

THE SOCIAL FACTISSUE NO: 9A SOCIOLOGY BULLETINAUG-SEP 2022





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THE SOCIAL FACT

INSIDE THIS SOCIOLOCIAL BULLETIN

Connecting the dots :

Sociology is a process in making. Everyday newspapers and weekly have many important news, which have sociological angle in subtle form. This chapter helps you to connect those dots and give a clear picture of the reality.

Sociology Explained :

World is one for sociology. Many authors explains social problems and social changes in length and breath through their research. This chapter collects and compiles those articles which are related to our syllabus.

Perspectives :

Beauty of Sociology, as a social science, is its capacity to offer different perspectives of a same topic. This chapter analyses a current topic with an unique social perspectives.



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CONNECTING THE DOTS

- Almost 6,200 children of Myanmar people who fled the civil war back home are studying in schools in Mizoram, mostly in the border districts. Officials in State capital Aizawl said most of the students who have taken refuge from across the international border are in government-run schools as it shares a 510 km border with Myanmar : **Clifford Geertz opinies that Western concept of nation-state is not an omnipresent one and trans border ethno nationalism is very much evident in the 21st century.**
- The transgender community observes Navratri with total dedication to invoke goddess Durga and seek her blessings and this puja, they are organising a unique one every year, making even the idol on their own here. An outfit that works for the rights of the LGBT community said, "We implore the goddess to make us man or woman in our next birth, pray to her to liberate us from the shackles of indignity and humiliation. : Compensators theory says, As long as the problems of today proliferates, the hope of tomorrow exists, religion will find its place in the world.
- Rights group Open Stadiums have called on FIFA to throw Iran out of the World Cup finals in Qatar in November because of the country's treatment of women. The organisation said Iranian authorities continued to refuse to allow female fans access to games inside the country despite pressure from the game's governing body : Pressure groups around the world are now focussing on the social issues like rights, dignity of the women as against 19th century pressure groups and now it ushers a wave of new social movements.

- Social media platforms are posing new challenges to child safety. Children are being manipulated on social media platforms, technically known as grooming and these agencies are not ready to cooperate. The government wants these companies to give parents the right to access to accounts of children on social media but these multi national companies are ignorant and not ready to cooperate with state : Kenichi Ohmae in his borderless world explains the growing dominance of transnational company in the day to day life of people and its tussle over the nation state.
- The rate of the people experiencing suicidal thoughts has increased globally after the Covid-19 pandemic, said director (health and family welfare services). Growing social and economic inequalities, protracted conflicts, violence, public health related-emergencies affect the whole population : This was predicted by Durkheim in his theory of suicide through suicidogenic currents in the complex society, where in, lack of integration and regulation would lead to egoistic and anomic suicide respectively.
- Leaders of six communities(Tai-Ahom, Matak, Moran, Chutia, Koch-Rajbongshi, and Adivasi) in Assam, which are agitating for Scheduled Tribe status in their State, have stressed the need to stay united in their fight. A consensus was arrived at regarding the inclusion of just two of the six agitating communities — Matak and Moran — with more meetings promised to discuss the possibility of including the others : 'Scramble for benefits' concept where group of communities unite to avail the concession of a democratic state. Desanskritization for reservation also similar to this.
- The recent data shows that the aggravation of depression and other mental health issues leading to suicide is being repeatedly attributed to technology. Factors such as cyberbullying, loss of self-esteem due to social media, extreme binge-watching of online content or heavy reliance on virtual followers/communities for validation are all said to be contributing to the issue : Marxist school says that above condition is the consequence of exploitation and alienation of capitalist society. People are moving towards false consciousness like binge watching in the name of leisure and prone to suicidal thoughts.

- A green group has launched a game of flashcards on the birds of India to keep children away from screens to the open for taking a flight to nature. The game titled 'Pakshi Parichay' ('What's that Bird?') entails a set of 40 flashcards on as many species and is aimed at making children get out of their homes, observing birds and learning more about them and this will indirectly socialise the children in a better way. : As per Parsons, the traditional role of family includes primary socialisation but due to differentiation and specialisation of institutions in the modern society, the family's role are now done by other institutions like NGO, day care centre etc.
- A Dalit guest lecturer at Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapith in Varanasi has lost his job and been barred from entering the university premises for suggesting on social media that women are better off reading the Constitution and Hindu Code Bill instead of fasting during Navratri : As Andre Betielle says, Constitution may direct on what direction a society should move but the customs would decide the final direction.
- Indian Railways has renamed Tipu Express, which plies between Mysuru and Bengaluru, as Wodeyar Express. However, critics have slammed the move on the grounds that this was in continuation of the Bharatiya Janata Party name-changing spree to efface historical legacy of Muslim rulers : Randhir singh criticised the political parties that they are now increasingly based on interest rather than on ideologies. Cultural nationalism in the name of revisiting the past is becoming new tool for vote bank politics.
- Two Kerala women reported missing by their families three months apart and bound by a common profession - selling lottery tickets - became victims of human sacrifice in a bizarre ritual orchestrated by a self-styled voodoo man professing to bring luck to a couple facing financial problems : This is an example of Dipankar Gupta's 'mistaken modernity' concept where in both modern values like rational education coexist with primordial activities like human sacrifice even in an 'advanced' state like Kerala.

- TMC invokes Bengali pride after Sourav Ganguly loses out on second term as BCCI chief. TMC cites this as an act of "political vendetta" against one of the biggest sporting icons of West Bengal. It was an attempt to point out that Mr. Ganguly had been "sidelined" since he was from Bengal, thereby attempting to raise the plank of Bengali pride, an issue which the TMC used successfully in the 2021 Assembly polls : Ethnic mobilisation is very much prevalent in Indian politics, it helps in capturing power for elites and at the same time provides the solidarity for the commoners
- In a report titled, We are being punished by the law: Three years since of abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu & Kashmir, Amnesty documented interrogations, travel bans and detentions of journalists and human rights defenders. civil society and media in Jammu and Kashmir have been subjected to a vicious crackdown by the Indian government, which is determined to stifle dissent using draconian laws, policies and unlawful practices in their arsenal : Ideological state apparatus of Althusser explains the above observation where in state tries to dominate the narratives in the group using its authority.
- In Rajasthan, more than half the cases registered for crimes against women were false. In the majority of the rape cases, the perpetrators are the known people. 56% of these cases of crimes against women are false. This trend is almost similar in other states also. : Supreme court judge Hima kohli observes that the misuse of a law can't be reason for the repealing or amending a law. We Have Not Reached The Point Where Men Need Protection From Women. We can do as much as we can to nip the misuse at the bud. However, there is no denying that the power structure is in favour of men
- To make Uttar Pradesh free of abusive language, Selfie with daughter foundation has launched an innovative campaign "Gaali Band (stop abusing)" whereby a chart is put up in houses and the number of abuses hurled by male members of a family in a day are marked and counted : Parsons definition of functions of family is criticised by the fact that it gives only the male personality stabilization. The above campaign will solve this issue and ensures dignity of the woman and democratisation of relations

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A PICTURE TO PONDER



"After polluting all the air, after draining all the rivers, after cutting all the trees, we will realise we cannot eat money"



MENSTRUATION AND RIGHT TO WORSHIP

Paper 1: Patriarchy and sexual division of labour

Paper 2: Violence against women.

The growing protest against temples that deny access to menstruating women should also challenge the institutionalisation of faith and the mediating power of the priest. Banning menstruating women to enter places of worship by priests is not new in India. What is interesting is that a few fundamentalist forces want to nurture and continue this practice in the name of religion and cultural practices. What needs to be argued is whether these priests or fundamental forces have the right to decide the appropriate behaviour for women in religious places. Secondly, are these forces above the Constitution and the constitutional rights given to its citizens by the state? Finally, what is the role of the state in protecting and ensuring the rights of its citizens? It seems that there is an increasing interest and inclination towards religion, and worship of gods and goddesses in recent years. It would be interesting to understand and explore this new found interest, its political economy and the forces behind it. Historically, many of these institutions have played a significant role in nurturing patriarchy and disempowering women. It is difficult to understand why women are trying to break centuries old traditions that apart from their right of access to god and the temple. In fact, earlier temple entry movements by marginalised sections were more of a symbol of protest against exclusion and challenge to establish a power hierarchy in the society rather than a renewed interest in God and Goddesses. Undoubtedly, banning entry to the temple is discriminatory since it subverts the idea of everyone being equal to God (Saxena 2016). Nevertheless, there is a trap which women should be aware of. They should understand that the power and influence of organised religion cannot be limited to the temple.

The demand to access temples to worship god runs the risk of institutionalising the mediating power of the priests. The conflict is obvious and expected, where priests are openly announcing and passing strictures that menstruating women will not be allowed to enter the place of worship. In this conflict, the state has become a mute spectator or playing in the hands of priests. Although the Supreme Court of India has pronounced that such a prohibition is unconstitutional, the Kerala state government's stand to defend the ban on the entry of women in Sabrimala temple is surprising. The Kerala government told the Supreme Court that beliefs and customs of devotees cannot be changed through a judicial process and that "the opinion of the priests is final" (Anand 2016).

The government fails to recognise women as a devotee. It seems that it has lost its power to protect its citizens, safeguard people's constitutional rights, and stand for marginalised and excluded population groups including women. In a secular country like India, which promises to protect the rights of its citizens to practice religion and faith of his or her choice, such rulings are a violation of one's rights. The recent ruling by the Sabrimala temple in Kerala is that it will only allow women to enter if a scanning machine is designed to ensure none of them are menstruating (Sanghani 2015).

The temple has currently prohibited the entry of all women in the menstrual age group because it believes that bleeding makes them impure which is not only an attack on women's rights, but it is a question of one's privacy. It is another form of Hindu majoritarianism, where a few wants to dictate what to do and what not. It is a serious issue—where these forces are proclaiming themselves as supreme power above the State, although not in words but in acts. We do not know whether the state is supreme or these fundamentalist forces. We have seen the consequences of it in the other parts of the world where these fundamentalist forces have thrown out the State. The state should take strict action against those brahmanical fundamentalist forces, otherwise they are nurturing the ground for Hindu talibanisation.

Women's groups and organisations have come forward and challenged this whole notion of "purity-impurity" and are protesting against this unjust ruling by the temple heads in the name of god, religion, culture and practices. However, one should not forget that it is not their fight only. There is a need to fight against this whole design of fundamentalist forces to break the social fabric of society. Patriarchal forces are reemerging to marginalise, exclude and control women's mobility and access to institutions. Today, its women, tomorrow it will be for others, particularly the marginalised and excluded population groups.

CRISIS AND THE GODDESS CULT

Paper 1: Types of religious practices

Paper 2: Religion in modern society

Invoking the goddess in times of disease and health crises, as with "Corona Devi" in the COVID-19 pandemic, is rooted in the mingling of Brahminical and tribal cultures. We are witnessing an unprecedented pandemic that is destroying the everyday narratives of the old world and replacing them with a "new normal." Although the pandemic has engulfed both "the Orient" and "the Occident," the world's response to it has been anything but homogeneous. While scientists across the world create vaccines and search for a cure for COVID-19, in some parts of India, the response to the disease has been superstitious—especially in the eastern states of Bihar, West Bengal, and Assam where some worshipped "Corona Devi," hoping to placate the "coronavirus goddess" and expecting a cure for the virus.

History tells us that the creation of the goddess cult dates back to the early medieval period. In the latter half of the Gupta era, land grants on the peripheries of villages and towns, in present-day West Bengal and Assam, were made to Brahmins in recognition of their services, and came to be known as "Brahmadeya" lands. As a result, with Brahmin communities as the main transporters of Brahminism to peripheral lands, there was an assimilation of Brahminism and local tribal culture in more ways than one, which created a strong and diverse regional identity. Historian Kunal Chakrabarti details the religious processes that stemmed from this assimilation of the Brahminical and non-Brahminical deities. According to Chakrabarti, the proliferation of the mother goddess cult and Tantrism is not a recent phenomenon, and is evident from the Mangal Kavyas, Bengali religious texts composed between the 13th and 18th centuries. Ethnographic accounts too suggest the region's long association with non-Brahminical goddesses. There was large-scale Brahmin migration in Bengal, after the Gupta period, to which tribal culture's interaction with Brahminism can be traced—the assimilation of Brahminical deities with the existing goddess cult was a result of a "puranic process."Since then, invoking the goddess to ward off disease has been a common act. In fact, many epide¬mics have given rise to the origin of a deity with the name of the disease, with the healthcare practices associated with it too becoming a part of the imagination. For instance, Sitala Devi, the goddess of smallpox, is imagined with a broom, a water container, and a fan made from plum leaves. These produce the cooling effect (sitala) that is required to lower the heat produced in the body during smallpox. And even today, despite the eradication of smallpox, Sitala puja is observed during the months associated with the infectious disease.

Similiarly, Manasha, a fertility goddess, is worshipped among the tribes in the eastern region, residing in the riverine belt, with the singing of Manasha Mangal in eastern Bengal during the monsoon playing an important part in the rituals. In everyday narratives, it is still believed that she protects people from snakebites. Ma Sasti, on the other hand, is believed to protect one's children, and is also worshipped as the last resort of "barren" women with fertility problems. But, of course, the same fertility problems in men don't seem to warrant the intervention of gods and goddesses. Therefore, in a region that has traditionally sought comfort in the goddess cult to overcome serious crises of everyday existence, it is easy to contextualise the worship of Corona Maa too. But, interestingly, these deities have always been imagined in the female form.

In Satyajit Ray's much celebrated film Devi (1960), set in 19th-century rural Bengal, the protagonist, Doyamoyee, is the lonely daughter-in-law of Kalikinkar Choudhury who imagines her as the living incarnation of goddess Kali. As the story progresses, she is worshipped and celebrated with great fanfare—she neither wishes for it, nor does she have a say in the matter. Later, when the attributes bestowed on her by the community fail to act as a solution for a grave tragedy, she is almost discarded mercilessly—once again denied voice and agency.

Gender relations in a patriarchal society thrive on this disparity, this contradiction—it serves the patriarchal project to construct, destroy and blame the female construct at will. And the creation of the goddess cult is not beyond it. Popular imagination thrives on the brittle state of the female goddess, who can be constructed and deconstructed as a patriarchal society wishes. The female identity and body is imagined as an object with a passive existence that can be created and distorted as per the society's needs. Similarly, the creation of Corona Maa in the popular imagination serves a specific purpose beyond just comfort in the face of disease—she can be blamed, vandalised and discarded if COVID-19 is undeterred, despite the goddess's imagined powers. In the past year, we have recognised that not all people have suffered the pandemic in equal measure. In our part of the world, caste and creed play a crucial role in determining the haves and have-nots in the social sphere. In the dearth of the basic necessities of existence, and the repeated failure of elected representatives, human suffering becomes a function of class.

If we delve into the literature on epidemics and natural cala¬mities in Bengal, what becomes evident is that disease and calamity remain in the background and the main focus is on hunger. This is what we see with the worship of Corona Devi too—with the imposition of a strict and sudden lockdown, a large section of the population faced an uncertain existence. In such a dire situation, physical distancing, immunity boosting, and sanitising could hardly make sense to those who had more immediate concerns. With a lack of confidence in the elected government and the scientific fraternity, the most vulnerable sections of society found hunger and sustenance as the bigger challenge. Thus, not only is the construct of Corona Maa the result of a desperate need for a solution to the healthcare crisis, but the crisis also reflects the failure of the state to ensure and guarantee basic human rights for a significant portion of the country.

SOCIOLOGY OF DOG VALUATION

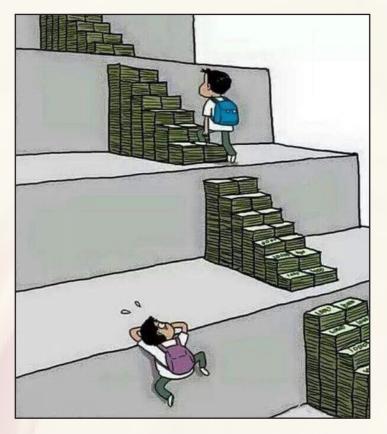
Paper 1: Scope of sociology

Sociology is all about society and its structures. As we enters 21st century, the role of pers especially dogs in our life increased exponentially so does the study about these creatures from sociological angle. Here, Jenny Enos explains the sociology of Dog Valuation, Sacralization, and the Dog Consumer Market. Long considered "man's best friend," dogs have undoubtedly come to occupy a significant role in U.S. society. Their popularity with Americans is striking: an estimated 63.4 million households owned a dog in 2019-2020, which makes up 67% of all households in the U.S. Dogs are by far the most popular pet in America. Dog owners are increasingly opting for more affectionate terms for their pets like "companion," "family member," or even "person." And perhaps rightly so. An abundance of research demonstrates that for many owners a dog can serve as an attachment figure- someone who the person turns to for psychological and emotional support. Indeed, the psychological benefits of being in the presence of an animal, and of a dog in particular, have proven to be plentiful: dogs can reduce a person's anxiety, depression, and stress, as well as increase their self-esteem and playfulness.

Given all of these psychological and emotional benefits to being around dogs, it is no surprise that dog adoptions and sales have soared during the COVID-19 pandemic. With little to no way to safely socialize with people, and with most employment relegated to the home, many individuals have found themselves with lifestyles more suitable for owning a pet than ever before. The pandemic has brought loneliness, stress, and anxiety for many. This trend of pandemic dog-adoption raises many concerns about what may happen once people start returning to work and to their normal, busy lives. For years, shelters have expressed concerns about the rate at which pets are surrendered during periods of increased stress and commitments (including during or just after the holidays). A dog's life span is 10-20 years, so those "pandemic puppies" will likely still be around when our lifestyles start returning to "normal."

Considering the widespread presence of dogs in our lives, perhaps more so this year than ever, it is worth further interrogating the role they play in society. Sociologists have long argued that in addition to their potential psychological benefits for humans, dogs are also cultural artifacts in the sense that our culture and various social processes shape what dogs mean to us and how we treat them. For example, scholars have argued that being socialized into traditionally masculine gender roles have led some men to seek emotional support in dogs more so than other people as a more "socially acceptable" outlet for their emotional needs. In this sense, our society's gender roles are seen as having a direct effect on how dogs are valued, particularly by men. While dogs have been part of human life since its inception, the drastic change in how we think about dogs - first as pure sources of labor to now as companions and sources of emotional support - says a lot about how the role of dogs is socially constructed.In a recently published article in Sociological Forum entitled "The Changing Valuation of Dogs," authors Dustin S. Stoltz, Justin Van Ness, and Mette Evelyn Bjerre investigate these changes further. They argue that there are many parallels between the changes we have recently seen in dogs' societal status and the change in children's status that occurred between the late 1800s and mid-1900s.

They refer to this process as "sacralization," whereby the perceived value of something (e.g. children or dogs) is shifted from being solely property and labor based to having "sacred" value – emotionally "priceless" value in and of itself. In the case of children, this change in valuation coincided with broad societal changes, such as increased legal protection for children and a shift in insurance companies' approach to children. Just as the more "humane" treatment of children gave rise to a whole economic market aimed at incorporating children as consumers in the household, Stoltz et al. argue that the change in how we value dogs has had significant impacts on the consumer market. They show that households now alter their consumption patterns for dogs and that an entirely new market for accommodating dogs' consumption wants and needs (e.g. different kinds of dog food, toys, policies, dog spas and gyms) has emerged – focused on the dog, rather than the owner, as a consumer. As an ad from Embrace Pet Insurance so eloquently summarizes what drives this new dogs-as-consumers market: "Your best friend deserves the best care." This is not simply a change in how we think about dogs; rather, it is a fundamental sociocultural shift with significant bearing on consumer markets. And within this new market, considering dogs to be priceless companions or family members who deserve "nothing but the best" certainly does come at a hefty price.



A PICTURE TO PONDER

"Mobility in the social ladder is the combination of economical capital, social capital and Cultural capital"







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PERSPECTIVES

FAR FROM POST RACIAL

Paper 1: Social stratification of race

Paper 2: Challenges of social transformation

Since the election of President Obama in 2008, many Americans have claimed that we live in a "post-racial society" in which race no longer matters. After all, if we elected a Black man to be president – the ultimate position of power in the country – how can people still claim that racism exists? Some telling societal metrics also speak to an increasingly leveled playing field between the races; for example, the difference in college enrollment rates for White and Black 18-to 24-year-olds has decreased from 8 percentage points in 2000 to 5 percentage points in 2018. At the very least, might these numbers suggest that we are headed in the right direction?

Unfortunately, the story is not that simple. What we think of as "overt" or "traditional" racism – where bias or prejudice is openly expressed – has been on a steady increase in recent years. In 2020, hate crimes in the U.S. reached the highest level in over a decade, with 64% of hate crimes being racially motivated. In 2015, the last year of Obama's term as president, a White man killed nine Black members of a church in South Carolina in what is considered one of the most heinous racial hate crimes in recent U.S. history. At the same time, sociologists have pointed out that it is not just these overt forms of racism we should be paying attention to. As Eduardo Bonilla-Silva has argued, a more subtle, "color-blind" racism runs rampant in our society, whereby White people are able to make statements about different racial groups in non-racial terms, thus not "sounding racist." For example, Whites may say that the reason why Black Americans are overrepresented among the unemployed is because they share a "culture of poor work ethic," and that they "don't see race – just people." While statements like these may seem innocuous, they ultimately (and insidiously) contribute to upholding white supremacy by denying the presence of structural racism and inequality.

Why, then, does racism in these forms persist? Sociologists have a long history of finding ways to explain race-based prejudice and bias. In his foundational 1967 book, Hubert M. Blalock laid the groundwork for what would later be called "group threat theory." According to this perspective, prejudice is produced when the majority group (in this case, White Americans) feels threatened by the minority group (Black Americans). In particular, the theory proposes that as the minority group increases in size, and when economic conditions (such as unemployment) worsen within the majority group, the sense of threat – and therefore prejudice – would increase within the majority group.

Because of a perceived competition over scarce resources in society, such as jobs, prejudice increases when the majority group feels they receive less of those resources. We see this sense of economic threat play out in current political debates about immigration, for example, where the majority group (native-born Americans) feels that the minority group (Latinx immigrants, in particular) is "stealing American jobs."

During a campaign event in Phoenix in 2015, then-candidate for President Donald Trump told the crowd that Mexicans are "taking our manufacturing jobs. They're taking our money. They're killing us." While it is impossible to say to what extent this anti-immigrant rhetoric helped Trump win the Presidency, it certainly seemed to have echoed the threat many Americans felt from immigrants. However, the widespread anti-immigrant prejudice in the U.S. is not just the result of economic threats – that is, that Americans are afraid that their jobs will be stolen by immigrants. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, anti-Asian hate crimes have reached unprecedented levels as Asian immigrants and Americans of Asian descent have been scapegoated based on their race. In this case, the majority group (non-Asian Americans) does not feel an economic sense of threat; rather, scholars have argued, they perceive a biological threat from the minority group based on the notion that the coronavirus disease originated in Asia.

In response to a biological threat, populations can become increasingly prejudiced against "outsiders" who are seen as responsible for creating and spreading the disease – and those who were already prejudiced may become encouraged to act out their feelings in the form of hate crimes. In a study recently published in Sociological Forum, Chelsea Daniels, Paul DiMaggio, G. Cristina Mora, and Hana Shepherd investigate the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic has influenced Californians' attitudes toward immigration, diversity, and Asian Americans. In spite of the widespread anti-Asian rhetoric and the increase in anti-Asian hate crimes since the pandemic began, they find that attitudes toward Asian Americans were unaffected when respondents were primed with questions about COVID-19.

However, being primed with questions about COVID-19 did decrease respondents' appreciation for diversity and their support for policies that create a pathway to citizenship among undocumented immigrants. As this study shows, the relationship between different groups and perceived threat is not necessarily straight forward. While the increase in anti-Asian hate crimes is certainly concerning, this study suggests that the pandemic has not necessarily generated widespread anti-Asian sentiment. Rather, the authors argue that the rise in hate crimes is likely because "elite expressions of bias made such actions acceptable" in the minds of some Americans, highlighting the potential influence of politicians who encourage scapegoating against groups.

POWER VS PRIVILEGE

Paper 1: Dimensions of stratification

: Sociological theories of power

For the past few months, we have been closely following the #MeToo movement. It is clear that what started as a simple social media hashtag has blossomed into a potential bellwether of the changing gender landscape. We both feel strongly that sociologists should be lending their analytical insights to help understand and advance the efforts for gender equality. But what is the role for sociologists like us who approach the world though multiple positions of power and privilege? Should we weigh in and risk sounding clueless or stay quiet so that we can listen and learn from others? Peter Kaufman gives his perspectives about this topic.

We tend to side with those who argue that saying nothing is part of the problem; silence connotes complicity and apathy. Clearly, we do not and cannot understand the situation completely, fully, and experientially as women do. Nevertheless, we also realize that the problems are largely our responsibility: All of the –isms of intolerance will not be rectified unless privileged individuals like ourselves are actively part of the solution. But the solution is to not just recognize our privilege; rather, we must recognize and relinquish our social power. Consider all of the stories that are coming out about men behaving egregiously—cases of sexual assault, abuse, harassment, intimidation, and violence. Whereas the general public and most media commentators have latched onto the concept of "male privilege" to analyze and contextualize these crimes, the truth is that they are all really about the unequal power balance between women and men.

In too many instances, the mainstream media is stuck on the sanitized language of privilege. As one commentator astutely pointed out, "privilege is clickbait." And sociologists may not be immune to focusing on privilege and excluding an analysis of power. For example, many sociology students are assigned Peggy McIntosh's classic essay, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack." Reading this essay is an important first step in thinking more critically about these issues. But equally important is extending this preliminary analysis to consider the underlying dimensions of privilege: structural and institutional power.

Although focusing on privilege does foster reflection, which can be valuable, there is limited utility in checking our privileges. To be clear, individuals like us do have many privileges and those privileges matter. While such acknowledgement can be important in its own right, it is more critical to focus on systems of power and oppression. Privilege reflection falls short when it fails to confront much less call for the dismantling of the unequal status quo.

We are not pointing out an insignificant difference of semantics. Language matters. The words we use to frame the problem become the markers we point to for the resolution of the problem. If privilege is all that we are concerned about, then mitigating privilege will be the main focus of our efforts. But even if we fully empty our invisible backpacks of privilege, the real generator of these inequalities, the societal power imbalances between women and men (as well as all other relationships based on power differentials—i.e., race), will remain unresolved.

Ask yourself: Are people excluded, ignored, harassed, assaulted, and even killed because they are lacking privilege? Or do they receive unjust and unfair treatment because they are lacking social power? We can even bring this to a personal level: It is not a privilege for us to be white, upper middle class, heterosexual able-bodied men; it is powerful. And unless we are willing to acknowledge, share, and ultimately renounce some of this power, the imbalance of power will never be equalized. We can point to some specific examples: The fact that over 80% of the United States Congress is male, much like other governments around the world, is because of power, not privilege, the fact that nearly 94% of Fortune 500 CEOs are men is because of power, not privilege, the fact that Donald Trump can be elected president of the United States despite nineteen accusations of sexual misconduct (much less when he is caught on tape bragging about grabbing women by the genitals) is because of power, not privilege.

To talk about privilege when we really mean power is to minimize and ignore the structural underpinnings of societal arrangements. We cannot overlook that some groups have more power than others. This power grants them access to resources, which enable their ability to navigate the social world more successfully and more safely. Other groups have less power and are saddled with societal rules that constrain their ability to grow, function, and prosper. These are what Émile Durkheim famously referred to as basic social facts and they must be part of the conversation. We are by no means the first ones to raise these points. For many years, critical sociologists and intersectional feminists have been arguing that we need to shift the discussion to a focus on structural power. We especially appreciate the recent analyses of Rebecca Traister and Roxane Gay. So isn't it time to finally heed their call? For power relations to fundamentally change, it will require a lot more than acknowledging or checking our privileges at the door. The #MeToo movement reminds us that gender inequality is more about power than privilege. In short, to fight against all the isms—sexism, racism, classism, heterosexism, ableism—is to fight the power.So, what should we do? Specifically, what should individuals like us who have a lot of social power do? What contributions can we make as powerful men? One suggestion we embrace comes from feminist scholar and activist bell hooks. In Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center she encourages men like us to be "true comrades in struggle." More specifically, she argues that we must be more vocal in our opposition to sexism; we must share responsibility in the effort to eradicate sexism; we must confront, oppose, and transform the sexism of our male peers; and we must work with others to transform male consciousness.

As individuals with social power, we need to learn to appropriately navigate the path of social change. We need to be on stage without necessarily or automatically taking the leading role. Men (especially white men) are accustomed to having their voices centered and amplified. We both have attended many meetings in which men (and sometimes we are guilty of this) loudly assert their opinions and points of view while others struggle to be heard (see: mansplaining). Those of us with social power need to do a much better job of listening, reflecting, collaborating, and sometimes even shutting up and stepping aside.

Ultimately, if we have any hope of eradicating social inequality and injustice, we must willingly speak and act in terms of power and not just privilege. After all, if it looks like power, operates like power, dominates like power, manifests like power, harms like power, controls like power, divides like power, and exploits like power, then it's probably about power, not privilege.

INEQUALITY IN DREAMS

Paper 1: Stratification and mobility

What do you want to be when you grow up?" Most children and teenagers are asked this question countless of times by well-meaning parents, teachers, and friends. They are often told that anything is possible, and that they can be absolutely anything they want to be. Some may dream of becoming the next Elon Musk, Mark Zuckerberg, or just some nebulous kind of "celebrity"; others may dream of becoming a doctor, veterinarian, or zookeeper. "Dream big!" is the mantra espoused by many parents who, often aware of the low likelihood of the outcome, nonetheless feel pressure to encourage their children's dreams. Parenting guides even tell parents to fight the urge to fact-check or reality-check what their children dream of.

Of course, most of these dreams never come true. In part, this is because dreams rarely involve any realistic or strategic planning around how the dream will be achieved. For example, my dream to become a dolphin trainer as a child was not something I ever actively pursued – even though I certainly could have. In this sense, dreams are different from aspirations, which often imply realistic and strategic steps toward realization. Rather, dreams are focused on the end goal; suddenly waking up and being that dolphin trainer or the new Elon Musk, without thinking about the work that needs to be accomplished before that end goal is achieved. The dream of being something (or someone) is less about what we ultimately think we could do with our lives, and more about who we are at our core and what sort of life we believe we deserve. As sociologists, we also have to consider another – and perhaps more important – reason as to why most dreams do not come true: inequality of opportunity. For example, it is more likely that a white, upper-class child achieves their dream of being a doctor than it is that their Black, working-class peers do so. We know that race and class constrain opportunities throughout the life course, particularly through inequalities in education – which is a key vehicle of upward mobility.

From the onset of their education, poor and minority students are segregated into the least well-funded school districts where resources, quality teachers, and safety are lacking. If college can even be of consideration for these students, the college application process (including the SATs) significantly disadvantage poor students and students of color. Then, once in college, increasingly unaffordable tuition and class-biased financial aid can sink students into insurmountable debt or force them to drop out. For these students, telling them to "dream big!" doesn't help all that much.

So in this sense, we can see that dream achievement can be inhibited by stratification. But what about our dreams, in and of themselves? Are all dreams "created equal"? No, write Karen A. Cerulo and Janet M. Ruane in their recently published article in Sociological Forum entitled "Future Imaginings: Public and Personal Culture, Social Location, and the Shaping of Dreams." Using data from focus groups and interviews with a wide range of people, they find that one's "social location" – experiences based on characteristics like race, class, and gender – shapes one's dreams about the future.

Overall, they argue that those in privileged social locations, like those who are white and upper-class, construct their dreams with positive "cultural scripts" or commonly held assumptions, like "anything is possible" or "dream big!" At the same time, those in less privileged social locations tend to construct their dreams along negative cultural scripts, such as believing that the social structure is "rigged" and stacked against those who already have less.

It is quite staggering to think that even our dreams of the future, which are so profoundly personal and imaginary, can be influenced and shaped by inequality and social forces. In many ways, however, this study exemplifies the promise of sociology – to uncover the patterned social structures underneath our believed-to-be individual and personal experiences, thoughts, and desires. It truly is the sociological future imagination.

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