# ELI ZARETSKY

*CAPITALISM, THE FAMILY & PERSONAL LIFE*

Sivarajavel IAS Academy 's

THE SOCIAL FACT

is a monthly bulletin for sociology current affairs which tries to give aspirants a new dimensions in their sociology preparations. The Magazine has been designed in such away that the reading experience is enriching and insightful for the readers.

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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

- *IIT Campuses across India are organizing screenings of Debalina Majumder's 'Gay India Matrimony (GIM)' - the film which along with Shabnam Virmani's 'Had-Anhad' was stalled from screening at Cuttack's Ravenshaw University recently. the film is shown on the very day when a trans-identifying research scholar of JU was manhandled by a family member for being gender non-conforming:* **The above incident is an expression to fight against homophobia. It encompasses a range of negative attitudes and feelings toward homosexuality or people who are identified or perceived as being lesbian, gay, or bisexual. It has been defined as contempt, prejudice, aversion, hatred, or antipathy, may be based on irrational fear, and may also be related to religious beliefs.**

- *Following the Madras high court order, the Tamil Nadu government has issued an order banning performance of 'kuravan kurathi' dance in the cultural programmes. Recently, Madras high court ordered the government to ensure that no dance performance was identified as using a caste/tribal community's name to insult or degrade people belonging to such community :* **The government should not grant permission for the cultural programmes depicting obscene and denigrating the social status of people belonging to the kuravar community.**

- *Over 100 women students of Delhi University broke the curfew timings of their hostels and PGs to participate in a midnight march on a Sunday around North Campus to "reclaim the streets at night". Raising slogans against curfew timings for women students, they walked around the campus and gathered outside the Arts Faculty till 3 a.m. :* **We see this women's night march as a testament to the resilience and strength of women The march is a strong statement about women demanding the right to live without fear and occupy public spaces without restrictions.**

- *The Afghan Journalist Safety Committee, an Afghan watchdog organization that promotes the safety of journalists and press freedom and which was involved in mediation for the station's reopening, welcomed the resumption of broadcasts. A women-run radio station in northeastern Afghanistan has resumed its broadcasts after officials shut it down for a week for playing music during the holy month of Ramadan :* **Active Civil society organizations (CSOs) can provide both immediate relief and longer-term transformative change – by defending collective interests and increasing accountability; providing solidarity mechanisms and promoting participation; influencing decision making**

- *In an attempt at reaching out to the numerically significant Dalit community, Samajwadi Party (SP) national president Akhilesh Yadav is likely to unveil a statue of Bahujan Samaj Party founder and Dalit leader Kanshi Ram at a function in Rae Bareli. Mr. Yadav will also address a public meeting where he is likely to focus on the party's agenda of Other Backward Classes-Dalit unity, which gained momentum after the 2022 Vidhan Sabha polls :* **This is an example of opportunistic politics, which can hamper Indian Secularism, Amartya Sen argued that secular India will be possible only through education, caste free employment and democratic participation.**

- *NASA on Monday named the first woman and the first African American ever assigned as astronauts to a lunar mission. Christina Koch, an engineer, was named as a mission specialist for the Artemis II lunar fly-by. Victor Glover, a U.S. Navy aviator, will be the first Black astronaut to be sent on a lunar mission:* **This is a conscious effort of Nation building by including women and black people. Nation-building is the process whereby a society of people with diverse origins, histories, languages, cultures, and religions come together within the boundaries of a sovereign state**

- *The Dalai Lama has apologized after a video emerged showing the spiritual leader kissing a child on the lips and then asking him to "suck my tongue" at an event in northern India :* **This is an example of violence against vulnerable population which includes children.**

- *The Bareilly Development Authority's (BDA) decision to remove structures and houses said to be illegally built on the land acquired by the authority in two-three villages of the district has led to major protests and pushback. The protesters alleged that about 600 houses are likely to be demolished and at least 21,000 people — mostly from the SC, Muslim, and OBC social groups who either work as daily wage laborers or street vendors — would become homeless:* **This is a classic example of marginalization on the basis of the socio-economic structure. Protesters have their concerns and anxieties and are often reminded of their marginal positions.**

- *Muslim, Jain, Sikh, and Christian leaders, along with the RSS, are opposing same-sex marriage as the SC takes up the case, arguing that it contravenes scriptures, societal values, and natural order. it is against the natural family order apart from being in contravention of their differing scriptures. Several leaders reiterated the sentiment that marriage is an institution for procreation, not recreation:* **Religious leaders across different faiths have joined hands to oppose the plea for recognition of same-sex marriages in the SC showing the fear of losing their (Religion) hold over the individuals through the institution of the family.**

- *In Bison Hills, wedding bells fall silent as Konda Reddi tribals face 'cultural trauma as the government told them to be prepared to be displaced from Godavari River before the next monsoon arrives:* **This is a challenge of social transformation. From birth, the wedding to death, every ritual begins with a holy dip in the Godavari. For some rituals, soil and sand are brought from the banks of the river and offered to our local deities to commence agricultural activities. Among many problems, Cultural shock and trauma is the most difficult one faced by the displaced communities since the independence.**

- *National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has revised its books, including the 12th class History book by removing the chapters on the Mughal empire. The change will be applicable to all the schools that follow NCERT across the country :* **Neo Marxists like Althusser strongly proclaims that directly and indirectly political leadership, church, local leadership and industrial houses control education.**

- *The FSSAI had issued a directive to the federation of milk producers in Tamil Nadu, asking them to change the labels of their curd packets from 'curd' in English and 'thayir' in Tamil to 'dahi' in Hindi. The directive also applied to other dairy products such as butter and cheese :* **Mayron Weiner says that India as a nation state is yet to develop as a nation. In India, people have gone for territorial integration, constitutional integration and political integration.**

- *Kalakshetra, the globally recognised Tamil Nadu-based arts and cultural centre, has been rocked by allegations of sexual harassment for weeks now. The allegations, first made online by students of a Kalakshetra Foundation-run college, have forced Kalakshetra to dismiss three staff members and the Tamil Nadu chief minister MK Stalin promised the stringent action against the convicted persons:* **As a human rights issue, the effort to end violence against women becomes a government's obligation, not just a good idea." – Charlotte Bunch**

- *Opinions Divided As Bengaluru's Cubbon Park Bans Food, Games And Public Display Of Affection. According to the new rules, visitors are not allowed to carry food or eat inside Cubbon Park, play games there, click photos and couples can't get too close:* **The difference of opinions, in this case, explained the mixed modernity we are living. When two different patterns variable conflict with each other, the government would force to take the decision of majority norms**

# A PICTURE TO PONDER
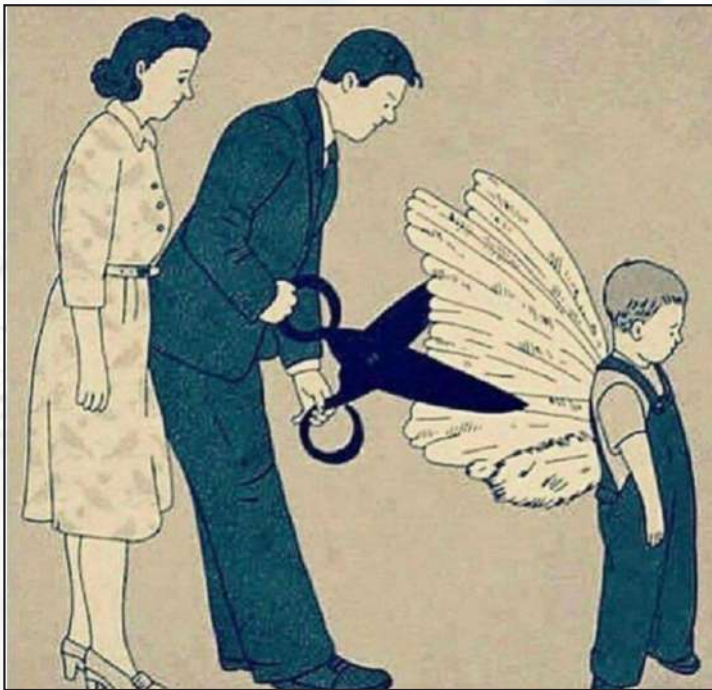


*"Family is unable to provide the psycological and*
*personal needs of the child"*
*- Eli Zaretsky*

# SOCIOLOGY EXPLAINED

## CASTELESS SOCIETY - AN ASPIRATION OR MYTH ?

*Paper 2 :  Untouchability - forms and perspectives*

*Paper 2: Perspectives on the study of caste systems*

Despite attempts to create an egalitarian and modern society, the caste system remains a prominent feature of Indian society. Historically, castes, which are often associated with certain occupations, were arranged in a hierarchy, with some castes considered superior to others and thus accorded more power and privileges than others. This system of social stratification and power relations has been a major problem in India as it has led to discrimination and inequality for those belonging to lower castes. The word 'casteless', simply refers to 'an individual who does not have a caste or is an outcaste'. Yet, its implications and manifestations as a social concept run much deeper. The term 'casteless' refers to the 'absence of caste' in society. It advocates for a society free of caste-based discrimination and oppression. It aims to create an inclusive society that provides equal opportunity for every individual regardless of inheritance and birth. In a 'casteless' society, people from different backgrounds would be treated with dignity and respect. People would interact and work together freely, without caste-based discrimination or prejudices.

Everyone would have access to quality education, healthcare, and job opportunities irrespective of their caste or social status. Here a person's worth and success would be solely judged based on their abilities, character, and hard work rather than their social position The idea of such a casteless society has been a goal that many, including social reformists, have aspired to achieve. However, the reality is that the caste system remains deeply ingrained in our society with roots that extend back thousands of years. The term 'casteless', as a sociological concept was popularized by M. N. Srinivas, an Indian sociologist who has written immensely about caste, sanskritization and social stratification. Srinivas in his book Caste in Modern India argues that caste is a complex social structure that has adapted and changed throughout history but remains a powerful force in modern Indian society. One of Srinivas's key arguments is that the notion of being "casteless" is a myth in the Indian context. He explains that even though some people may claim to be casteless or advocate for a casteless society, they are often still influenced by caste in various ways.

For instance, many media houses, universities and corporate organisations are filled with people belonging to upper castes, especially in higher positions. Despite many claims to be casteless, employers belonging to upper castes tend to prefer hiring people of their own castes than people from the so-called lower castes. The concept of castelessness is a response to the discriminatory practices of the caste system. Yet, Indian sociologist Satish Deshpande, in his article "Caste and Castelessness: Towards a Biography of the 'General Category'", argues that only upper castes are enabled to think of themselves as "casteless," while the under-privileged lower castes are often restricted to their caste identities. The ideology of castelessness has successfully interpellated upper-caste subjects, enabling them to see their caste identities as incidental or irrelevant to their claims. However, it is presumptive because, in actuality, they do not have to give up their caste identities.

They would automatically be presumed to be casteless if they did not explicitly invoke their caste. Therefore, they can retain their power and privilege while appearing to be casteless. Glimpses of caste pride among upper castes are witnessed in the caste surnames they carry, in their insistence to marry within their castes as well as through the caste associations and clubs they create. Caste identity and pride can be so deeply ingrained in an individual's upbringing and socialisation, that they may not even realize the extent to which it affects their thoughts and actions. Upper-caste individuals are often able to attain better education and employment opportunities due to their sociocultural and economic privileges. It enables them to be seen as individuals who have achieved success through their hard work and merit while hiding the caste identity that helped them achieve it. On the other hand, lower caste individuals often face discrimination and barriers while accessing education and employment opportunities due to their caste identity.

Moreover, in most cases, their caste identity overwrites all other identities, and thus, despite hard work, society may not grant them equal opportunities. This forces them to rely on their caste identity as a means of asserting their rights and claiming social and economic opportunities. As the Chief Justice of India, D. Y. Chandrachud said at the B.R. Ambedkar Memorial Lecture, "Castelessness is a privilege that only the upper caste can afford because their caste privilege has already translated into social, political and economic capital". Claims of castelessness, among the upper castes, thus seem like attempts to resist affirmative action policies that aim to redress historical injustices and promote social and economic equality for lower castes. Upper caste individuals claim the need for a casteless society by superficially arguing against reservation policies on claims that it encourages certain castes to identify primarily with their caste identity, rather than as citizens of a unified nation, and that it works against meritocracy.

In making claims of castelessness, dominant caste individuals seem to be oblivious to the caste-based discrimination and inequality that still prevails in society. For many lower-caste individuals, reservation policies have provided a pathway to education and employment opportunities that they might not have otherwise had. Therefore, castelessness is now viewed as a new disguise for caste power and privilege, while at the same time it is also an aspiration for people subject to caste-based discrimination. Dr. Ambedkar acknowledged that caste was deeply entrenched in Indian society and that it would require significant effort to uproot it. Education, according to him, was key to annihilating caste. Education could empower individuals socially, economically and politically. It could help them escape the cycle of poverty and oppression through economic independence. It could also help them to be more politically represented, giving them a voice in the democratic process to advocate for their rights. Economic and political freedom would help them in challenging the existing social order and breaking down barriers that had been erected to maintain caste-based discrimination.

According to him, another important step towards creating a casteless society was inter-caste marriages. He argued that marriage was a means of reproducing caste privileges and maintaining the existing social order. Inter-caste marriage could break down caste barriers, as individuals born through such marriages cannot be associated with a single caste, challenging the traditional notion of caste purity. He believed that inter-caste marriages would help to create a sense of unity and shared identity, which would be necessary to achieve a casteless society.

# MILLENNIALS, SEX AND ECONOMY

*Paper 1 : Sociological theories of social change.*
*Paper 2 : Population Dynamics.*

Although the exact definition of a millennial may vary, roughly speaking millennials are those born between 1981 and 1996, and are between 22 and 37 years of age in 2018. This is the first generation to come of age after the technology boom, having grown up with the internet and mobile phones. This is also the generation most impacted by the economic downturn. many of them graduated from college and entered the workforce during and immediately after the Great Recession, thus impacting not only their lifestyles and career opportunities, but even career choices and college majors. While the economy impacts everyone, it has had a particular impact on millennials' lives. We know so much about the lives and experiences of millennials in part because of their use of social media to document their lives, preferences, and habits and because, as the largest demographic, they are a target audience for market research.

For example, we know that millennials prefer streaming services, preferably Netflix, over broadcast television. They do not like wine corks but prefer wine bottles with twist tops. They appear to love avocados, especially on toast, and prefer prepared meals to cooking. However, one interesting trait about millennials that has gained quite a bit of attention has been their sexual habits, or the lack thereof, as reports have consistently shown that compared to previous generations millennials are having less sex and are more likely to remain virgins into adulthood. First, it is important to note that although many millennials many not be engaging in sexual activity, they certainly appear to have an understanding of their sexuality and sexual identity.

Fewer millennials are likely to identify as heterosexual and are more likely to identify as LGBTQ compared to other generations. In fact, an estimated 20% of millennials identify as LGBTQ. This compares to the 12% of Generation Xers and just 7% of Baby Boomers who identify as LGBTQ. Importantly, millennials understand sexual fluidity and are also not just likely to identify as lesbian or gay, but also as asexual (4%), pansexual (2%), and bisexual (6%). Clearly, millennials seem to have come to terms with sexuality and sexual identity in far more complex ways than their previous generations, so why are they engaging in less sexual activity? There are a variety of explanations. Some blame the easy access to pornography which may make some not want to put forth the effort in finding a sex partner. Others blame the rise in STDs that do not respond to medications, which has scared many from sex all together. One article also suggests that since millennials are more in touch with their sexuality, they are simply having better sex and prefer to only have sex when they feel deep attraction for a partner.

However, as sociologists, we look to the large-scale structural changes that are impacting their ability (and desire) to form and maintain relationships. In the case of millennials and sex, we can see how social forces, in particular the economy, has influenced romantic relationships among millennials. While millennials may have a reputation for participating in a hookup culture, research has found this to be largely a myth. Millennials are more likely to delay not just sex, but other types of relationships, such as dating, marriage, and childbearing. Many of them report that they neither have the money nor resources to marry and raise one or multiple children. Although the economy is "booming" and unemployment is low, this is not necessarily the case for millennials. Many are left struggling to pay back student loans and are burdened by a high cost housing market.

This is especially the case for those who live in high cost urban and suburban communities in and around New York City, Washington D.C., San Francisco, Seattle, and Chicago. This has not only impacted their desire to marry and have children, but it also has impacted dating styles and patterns. For instance, dating for millennials (and anyone for that matter) can be quite expensive, with the cost of flowers, movies, dinner, dessert, drinks, and a Lyft all mounting up. Dating has become so costly that some would rather not go out and opt, instead, to grab coffee and stream a movie at home rather than go out for dinner and drinks. Another way the economy has impacted the dating and relationship patterns of millennials is that they are more likely to live at home with their parents than on their own or with roommates, thus possibly hampering opportunities to bring people home or engage in sexual activity.

Last year I wrote that millennials are returning home to live with their parents at higher rates compared to any other generation. On average, almost a quarter of millennials are returning home after college because of the high cost of living and student loan debt. Acknowledging this trend and the challenges that young adults face when they live at home with their parents, articles offer millennials advice on how to date and have sex while in this situation. While some articles point out the humor in dating while living at home, others remind them that although they live with their parents, they are still mature adults who are allowed to engage in romantic relationships.    Sociologist C. Wright Mills argued that in order to understand how we live our lives and experience the troubles in our lives, we must look to social institutions, structures, and issues that influence our lives.

He called this perspective the sociological imagination, and he explained that it provides us with a lens through with to view the social world and the impact that it has on our lives. Sexual activity, dating, and relationship patterns among millennials provides a great way to see the impact the economy can have on even the most intimate and personal of human relationships and experiences.

In the end it doesn't really matter whether or not millennials are having more or less sex, what is of interest is that sociology helps to provide us with the tools to better understand how social systems impact our lives and relationships.

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# THE MEN OF TOMORROW

*Paper 1: Social Stratification of Gender.*

*Paper 2 : Patriarchy, entitlements, and sexual division of labor.*

The phrase "boys will be boys" irritates me. It suggests an inevitable outcome; that no matter what happens in life, it's in the nature of boys to behave a certain way. It goes against what I've learned and believe as a sociologist, and runs contrary to my own experiences and observations as a parent. The idea that "boys will be boys" grossly downplays the significance of how children are raised, and says nothing about social contexts and cultural influences. Contemplating how our social environment shapes masculinity is something that occurs on a regular basis in sociology courses. It's not the kind of content you'd expect to see depicted in a commercial for razors. But the recent "We Believe: The Best Men Can Be" Gillette advertisement critically addresses the subject of masculinity and got a lot of attention for doing so.

Near the beginning of the ad, we hear a voice ask, "Is this the best a man can get?" followed by images about bullying, sexual harassment, and mansplaining. A man pinches the butt of a woman on a sitcom set, and we hear the voice say "It's been going on far too long. We can't laugh it off. Making the same old excuses." Next, we see a group of men, arms folded, stoically repeating "boys will be boys" as smoke emanates from food on grills. The voice in the ad declares "But something finally changed"--we see a brief image of newscasters reporting on sexual assault and sexual harassment--and the voice continues by saying "and there will be no going back. Because we…we believe in the best in men."

As the ad comes to a close, men are challenged to hold each other accountable, and to say and do the right thing. We are reminded that boys are watching and learning from the people and behaviors that surround them, and that the boys of today "will be the men of tomorrow." I can imagine what a cynic might say: "They are trying to sell razors. It's designed to be a progressive advertisement to gain positive attention for their brand." Another cynic might outright dismiss it: "It's just a commercial, it doesn't mean anything." And it's easy to find criticism of the ad. For instance, in a discussion about the ad, one commentator asserts, "There's nothing wrong with masculinity" and refers to "the feminization of America." A writer described the ad as "gender shaming" and suggested it won't be long before Gillette tells men to shave their legs.

In an opinion piece with a headline characterizing the ad as "idiotic," a writer complained that the ad belittles and insults men. Another writer criticizes the ad for "invoking every cliché in the male-bashing handbook" and generalizing men as enabling violence. Several outlets offered recaps of reactions, both positive and negative, including The New York Times, Vox, NPR, and The Guardian. Cynicism and criticism noted, my view is that the ad is in tune with the #MeToo era and reflects a time when the definition of masculinity in under scrutiny. It's a rejection of toxic masculinity, a type of masculinity that features toughness and discourages vulnerability. As Maya Salam points out, toxic masculinity does not mean that all boys and men are inherently toxic). If masculinity is being redefined in a way that emphasizes kindness and awareness, I think that's a change for the better.

Awareness is a good alternative to "mansplaining." I can understand why it's become a popular term, as it seems clear to me that women have the shared aggravating experience of being treated in condescending ways by men.

It's not too much to ask of men that we don't interrupt women and put forth our explanations in a posture of expertise (in a classic example on the subject, a man was telling the writer Rebecca Solnit about a very important book that she should read, unaware that she had written it). I think it's also quite reasonable to ask that we be mindful of how body language is gendered and how men often take up more space than women in public. So what's the opposite of toxic masculinity? In other words, if we can identify a type of masculinity as toxic, then what constitutes a healthy masculinity? To me, a healthier masculinity is one that relaxes the tough guise and instead encourages being kind, considerate, compassionate, and empathetic. As I like to say to my students, why wouldn't these characteristics be incorporated into the definition of masculinity? Furthermore, can we agree these are human traits that we can emphasize as important for all of us to cultivate?

To claim there is no problem with masculinity is to deny obvious social problems, such as the link between masculinity and mass shootings. It ignores how masculinity is policed in our social institutions (for example, as C.J. Pascoe explains, how homophobic taunts are used to harass and intimidate boys in school, serving to reinforce traditional definitions of masculinity). It doesn't confront the misogyny, homophobia, and transphobia that corresponds with a rigid definition of masculinity (for more discussion related to this point, see Jonathan Wynn's post "Masculinity So Fragile"). It fails to acknowledge and examine the damage men do when committing sexual harassment and assault, or when men don't believe women's experiences of sexual misconduct or look the other way when the misconduct occurs . In thinking about the #MeToo movement, I'm reminded of Oprah Winfrey's speech at the Golden Globes Awards in 2018, when, after telling the story of Recy Taylor, she said:

She lived, as we all have lived, too many years in a culture broken by brutally powerful men. For too long, women have not been heard or believed if they dared to speak their truth to the power of those men. But their time is up. Their time is up. She ended the speech on an optimistic note, declaring a new day is on the horizon: And when that new day finally dawns, it will be because of a lot of magnificent women, many of whom are right here in this room tonight, and some pretty phenomenal men, fighting hard to make sure that they become the leaders who take us to the time when nobody ever has to say 'Me too' again. I hope Oprah is right in saying a new day is on the horizon. And I hope a better version of masculinity is in the making.

One of the many things I miss about Peter Kaufman are the conversations we used to have about masculinity. I'm certain we would've discussed the Gillette ad, as we liked to compare notes on the news of the day, especially about overtly sociological items. Back in 2017, in a creative Twitter thread, Peter turned the phrase "man up" into "man down" and wrote definitions for "manpathy" and other terms related to masculinity. Using his innovative terminology, we wrote a short story together called "A Manmade's Tale" that imagined a compassionate masculinity, one in which men would feel free to express their emotions and not get defensive when their worldview is challenged (the story appears in an edition of So Fi Zine).

Ultimately, I think the Gillette ad does a good job of promoting a positive change in masculinity. At the end of the commercial, we see the message, "It's only by challenging ourselves to do more that we can get closer to our best." I don't see anything controversial in the message that warrants backlash. I think it's a good thing to be challenged to be the best we can be.

As an applied sociologist partnering with designers, builders, and architects, my job is to teach them how to use the sociological perspective – to see the strange in the familiar, with particular focus on how cultural values and social locations of people who will inhabit and use the design may impact their experiences. I also aim to teach useful social scientific data-gathering methods, especially how to ask the right kinds of questions to get the most inclusive input possible. Inclusive data-gathering during the design process is needed if we want to create inclusive designs.

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# PERSPECTIVES

## BEYOND THE BINARY AND "DOING GENDER"

*Paper 2 :  Social Stratification of Gender.*

*Paper 2 : System of Kinship*

Gender has become more intensely interrogated by many people who criticize the social expectations that accompany femininity and masculinity. The beauty industry, for example, has repeatedly come under fire for the unrealistic (and often financially burdensome) ideals it sets for women. Others have noted that women are held to unequal expectations when interacting with male peers, such as maintaining a "polite" and accommodating demeanor. The emergence of the term "toxic masculinity" acknowledges the restrictions that accompany masculinity and the negative effects it has on both women and the men beholden to it. There is thus a growing acknowledgment that gender shapes how we live our daily lives, sometimes in harmful ways. While we still seem far away from completely throwing away the shackles of femininity and masculinity, there is a growing consciousness that gender impacts us and the way we move about the world.

However, these conversations are largely confined within the gender binary, neglecting how non-binary (persons who identify with neither male nor female identities) or gender fluid (persons who fluctuate between gender categories or express multiple at once) individuals actively construct their gender identity on a daily basis.

Gender scholars have long distinguished between sex (the physical differences between men and women) and gender (which broadly refers to the social definitions that distinguish the masculine and feminine). Simone de Beauvoir, for example, famously observed that the hierarchy between men and women is result of the social meanings of gender categories rather than simply the physical distinctions between them. Contemporary gender scholars have expanded this conversation to illuminate how gender acts as a social institution that impacts individuals at the micro (identity), meso (interaction), and macro (structural) levels.

Research has also attended to how individuals conform to gender categories in their everyday lives. Candace West and Don Zimmerman famously coined the term "doing gender" to explain how individuals actively construct their gender identity in interactions with others. Given that others continually categorize us in our social environment, we actively try to embody and enact masculine or feminine qualities so that others read us in the way we desire. For example, people may perform femininity or masculinity through dress or their mannerisms. Therefore, gender is not psychologically innate or simply imposed on us by institutions-it is an active project enacted in everyday life.

While insightful, these conversations are more complicated when we consider the growing number of gender categories that have recently emerged in the public consciousness. For example, a study on Minnesota LGBTQ youth recently found that roughly 3% of participants do not identify with binary gender categories. Facebook now allows users to select from a whopping 56 gender identities for their personal profiles. While the fight for LGBTQ rights is far from over, such reports indicate the growing visibility of genderqueer identities.

Conversations about the construction of gender are complicated when we move beyond the binary. West and Zimmerman, for example, do not imagine a world in which people might wish to conform to a non-binary gender. Consequently, how do individuals construct gender identity when they do not want to conform to a binary gender category? Harry Barbee and Douglas Schrock have recently taken on this question in their article, "Un/gendering Social Selves: How Nonbinary People Navigate and Experience a Binarily Gendered World". Barbee and Schrock investigate a process they term "un/gendering social selves," meaning how non-binary people define and present themselves in their daily lives to avoid binary classification from others.

While there is an abundance of literature regarding how individuals deliberately try to fit themselves into binary categories, the authors argue that there is a notable lack of research on non-binary people who actively seek to avoid binary classifications. The authors address these questions using in-depth interviews with 17 non-binary identifying individuals. Their respondents reported two tactics used to "un/gender" themselves in their interactions. First, they reflected on how they actively participate in "un/gendering embodiment." Prior gender literature has reflected on how individuals "embody" gender differences by actively manipulating their appearance to distinguish their gender from another. Barbee and Schrock's participants described manipulating their appearance to neutralize any gender signifiers that could be read on their bodies. For example, participants discussed consciously choosing their clothing, accessories, or makeup so that their appearance does not solely fit into one gender category. Participants also spoke of "un/gendering" their word usage. Many participants reflected on their choice to adopt gender neutral names and pronouns.

Others also spoke of actively changing their speaking voice in certain social contexts as not to come across as too masculine or feminine. While many of Barbee and Schrock's participants felt that these processes allowed them to feel liberated and like their authentic selves, many also reported that these processes are sometimes emotionally burdensome and make them vulnerable in some public spaces.

Barbee and Schrock's conclusions give us a new way to think about the construction of gender. By identifying how individuals "un/gender" embodiment and discourse, the authors illuminate that individuals still actively and thoughtfully construct their gender even when those individuals do not conform to binary gender categories. Consequently, like West and Zimmerman originally theorized about men and women, non-binary individuals must also carefully "do gender" even in their efforts to neutralize their gender identity.

While there is a growing acceptance of the multiplicity of gender identities, there is still much work to be done in the public and academic domains. Emerging perspectives on genderqueer identities should lead us to consider not only how we can add to existing gender theory, but also how we also might rethink those foundational perspectives to expand beyond the binary.

# PUBLIC LIBRARY AS SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

*Paper 1 :  Sociology - The discipline.*

*Paper 1:  Scope of the subject.*

Sociologist Eric Klinenberg wrote a book Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure can help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life, in which he defines social infrastructure as "the physical places and organizations that shape the way people interact," Colby King recently saw a vivid illustration of how Klinenberg's original subject, libraries, operate as social infrastructure and want to share the story and discuss its context. My wife and I (Colby King)  have been taking our daughters, who are 5 years old and 21 months old, to our local public library and borrowing books. Our oldest has been particularly excited about this. She finds a new book from the Princess in Black series on each visit.

On a recent weekend afternoon, I took both kids to our neighborhood playground. Among the kids at the playground there was a girl just a few years older than our 5-year-old, who is very eager to hang out with older girls because she sees them as cool and knowledgeable, and she wants to learn all she can from them. This older girl was friendly with her, and they ran around the playground while I pushed the baby in a swing. They climbed up a set of stairs to the slides and my daughter noticed that the older girl had left a book she brought with her there on the steps. She recognized the tag on the spine meant that the book was from the library, and asked excitedly, "Oh, what is that library book?"

The older girl explained that it is a chapter book, for older kids. "Is it about a mermaid?" my daughter asked, noticing the mermaid on the cover. "It is," the older kid explained. "It's called The Tail of Emily Windsnap and it's part of a series."

My daughter asked more questions, about the series, about how much the older girl had read, and how often she goes to the library. She asked enough questions about the book that she persuaded this older girl to sit down at the playground and read the first chapter of the book to her. She was enthralled. When she finished reading the chapter, the older girl promised that, when she finished reading it, she would return it to the library so that my daughter could borrow it. Their interaction demonstrated so much about how libraries function as social infrastructure. The library's tag on the spine of the book was a marker of what is cool and interesting. The shared appreciation of the book made available through the library helped both children to connect with each other. Their plan--for my daughter to retrieve the book after the older kid returns it--reveals how the library functions as a hub of community life.

This interaction happened at time of contentious debate over library books. In a scene that has become familiar across the country, in Pineville, Oregon, this past December concerned residents spoke at a meeting to encourage the Crook County Library to label LGBTQ-related books and remove them from the children's section. Last summer more than 200 community members attended a meeting of the Ashland Public Library board in Ashland, Ohio. Concerned participants described some of the library's books as pornographic and argued that the books should be moved to a "parental shelf," or removed from the library. The library board's president explained that the publisher and library staff consider the identified books to be health books and explained that those books are not held in the children's fiction or play areas. The board president also explained that their expectation is that parents or other care providers are with children as they browse the library.

The American Library Association reported that last year we saw a record number of attempts to ban or restrict books across the country. Last spring, this debate came to Greenville County, South Carolina, which is the western neighbor of Spartanburg. The Greenville County GOP passed a resolution urging their County Council to move books with what they described as "sexually explicit" content from the children's section of county libraries to the adult section. One problem, as reported in the Greenville News, is that "there is no sexually explicit content in the children's section of any Greenville County library branch." Recognizing a pattern across these and other incidents, last fall here in South Carolina a coalition of educational organizations, civil rights groups, religious institutions, and others committed to free speech and the free exchange of ideas including the League of Women Voters and the South Carolina ACLU formed Freedom to Read SC. Josh Malkin, a director at the SC ACLU was involved in these efforts and also involved with the Freedom in Libraries Advocacy Group (FLAG) in Greenville.

The members of which have worked consistently since last year to resist censorship efforts at the Greenville County library. Despite some success last fall, Josh suggested in the local news that censorship efforts were likely to continue. They have continued. This spring, a year after the resolution, the Greenville County Library System's Materials Committee has now voted to advance a proposal to limit access to transgender themed materials. Last week, a friend told me that community members were planning to speak at the Spartanburg County Library's board meeting to raise similar concerns about materials in our local library. A report on the meeting in The Post and Courier noted that during the 30 minutes allotted for public comment, 11 people spoke. Four speakers asked for books to be moved, drawing on many of the same arguments seen elsewhere. Seven speakers asked for the books to remain.

Among those were Amberlyn Boiter, who is president at PFLAG Spartanburg and serves on the board of the Women's Rights and Empowerment Network. Amberlyn was born and raised here in the Upstate of South Carolina, and she has a two-year-old daughter. In her comments, Amberlyn noted that her daughter, "…has two moms, and one of those moms is transgender. This isn't age-inappropriate or sexual – it's simply who her parents are." Further, she explained, "If you move books which contain characters like the members of [my daughter's] family, you are telling her that her family is something to be hidden."

I was among the seven people who argued that the books should remain on library shelves. I spoke about the need to protect public institutions. I shared my feeling that segregation of materials would be censorship. I argued that our public libraries must be rich, diverse, reflective of our community to serve our community well. Then I shared the story of my daughter at the playground, making friends and building community through their shared interest in a library book. We were dismissed before the board continued its meeting, and we are waiting to see if any action is taken our social worlds are segregated and often polarized, but social infrastructure, like that provided by public libraries, helps us overcomes these dilemmas. Illustrating this, Klinenberg recently pointed to this piece in The New York Times compiling photographs taken in libraries across seven states, documenting "the thrum and buzz in buildings once known for silence." As Klinenberg explained in his book, "Social infrastructure is crucially important, because local, face-to face interactions—at the school, the playground, and the corner diner--are the building blocks of all public life,"

# A PICTURE TO PONDER



*"Capitalistic sociey in a nutshell"*

# ELI ZARETSKY



- Eli Zaretsky is a professor of history at the New School for Social Research. Zaretsky was interested in psychology and the idea that the family might perform a psychological function.

- Zaretsky believes that the family allows a man to feel in control and powerful which they don't feel in the workplace due to bourgeoisie oppression.

- His previous works include Why America Needs a Left: A Historical Argument; Secrets of the Soul: A Social and Cultural History of Psychoanalysis; and Capitalism, the Family, and Personal Life