT
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

Inspired by both the French and the German Enlightenments, and deeply influenced by his intellectual and philosophical contemporaries, German-born economist, historian, and social theorist Karl Marx (1818-1883) wrote The German Ideology (1845-1846) and subsequent works in reaction to the horrific economic social conditions related to capitalism (Coser 1977). Marx cited problems such as child-labor, dangerous workplaces, and unsanitary living conditions as problems that had emerged as a consequence of the industrial revolution and the essentially global dominance of capitalist economies (Coser 1977). With the critical and precise goal to effectively construct a theoretical model of human history that could explain the state of affairs in the world, Marx also sought to build a theoretical model that could, in fact and in reality, change the world. Marx's theory of historical materialism begins by following modern mankind's transition from feudalism to industrial capitalism and the creation of new economic classes and social conditions. Most importantly, Karl Marx was markedly influenced by the works of previous sociological theorists although, at times, Marx's ideas stood in stark contrast to his intellectual predecessors. Despite moving away from traditional doctrines, Marx's work is both a radical departure from his eighteenth- century predecessors and a result of their contributions. Marx's contributions to the field of sociology and to other academic fields, as well as the main theoretical concepts that Karl Marx fashioned, are still relevant today. Marx's interpretations of social conditions in modern industrial society have clearly influenced generations of communities around the world. To be sure, modern society has tried for over one hundred and fifty years to understand the work of Karl Marx. This essay will summarize and critique Karl Marx's main ideas from The German Ideology, and provide an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of Marx's theory of historical materialism.

Written in reaction to the work of German idealist Georg W.F. Hegel (1770-1831), Karl Marx's *The German Ideology* (1845-1846) argued that economic conditions fuel

historical change, whereas Hegel posited that man's ideas were the driving force behind social change. While in agreement with Hegel's contention that each consecutive stage in history and social evolution bears the imperative effects of the previous stage, Marx did not agree with Hegel's assertion that ideas are the driving force behind historical progress and social change (Coser 1977). According to Marx, history has shown that whether a society is tribal, feudal, capitalist, or socialist, social change is always driven by material existence—not by ideas or consciousness, as was Hegel's position. According to Marx's theory of historical materialism, from tribal times to feudal days, and from capitalist to socialist and communist epochs in human history, the active chronicle of man has always evolved according to economic conditions and the parameters of economic determinism (Marx and Engels 1972). Within this framework or Marx's superstructure, lie modern society's arts, religion, laws, and cultural institutions that secure society's material base to its institutions. In Marx' view, the institutions that possess control over society's technology, and that hold structural jurisdiction over society's ideas, also provide the roles that people play in their daily lives—roles which are inherent to each individual's class position (Marx and Engels 1972).

In clear contrast to Hegel's position that ideas and ideologies determine modern society's class antagonisms and struggles, Marx, from *The German Ideology* contends that ideas are not the cause of class antagonisms, holding that "life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life" (p. 119), and arguing that ideas do not exist outside of physical reality. Unlike Hegel's and other traditional perspectives, it is Marx' contention that the progress of history is not determined by a struggle over ideas, but, instead, that "the history of existing societies is the history of class struggles" (p. 136). In contrast to Hegel's idealistic framework, Marx contends that, without any religious or transcendental conjecture, human production (i.e., *activity*; work) shapes modern social and political structures. In Marx' view, political and social relations such as class conflict are related to the manner by which a society's labor is divided (Coser 1977).

Marx posits that this class struggle serves as both the impetus for social change and the motor that drives history, while also asserting that modern society's *division of labor* manifests itself in both the ruling and the proletariat classes (Coser 1977). Following in the tradition of French economic social theorist Henri de Saint-Simon (1760-1825) who viewed modern society as a veritable workshop of industrial relations driven by property relations and class struggle, Marx concurred that class struggle is related to the concepts of property and the private ownership of the means of production. Marx viewed property and the private ownership of the means of production as the most important factors spurring modern society's industrial and class relations. For Marx, class relations are effectively based on a relationship adroitly defined by the inherent domination and subordination between the two prominent social classes that were created by modern capitalism (Coser 1977). Marx identifies these two social classes as those groups that own the means of production (bourgeoisie) and

the workers (proletariat). The bourgeoisie class are typically those who own property, while the proletariat represent the propertyless factions of modern society who are essentially mired in modern society's complex division of labor (Edles and Appelrouth 2021).

In Marx's view, modern society's division of labor is based on the natural division of labor in the family—a division of labor that is defined by, first, the mutual dependence of those who are dividing the labor, and, secondly, by a division of labor which features the unequal distribution of labor, products, and property (Marx and Engels 1972). Marx posited that modern society's division of labor inherently leads to the formation of antagonistic classes, and also leads to the *alienation* or estrangement of individuals from their labor, from the product they produce, from other people, and from themselves (Marx and Engels 1972). This experience of separation amid the antagonism that is class struggle, necessarily results in man's labor, products, and property coming to oppose and dominate him, as noted by Marx. From the *German Ideology,* Marx asserts that class struggle and alienation are the result of the involuntary, natural division of labor in which man's activity controls him and "man's own deed becomes an alien power opposed to him" (p. 124), whereby man's activity/work essentially enslaves him. Moreover, both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat experience alienation, but each one experiences it in a different manner. For example, the bourgeoisie feels affirmed and satisfied in this alienation while, conversely, the proletariat feels destroyed, powerless, and expendable. Marx viewed modern society's

private ownership of the forces of production as alienating the worker from the product their labor produced, and also reducing the worker's role to one that is filled with routinized tasks that essentially lessen the worker's role to that of an easily replaceable tool (Marx and Engels 1972).

Marx's assertions about both alienation and about religion were influenced by his predecessors and contemporaries including German philosopher and anthropologist Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872), a philosopher whose critique of Christianity concluded that religious phenomena were essentially alienated reifications of man's own nature. Similar to Marx's position, Feuerbach contends that the very existence of religion (and other institutions) bears proof that men are controlled by and subject to persecution from objects which they themselves created. In addition, like Feuerbach, Marx holds that it is man that invented religion, but that man now finds himself challenged and dominated by its force which holds alien powers and is typically reified as something separate from man.

Marx's work follows the sociological economic theory of *economic determinism* which holds that economic and material conditions form society's economic base and act to support important societal institutions such as the family, education, and religion. For Marx, modern economic determinism is defined by the economic relationships which are foundational to all of society's institutions and include social and political arrangements. From Marx's perspective, all of society's institutions function similarly. For example, being a product of society's economic base, religion is created and

defined by the ruling class. Representing the ruling ideas and values, religion helps to regulate society's social order while, at the same time, religion provides a reflection of the ideas and values held by the owners of society's means of production (Coser 1977).

Central to Marx's theory is the assertion that religion is essentially a tool that numbs, exploits, and oppresses the proletariat, while maintaining the strategic social stratification and the interests of the dominant economic class who control the means of production. For Marx, the only connection remaining between the individual and the forces of production in modern society is the individual's labor. In contrast to Hegel's position and to German philosophical tradition, Marx posited that the real connection between modern men is not based on any "ideal" or imagined, metaphysical, moral, or religious dogma, but instead, the real link between men in modern society is their history of industry and exchange. In Marx's view, institutions such as the family, education, and religion represent the economic and material connection between men (Marx and Engels 1972).

One of the strengths of Marx's theory is that his conjecture that capitalism would experience global expansion was accurate and, today, there exists a global capitalist market which includes the United States, Japan, the United Kingdom, Chile, and Germany. Today, capitalist economic markets also exist in Australia, Hong Kong, and Nigeria. Another strength of Marx's theory is his strong critique of capitalism which contends that capitalism creates social inequality. In addition, Marx's view that inequality is inevitable and functional in

a capitalist economy whose institutions serve the ruling class interests is still a relevant observation considering the many contemporary governments that do exist. Indeed, capitalism still carefully guides and filters man's cultural values, ideas, and institutions based on economic determinism. According to Marx in Capital (1867), money in the form of capital and commodities is always in process, and adding unto itself by holding a magical power whereby money "lays golden eggs" (p. 231). However, in Marx's view, money also alienates man from his work and his own existence. Essentially, man comes to worship money as a dominating force. As Marx envisaged, today, the prime mover of society is the economy (money). Another strength of Marx's theory, and contrary to the Enlightenment thinkers, is Marx's interpretation and understanding of social change being a product or function of society's changing economic and material conditions –rather than a product of ideas.

One weakness of Marx's theory, the idea of an economic class structure only containing two social classes, is considered by some to be too simple an approach when defining modern society's relatively involute socioeconomic class levels. Marx does offer that a *lumpin proletariat* or a class of outcasts does exist, however, Marx does not include a sufficiently multifaceted level of classes. These socioeconomic classes might include, for example, a lower middle class, or an upper middle class. Another weakness of Marx's theory is that his *labor theory of value* rests solely on an overly-simplistic, and too materialistic, analytic approach. Marx's approach to understanding economic value in terms of the labor it takes to create an object or "thing," and Marx's definition of

what a "thing" is actually worth as being anchored to labor hours, has come under scrutiny. Critics have interpreted Marx' labor theory of value as largely disregarding symbolic meanings and exchange value interpretations that are characteristic of the capitalist market and trade system. Critics have also cited another weakness of Marx' theory, specifically, Marx's contention that man's history culminates in a communist "utopia" as part of man's natural, historical, and material evolution. That has never happened. Another weakness to Marx' theory is the fact that neither Marx (nor his contemporaries) left any sort of template for the management of communist societies-- which has resulted in unparalleled death and destruction under such dictatorships as Joseph Stalin's Russia and Chairman Mao's China. Finally, another weakness of Marx' theory is that his prophetic claims that there would be a worldwide worker's revolution, or some type of military revolution that would change reality from its present state, has not come to fruition. Socialist regimes in Nazi Germany and the former Soviet Union are two examples of relatively coercive socialist countries that failed to realize a utopian future. In fact, despite the socialist and communist revolutions that have happened over the past 200 years, the history of man has not, thus far, culminated in man realizing his full human potential or species being-- as much as man has realized his role within the realm of the culture industry.

Karl Marx remains one of the most influential and the most controversial individuals in the domain of economics, and also continues to be the most prophetic and enduring figure in the world of classical sociology. Although Marx was correct in asserting that modern capitalism is necessary for the creation of wealth, Marx's communism or the "real movement which abolishes the present state of things" (p. 126) as predicted in The German Ideology, has not ended in a utopian society free from classes as prophesized by Marx. Nevertheless, essentially buoyed by its similarities and contrasts to the work of his contemporaries, the work of Karl Marx and Marx's theory of historical materialism are anchored to, and indebted to, the great thinkers that came before him and informed his perspective of the modern world—a perspective that has influenced the work of innumerable social scientists across the globe ever since Marx first put pen to paper.

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SIGNIFICANCE OF MICRO-LEVEL SOCIAL PROCESSES IN SOCIOLOGY

BY AYAN HASSAN
GRADUATE STUDENT
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

There has often been an emphasis on macro-level social processes within sociology, diminishing the significance of micro-level social processes within the field. Although looking at what occurs in large scale patterns can be beneficial to analyzing theories, small-scale processes still play a role in understanding attributes in overall concepts. While what transpires at the micro-level can be consequential in all social processes, the goal of this paper is to examine the relevance micro-level social processes play in sociology, focusing on conflict, acculturation, and socialization as three distinct types of social processes.

Social forces at the macro, meso, and micro level hold their prominence in examining social processes within sociology, although micro-level analyses are often neglected, their recorded research can go hand in hand with macro-level social processes that are later analyzed. The macro-level explores sociological analyses including large scale populations and society, the meso-level primarily focuses on either small or large organizations, and the micro-level targets small groups (Carter 2012). Micro-level theorizing can also be concurrent with the macro-level, according to Turner (2010) micro-theorizing in the social realm is similar to macro-level theorizing since it does not center on the details of empirical cases, but rather focuses on empirical occurrences as expressions of more generic processes and formations that exceed time and place and can also be explained with a proportionally small set of thorough abstract theoretical principles and models. Intra-group as well as inter-group processes are also central to examining micro-level processes especially within the contexts of conflict, acculturation, and socialization as it acknowledges what materializes in group formations.

In Bramsen's (2019) article, conflict was researched using a micro-level approach. The article studied the interaction between protesters and security forces in Bahrain. The research fieldwork in Bahrain combined with interviews of activists, journalists, and opposition politicians explored how the Arab uprising within the country was controlled and repressed. The article often refers to

Randall Collins' micro and macro violence theories. With a series of uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa, Bahrain was certainly not exempt from the ripple effects of the events taking place within its borders. Several underlying issues were at the forefront of these protests, most notably the tension between the Sunni and Shia sects living within the country. Many other causes such as unemployment, media censorship, authoritarianism, and widespread corruption also influenced hostility in the country. The conflict happening between the sects was directed to the Bahraini government, as the obvious mishandling of citizens protesting created a greater conflict than what was present before. The violent dynamic between protestors and police/military was subsequently repressed by using methods such as sectarian policies and non-intervention during the momentum of the uprising, and injuring, torturing, and imprisoning rather than killing protestors (Bramsen 2019).

The tactics in place can be measured with the micro-interactional violence pathways that Collins discussed; these pathways include attacking the weak, audience-oriented staged and controlled fair fights, confrontation-avoiding remote violence, confrontation-avoiding by deception, confrontation-avoiding by deception in technique (Collins 2009). These pathways highlight the dimension that micro-interactional violence within arising conflicts disclose the relationship between the aggressors and victims for violence and emerging conflict to be successful. The application of the theoretical lenses of micro-level sociology in the article depended on dissecting the micro-interactions of

repression and dissent.

The findings from Bramsen's (2019) article also addressed the emotional aspects of conflict in how de-energizing repression eventually silenced protestors all together. The micro-level analysis of emotional energy in the article references three main types of interaction rituals in conflict, solidarity interaction rituals, domination rituals, and conflict interaction rituals. Because the military and police used a constrained form of violence that did not reach a lethal level, this de-energized the protest movement, applying domination rituals in this context. By zooming in at the social processes at the micro-level, detailed accounts of the events and the dynamics of the interactions can be analyzed repression within conflicts.

Similar to conflict, assessing acculturation at the micro-level can add perspective to the nuances social processes undeniably hold. In the article by Schwartz et al. (2020), a micro-level analysis of acculturation was examined using a sample of first- and second-generation Hispanic college students in Miami as participants in the study. The study included a twelve-day diary design exploring the daily challenges in the students' heritage and destination cultural practices, values, and identifications. Fluctuations regarding the students' well-being, internalizing symptoms, and externalizing problems were also researched at the micro-level to measure the degree of significance these variables hold. The survey sent out to the participants consisted of demographic questions and closed-ended questions determining identity, acculturation, well-being, and psychosocial functioning.

The findings from the article concluded that daily volatility in terms of comfort with speaking English, collectivist values, and ethnic identity appeared to be the most afflicting for the participants. Fluctuations also coincided with the outcomes; for example, the fluctuations in comfort with speaking English negatively predicted three of the four well-being outcomes and positively predicted all the internalizing and externalizing factors for the participants (Schwartz et al. 2020). These correlations were disclosed using a micro-level approach as opposed to a macro-level as studying acculturation at the micro- level can constitute change and stability in distinct contextual conditions and events. While applying a macro-level approach in researching acculturation focuses on long-term changes, acculturation has often been theorized to materialize through day-to-day actions. Utilizing research gathered from viewing acculturation at the micro-level can emphasize the daily and rapid changing interactions as well as fluctuations that occur, setting the scene for macro-level analyses; this signifies the value of considering micro-level social processes.

Considering micro-level processes in relation to socialization is also just as pertinent to other social processes. Shimizutani, Suzuki, and Noguchi (2008) examined how the socialization of long-term care influences the female labor market participation in Japan, producing micro-level evidence that correlates the relationship between the long-term care insurance scheme and female labor participation (Shimizutani et al. 2008). Due to rapid aging, Japan's population has started to decrease, this has directly impacted the working age population. To counteract this, the Japanese government implemented a public elderly insurance program targeted at decreasing the responsibility of care in the household, which is held by women. The family is generally the first and primary agent of socialization (Carter 2012) therefore, possible cultural traditions such as women carrying the responsibility of caretaking the elderly in the household could be a byproduct of that.

The main purpose of this insurance program was to socialize the burden of elderly care and therefore encourage female labor market participation (Shimizutani et al. 2008). The dataset for this study was split into two categories, households containing an elderly person who needs care and is eligible to receive care through the insurance scheme that was put in place in 2000, and the other consisting of chronically ill patients, however only some of those patients needed care. The dataset also included details of the labor status of the main caretaker in a household who was typically female, before and after the installment of the insurance scheme in 2000. The results from the data concluded that the insurance scheme implemented by the government had no effect on female labor market participation in the year following the insurance scheme's introduction, however two and half years after the insurance scheme was put in place a positive and large effect was found. Researching socialization at a small-scale also stresses the latent function found in the data. The working age population also increased due to the long-term care insurance, causing it to be a latent function. This article analyzed socialization producing micro-level datasets that detailed

the correlation between at-home elderly and female labor market participation and how it has been impacted by the insurance scheme; indicating how micro-level analyses are applied in social processes like socialization.

Observing cultural interpretation on the micro-level as it relates to socialization can be applied to another article. The interactional processes of cultural interpretations as well as transmission regarding the mythopoetic men's movement was analyzed using a micro-level approach (Magnuson 2007). The potential of establishing a cultural identity within a group can heavily rely on its leader. The study researches the processes leadership within the movement by using participant-observation within open-ended field interviews and meetings. The group's leader was acting as a socializing agent to the new group members of the movement; this is essential to defining what type of culture setting in terms of beliefs and attitudes should be recognized as a member of the group. The leader would often exercise his authority in meetings and would expel members who did not possess similar traits that coincided with the cultural identity of the group. The data from the ethnographic study suggested a distinct set of core practices that were applied as a means toward the socialization of the men involved, the leader being able to define and maintain specific sets of ideas and standards by exercising authority and interactional power (Magnuson 2007). This micro-level approach provided nuances in relation to socialization and group identity.

Social processes occurring at the macro,

meso, and micro level are fundamental in the sociological realm. What was referenced in the articles emphasizes the significance of micro-level social processes in theories and how it provides substantial insight on details and effects on what transpires in studies. Analyzing social processes at the micro-level like conflict, acculturation, and socialization presents variety in researching areas of group identity, attitudes, and values.

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STUDENT PROFILES

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE INCREDIBLE STUDENTS WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THIS EDITION OF LA SOCIOLOGÍA DE CSUN

Tom Espinoza

He/Him

Tom originally attended CSUN during the 1980s. He returned to college and earned two associate degrees at the College of the Canyons in Valencia, CA. while working in a NASA-funded internship at CSUN before completing his Bachelor's Degree in Sociology in Fall 2022. Tom is working towards becoming a professor at a community college and hopes that his educational journey will serve as a message to all students, young and old, that anything is possible. Tom has spent the last two years working as an Instructional Student Assistant at CSUN and is interested in studying the relationship between alcohol and religion in modern cultures, as well as exploring the impact of individuals' self-identified social class on depression in college students and adults. Tom will earn his Master's Degree in the Summer of 2025.
Contact Info: tom.espinoza.654@my.csun.edu

Heidi Garayoa
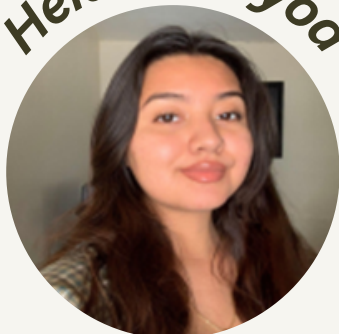
She/Her

Heidi is a first-year Graduate student pursuing her M.A. in Sociology. She hopes to become a professor one day or work in Human Resources for the film industry. Her research areas of interest are education demographics, population dynamics, and classical and contemporary theory. During her undergraduate studies, she participated in CSUN's symposium and won first place in her group. Upon beginning her academic career in the master's program, this is her second publication with La Sociología de CSUN. Outside of work, she is a barista with a passion for coffee and connection :)
Contact Info: heidi.garayoa.861@my.csun.edu

Armando Gonzalez

He/Him

Armando Gonzalez, a Mexican American from Long Beach, CA, completed his studies at UCLA with a deep interest in sociology. He aims to pursue a career as a sociology professor at a four-year university. This semester, he worked as an ISA for two professors and plans to research racial disparities in the U.S. criminal justice system and college completion rates using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Armando actively engages in sociology-related organizations, advocating for equality and social justice.
Contact Info: armando.gonzalez.666@my.csun.edu

Juliana Guzman

She/Her

Juliana Guzman is a first-year graduate student in the Sociology master's program and a proud first-generation college student. She graduated magna cum laude from CSUN in 2024 with a bachelor's degree in Sociology. Her academic journey has been deeply personal and transformative, driven by a passion for understanding human interactions. Juliana's research interests reflect her own experiences and those of others, focusing on Media/Communication, especially social media, the Sociology of Culture, Race/Ethnicity, and Immigration/Migration. She aims to shed light on these critical issues and contribute to a more inclusive society.
Contact Info: juliana.guzman.379@my.csun.edu

Ayan Hassan

She/Her

Ayan's academic journey, shaped by her family's belief in education and supportive professors, reflects her commitment to intellectual growth. As an undergraduate at Arizona State University, she excelled in global health projects, earning Dean's List honors and membership in Phi Kappa Phi. Now a graduate student and member of Alpha Kappa Delta, Ayan recently secured second place in a poster presentation on social media's impact on global conflicts. Her career goals focus on evaluation research and policy analysis, particularly for underrepresented populations. Ayan is currently an ISA in the Sociology Department.
Contact Info: ayan.hassan.341@my.csun.edu

Arianna Passan Sanz

She/Her

Arianna is a master's student in the sociology program at CSUN. She is passionate about exploring topics on gender, family, and social psychology. In her final year, she has cherished building meaningful connections with professors and peers who have inspired her growth. Her thesis focused on the menstrual experiences of Latinx women, reflects her commitment to amplifying underrepresented narratives and advocating for inclusivity in research. Arianna looks forward to sharing her work with both academic and broader communities, aiming to foster greater understanding, empowerment, and open dialogue on topics often overlooked. She aspires to continue her work, making meaningful contributions to social research.
Contact Info: arianna.passan.739@my.csun.edu

Sophia Taylor

She/Her

Sophia is a second-year graduate student with interests in the fields of gender, sexuality, queer studies, and identity. She primarily does qualitative research but enjoys quantitative as a way of generalizing her work. At CSUN she completed a pilot study on the lived experiences of queer art students, which she presented at PSA 2024, and a quantitative study examining how opinions towards pornography laws differ across sex and education level. Sophia is currently working on her thesis, which aims to understand the intersection between drag performances and activism.
Contact Info: sophia.taylor.054@my.csun.edu

Marissa Tolbert

She/They

Marissa Tolbert is in her final semester in CSUN's sociology graduate program. Her research focuses include sex & gender, mental health, Japanese pop culture, and the different challenges that people of color face in higher education. In her free time, Marissa enjoys going to concerts, cosplaying, and reading. After receiving a Ph.D. in sociology, Marissa's eventual career goals include teaching in both college and high school sociology classes.
Contact Info: marissa.tolbert.872@my.csun.edu

Ruby Wargo

She/They

Ruby is our incredible cover artist. They are expected to graduate spring of 2025.

Contact Info: ruby.wargo.961@my.csun.edu

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