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CLAREMONT MCKENNA COLLEGE

ECONOMIC PROPAGANDA IN THE UNITED STATES

SUBMITTED TO
PROFESSOR MELISSA ROGERS
AND
PROFESSOR JON SHIELDS

BY BROOKLYN MONTGOMERY

FOR SENIOR THESIS FALL AND SPRING 2022

25 APRIL 2022

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Abstract

This thesis aims to identify and analyze three different forms of economic propaganda: cultural, structural, and political. I first examine 'Do What You Love' culture and its impact on the labor force. Chapter Two explores the propagation of neoliberal economics as an objective study, and the final chapter analyzes the use of Black capitalism as a political mechanism to quell Black radical sentiment. In detailing these phenomena, I investigate the implementation, normalization, and effects, as well as the material repercussions of these ideas and structures.

Introduction

Growing up in a working class community, I was infused with the values of ‘bootstrap theory.’ I was told by family members, friends, parents of friends, teachers, and school counselors that through hard work and perseverance, anything was possible. When I became the first person in my family to go to college I assumed it to validate the ‘American dream.’ However, when I reached campus I discovered a reality that seemed to me hidden from communities like mine. For the first time in my life, I came into contact with the privileges of intergenerational wealth, manifested in the school curriculum a public education never prepared me for, the rhetoric of my wealthy peers who assumed that the resources provided to them such as SAT tutoring were standard, the Board of Trustees whose wealth dictated the policies on campus *despite* the hard work of student activists. Reflecting on my own journey to college, I realized that it *was* hard work that accelerated my academic trajectory, but that everyone I knew growing up worked just as hard if not harder, yet were met with low wages, evictions, and a plethora of economic barriers that prevented them from any form of upward mobility. I am confident that many of my First Generation, Low Income peers would agree that to enter into the sphere of wealth, both hardwork and a large degree of luck is required. I am not confident that my peers who have had the fortune of intergenerational wealth would agree that this was a prominent determinant of their place on campus and in the realm of the elite.

My experiences on campus propelled the realization that bootstrap theory was, and is, propaganda used to placate the lower class’ discontent over their economic stagnation, as well as to justify the mass of wealth owned by a small portion of the

country. I could have written my thesis on this topic, but it has already been covered extensively, and what interested me more was – what else is there? What other forms of economic propaganda are being used to legitimize inequalities?

This thesis seeks to answer this question through exploring three kinds of economic propaganda. The first, cultural, examines ‘Do What You Love’ culture and the exploitation of the labor force under its tenets. The second, structural, evaluates how the field of economics has come to be defined by the neoliberal and formalist movement, serving as an asserted objective justification for socioeconomic inequality today. Finally, I analyze the historical uses of Black capitalism, determining it as a form of political propaganda used to quell Black radical sentiment. These case studies serve as examples of the way the economy and its mechanisms are used to disenfranchise and exploit vulnerable communities, and I hope that in detailing them more attention might be drawn to the consequences of further economic propaganda in the United States.

CHAPTER I

Cultural Propaganda and Do What You Love Culture

Introduction

Economic Cultural Propaganda and Why It Matters

Culture is defined as “the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices” of, in the case of this thesis, American society. These features are present in our “everyday existence,”¹ highly internalized, and therefore difficult to recognize in an explicit sense.² It follows that cultural propaganda, a designated set of ideas which is infused into society’s collective consciousness and unconscious, is elusive, and as a result arguably the most influential of all forms of propaganda explored in this thesis. I define economic cultural propaganda as phenomena which relates to anything in the realm of the economy, money, and employment. The case study I selected is particularly potent in that it explores a subculture of work, which is perhaps the most fundamental component of American society. Its features and customs are therefore consolidated into the public psyche from as early as childhood, where parental relationships with employment set the standard for engagement as an adult. It is important to examine the values and traits of work culture not only because it determines attitudes towards employment for present and future generations, but because there should be constant efforts to improve the most pervasive aspects of American life.

¹ “Culture Definition & Meaning,” Merriam-Webster (Merriam-Webster), accessed April 19, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/culture>.

² “Inter-Culturally Speaking,” Difficulties in defining culture, accessed April 19, 2022, <https://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/courses/samples/inter-culturally-speaking-online/index.html>.

Do What You Love Culture

Do What You Love (DWYL) culture encompasses the modern search for a place of employment that instills love and inspires passion within workers. “Do what you love” has become an American aphorism, told to young children, college students, and adults going through midlife crises alike. The culture encourages those in the workforce to transform their interests and hobbies into labor, which in turn provides emotional fulfillment as well as financial and career success. Essential to the rhetoric of DWYL is love itself – the forging of a romantic tie which overwrites the very concept of labor. As Mark Twain states, “find a job you enjoy doing, and you will never have to work a day in your life.” This chapter is not a critique of the *act* of seeking or performing lovable work, which has both benefits and disadvantages and merits its own discussion, but rather is an examination of the propagation, motivations, and implications of the *culture* which promotes lovable work. DWYL culture appears amicable, inspirational, paternal even, but is in many ways coercive in its demand that workers not only love their labor, but center their lives around production for employers. Section One explores the emergence of DWYL culture and its erasure of labor with the forging of a romantic relationship between a worker and their place of employment. Section Two examines the forms of DWYL propaganda employed by the managerial class and the use of it to elicit further productivity. Finally, Section Three analyzes the class distinctions of DWYL.

SECTION I: What is Do What You Love Culture?

History of Do What You Love Culture

Do What You Love culture is premised on the fusion of labor and love, which was first instigated by the feminist movement of the 1960s. Before women entered the workforce, labor was traditionally the prerogative of the man, who served as the head of the household and provider for the family, while love – serving as a nurturing force for the husband, children, and house – were the duties of the woman. Reacting to the confinement of these expectations, women asserted their identity outside of their domestic role through deviating from household work and instead engaging in leisure activities such as soap operas and romance novels, as examined in Janice Radway's *Reading the Romance* (1984) and Dorothy Hobson's examination of the soap opera (1982).³ However, women became "less interested in romance fiction," instead pivoting their interest to the potential for "real romance and adventure...found in work."⁴ The feminist movement of the 1960s represented this shift, pushing against domesticity and calling for expanded opportunity and equality for women in the workplace. In large numbers, women began entering the Fordist workforce, an era characterized by mass production and consumption, with an interest in cultivating a loving and fulfilling relationship with employment.

Women's work under Fordism became representative of the ideal worker in the post-Fordist economy, defined by the emergence of new technology, specialization,⁵ and robust feminization of the workforce,⁶ which evolved in the late twentieth century and remains dominant today. This feminization of the workforce, however, extends beyond

³ Radway, J. A. (1984). *Reading the Romance*. Univ. of North Carolina Press.; Hobson, D. (2003). *Soap Opera*. Polity.

⁴ Gregg, Melissa. *Work's Intimacy*. Polity, 2011, 141.

⁵ Alain Lipietz (Spring 1997). "The Post Fordist World: Labor Relations, International Hierarchy and Global Ecology". *Review of International Political Economy*: 1–41

⁶ Peake, Linda (2009) "Gender, Race, Sexuality" p. 59

the physical presence of women in employment. In her essay, *Down with Love: Feminist Critique and the New Ideologies of Work*, Kathi Weeks asserts that the culture of domestic work was intentionally “harnessed, not only to continue to assign domestic work to women, but to recruit all waged workers into a more intimate relationship with waged work.”⁷ This intimate relationship consisted of the emotional qualities pervasive in domestic work: to be caring and communicative, to love and respect your husband, or in the case of employment, your boss, unconditionally, and to perform duties out of love. As demand for service and skilled workers increased under Post-Fordism,⁸ these qualities became more attractive to employers. Today, feminist political economists largely agree that “the conditions elaborated by feminists to surround women’s labour have now become generalized conditions of work.”⁹ This translation of domestic expectations to the generalized workforce prompted the infantile form of Do What You Love culture.

The Erasure of Labor

The most prominent aspect of DWYL is its rebranding of work as an engagement of love, erasing both income motivations and employee exploitation. Work has historically been viewed as a bleak mandate, with labor being coined an act of “drudgery,”¹⁰ performed solely to accumulate the funds necessary for survival. As

⁷ Weeks, Kathi. “Down with Love: Feminist Critique and the New Ideologies of Work.” Versobooks.com. Accessed March 24, 2022. <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/3614-down-with-love-feminist-critique-and-the-new-ideologies-of-work>.

⁸ Sheila Cohen, “Patterns of Work in the Post-Fordist Era: Fordism and Post-Fordism,” accessed April 19, 2022, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/20965311221092036>.

⁹ Adkins, Lisa, and Eeva Jokinen. 2008. “Introduction: Gender, Living and Labour in the Fourth Shift.” *NORA-Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* 16 (3): 138–49.

¹⁰ William C. Gannett, *Blessed Be Drudgery: And Other Papers* (London, 1916).

Economist Frederic Lordon states, “the spur of hunger is intrinsic to employment.”¹¹ Under the DWYL framework, the conceptual understanding of work has distanced itself from the historical motivation of economic gain and survival by recasting itself as the pursuit of love instead. Rather than the “sad affect” Lordon describes,¹² DWYL promotes lovable work as harboring “intrinsic joyful affects,” prompting the reimagining of labor as “a source of joy in and of itself.”¹³ Work and love are no longer meant to exist in separate spheres, but to become fused into one, effectively transforming popular sentiment towards labor from negative to positive. “Work used to be something we did just to earn a living,” one author asserts, “Increasingly, the point of going to work is to be happy.”¹⁴

Kathi Weeks likens this phenomenon to the “romantic narrative” which, as identified by feminist theory, presumed marriage as a noneconomic relationship despite women’s economic dependence on their husband throughout history. This romantic narrative was extended to “code unwaged domestic work as nonwork,”¹⁵ with housekeeping and childcare assumed to be performed out of romantic and paternal love for family rather than a stipulation of a woman’s financial support. The romantic narrative therefore, as Sara Ahmed notes, “erases the signs of labor under the sign of happiness.”¹⁶ DWYL’s insistence on applying this romantic narrative to work both rejects the premise that work feels like and is labor and, as Weeks points out, downplays the

¹¹ Frederic Lordon, “Willing Slaves of Capital - Wordpress.com,” accessed April 19, 2022, <https://laelectrodomestica.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/frederic-lordon-willing-slaves-of-capital-spinoza-and-marx-on-desire.pdf>, 43.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Alexander Kjerulf, *Happy Hour Is 9 to 5: How to Love Your Job, Love Your Life, and Kick Butt at Work* (Frederiksberg: Woohoo Press, 2016), 115.

¹⁵ Weeks, “Down with Love: Feminist Critique and the New Ideologies of Work.”

¹⁶ Ahmed, Sara. 2010a. “Killing Joy: Feminism and the History of Happiness.” *Signs* 35 (3): 571–94.

“strictly economic rationale of waged work as an income-generating activity.”¹⁷ DWYL cultural figures often advocate this ideal, with author Stephen King saying,

“I never set a single word down on paper with the thought of being paid for it ... I have written because it fulfilled me. Maybe it paid off the mortgage on the house and got the kids through college, but those things were on the side--I did it for the buzz. I did it for the pure joy of the thing.”¹⁸

The intent behind erasing labor and its economic rationale under the guise of happiness, according to Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, is that it “guarantees the workers’ commitment without recourse to compulsion.”¹⁹ Under this “new spirit of capitalism,”²⁰ workers will organize and complete their tasks out of a desire to reap the emotional rewards of doing so. To maintain their emotionally beneficial connection to labor, workers perceive their wellbeing to be linked to the institution’s wellbeing who employs them. Therefore, under DWYL, “nothing is imposed on [workers] since they subscribe to the project.”²¹ Through this psychological identification with the objectives of an institution, employers transfer “constraints from external organizational mechanisms to people’s internal dispositions.”²² In other words, workers, propelled by their emotional ties to the institution, internalize its demands of labor so that orders from employers become unnecessary. Employers can wield this romantic relationship between

¹⁷ Weeks, “Down with Love: Feminist Critique and the New Ideologies of Work.”

¹⁸ “Stephen King on Writing for the Money.” KayeDacus.com, May 20, 2014. <https://kayedacus.com/2014/05/20/stephen-king-on-writing-for-the-money/>.

¹⁹ Luc Boltanski, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (Verso, 2018), 76.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 79

work and love to further their profit goals, and exploitation becomes “less material and more psychological.”²³

For example, employers no longer have to force salaried workers to labor beyond their paid hours – employees are willingly and without prompting doing so. In her book, *Work’s Intimacy*, Melissa Gregg interviews Patrick, a 24 year old radio producer who regularly works beyond his designated hours. Patrick expresses concerns about becoming a “prisoner,” noting he sometimes feels “very constrained” by the demand on his time.²⁴ However, Patrick justifies his excess labor by claiming that he loves his job and is happy to do it, a mantra of DWYL culture:

“you realize that it doesn’t really matter how many hours you work here. If you’re not in touch outside of work . . . you’re going to not really be able to do your job properly. That sort of is a little annoying. I mean it’s only annoying if it’s not what you want to be doing. I guess - you know, I’m more than happy to do all that stuff because I enjoy working here and whatever.”²⁵

Patrick’s attitude towards his work reflects the conflict between a discontentment with his exploitation and DWYL’s justification of such working conditions. He loves his job, and so feels inclined to disregard his own needs as an employee to perform the job “properly.”²⁶ His success in his role, however, has little to do with his actual performance and skills, but rather with the expectation that he overextends himself completing the workload assigned to him. Historically, the demand placed on workers to labor beyond their assigned hours has been met with resistance, as labor was performed out of

²³ C. Wright Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (London, 1975), 110.

²⁴ Melissa Gregg, *Work’s Intimacy* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2011), 66.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

necessity, but Patrick serves as an example of the power of love to replace this notion and compel workers to perform their jobs at new lengths without contention. As Laura Kipnis states in *Against Love*, “the most elegant forms of social control are those that come packaged in the guise of individual needs and satisfactions.”²⁷

Romantic Relations with Work

Central to the justification of worker exploitation is DWYL’s encouragement of a romantic and passionate relationship with work. In his 2005 commencement speech to Stanford University, Steve Jobs states:

“As with all matters of the heart, you’ll know when you find it. And, like any great relationship, it just gets better and better as the years roll on. So keep looking until you find it. Don’t settle.”²⁸

Conveying work as a soul mate to be discovered, as a partner whose compatibility improves over time, turns exploitation into an aspiration. Popular conception of traditional romantic love is characterized as all consuming: a person you want to spend the rest of your years with, your soulmate, the “the only important thing” in life, compared to which “everything else seems trivial.”²⁹ In extending this view of romantic love to work, DWYL culture invites workers to center their lives around their labor. Steve Jobs, Kobe Bryant, and other successful figures in America greatly facilitated this evolution, serving as inspirational models of “the passion driven worker” who “has work on the brain all the time” – an eager participant in a parasitic romantic relationship.³⁰ In

²⁷ Laura Kipnis, *Against Love* (Vintage books, 2005), 94.

²⁸ University, Stanford. “Text of Steve Jobs’ Commencement Address (2005).” Stanford News, June 12, 2017. <https://news.stanford.edu/2005/06/14/jobs-061505/>.

²⁹ John Armstrong, *Conditions of Love: The Philosophy of Intimacy* (Penguin Books, 2003), 3.

³⁰ Miya Tokumitsu, *Do What You Love and Other Lies about Success & Happiness* (New York: Regan Arts, 2015), 28.

Melissa Gregg's *Work Intimacy*, many of the Americans she interviewed referred to work within a similarly romantic framework, most often finding "the desire to be alone with work, to the exclusion of all other distractions."³¹ She notes that her interviewees took this desire literally, neglecting other aspects of their life such as hobbies, marriage, their children, (140) and sleep.³² One interviewee, Jenny, often felt guilty for working at home with her husband present because it felt "consuming" in which she lost all "sense of time and perspective."³³ Not only do these feelings replicate symptoms of romantic infatuation, but they suggest that work is a competing relationship with all other relationships. Her neglect of her husband in favor of her work represents a near "clandestine affair."³⁴ Despite the unhealthiness of such an attachment, it remains difficult to sever oneself from work romantically under DWYL culture.

One of the most alluring draws of DWYL culture is its establishment of work as an avenue for fulfillment which makes up for deficiencies in the personal realm. As Gregg notes, some of her participants "clearly pursued work" with such "intensity" to make up for the "absence of a significant intimate relationship."³⁵ This romantic relationship between an employee and their work can, as Miya Tokumitsu writes, "soothe the disappointment of failed relationships."³⁶ The workplace can also "be a space for friendship,"³⁷ and Kathi Weeks further identifies the tendency of DWYL culture to encourage centering of friendships around work, stating,

³¹ Gregg, *Work's Intimacy*, 140.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 145

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 142

³⁶ Tokumitsu, *Do What You Love and Other Lies about Success & Happiness*, 26.

³⁷ Ibid.

“One of the remarkable features of the various efforts to teach us how to love and be happy in our work is their advice to detach from other social relations. Stop all that “excessive socializing,” one author counsels; avoid spending time with “people who drain your energy” and learn instead to set better boundaries against such “distractions.”³⁸

For workers who may lack other forms of satisfaction in their personal life, DWYL is particularly compelling as work becomes, as Steve Jobs stated, “the only thing that kept me going.”³⁹

Conclusion

Loving your labor is not an intrinsically negative affect. As the workforce has modernized and allowed for roles that are increasingly enjoyable, skilled, and specialized, it is natural for workers to seek out employment that best suits their interests. However, when the relationship with work entrenches the personal realm, it is necessary to evaluate whether this is both healthy and a truly autonomous decision, or if it is a culture of expectations imposed and enforced. The potential for exploitation of this relationship by employers serves as an insidious force propelling engagements in work without healthy boundaries. The next section will explore employers’ role in propagating DWYL culture as well as the supporting cultural components and why the results are ultimately negative for workers.

SECTION II: Do What You Love Culture and Propaganda

PART I: Employer Propaganda

³⁸ Weeks, “Down with Love: Feminist Critique and the New Ideologies of Work.”

³⁹ University, Stanford. “Text of Steve Jobs’ Commencement Address (2005).” Stanford News, June 12, 2017. <https://news.stanford.edu/2005/06/14/jobs-061505/>.

There is currently no large country in the world as productive as the United States that averages more hours of labor each year. Other countries around the globe have reduced their work hours as their economies grow more efficient, with annual hours worked per employee falling by about 40 percent in Germany and the Netherlands between 1950 and 2012.⁴⁰ In the United States, however, hours have only dropped around 10 percent in this time frame. Workers in the United States also “have shorter vacations, get less in unemployment, disability, and retirement benefits, and retire later, than people in comparably rich societies.”⁴¹ Why does the United States lag behind in work-life balance? Why is it necessary, and who benefits from it? How is DWYL culture used to establish this work ethic? This section seeks to further explore and answer these questions.

Technology Sets the Stage

There are two changes in the workplace which served as the initiator of a new work culture, setting the stage for the acceleration of exploitation under DWYL. The first was a change from a workplace which required clock-ins and clock-outs to a workplace defined by tasks to complete and “events” to center work around.⁴² This shift forged a workload that centered around the completion of a task by a given deadline, effectively neglecting consideration of the amount of time it would require to finish. This lack of explicit time boundaries between work and personal life enables employers to violate the intimate realm through assigning unreasonable workloads that require tending to outside

⁴⁰ “Annual Working Hours vs. GDP per Capita,” Our World in Data, accessed April 19, 2022, <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/gdppercapita-vs-annual-hours-worked>.

⁴¹ Huntington, Samuel P. *Who Are We?: The Challenges to America's National Identity*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005.

⁴² Adkins, L. (2009). Presentation at Cultural Work and Creative Biographies Symposium, April 1. Milton Keynes: Open University.

of normal work hours. With task assignment as the official work structure, employees are more susceptible to cooperate.

Additionally, as technological capabilities related to work grew, employers did not update job descriptions in pace with the expanding demand of technological use as new platforms emerged.⁴³ Suddenly workers were expected to know how to use computer programs as well as leverage the internet to achieve their projects – advertising online, initiating data input and creating databases, and more. Through the combination of a change to task oriented work and the increase of technological based duties, “workloads that may have been acceptable to begin with are shown to accumulate further expectations and responsibilities.”⁴⁴ This expansion of expectations of workers without official acknowledgement and extra pay is dubbed by Melissa Gregg as ‘job creep.’⁴⁵

Job Creep, Presence Bleed, and Work Life Balance

As expectations of workers grew through job creep, workers attempted to adapt through ‘presence bleed.’ As Gregg describes, presence bleed is the “experience whereby the location and time of work become secondary considerations” to completing a workload, which “seems forever out of control.”⁴⁶ Some workers who find genuine pleasure in their work willingly engage in labor outside of designated spaces and times. But for many, an increased workload and employers’ ability to contact employees after hours through the convenience of technology creates a pressure to work beyond paid hours, often on a regular basis. As middle-class professionals attempt to maintain professionalism and or to “keep sane” in the face of a strenuous workload, they find

⁴³ Gregg, *Work's Intimacy*, 10.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

themselves struggling to abstain from both working outside of work hours and at home due to “feelings of responsibility and anxiety” to complete their assigned workload.⁴⁷ One respondent recognized, “if it’s going to make my life easier the next day at work it’s worth it.”⁴⁸ Particularly for the middle class and elite, the affordability of mobile phone and laptops has opened the floodgates to email and other applications such as Slack and Microsoft Teams which facilitate communication between teams outside of work hours. Workers can check their mobile’s applications at all hours and respond to messages anywhere – at a cafe, at a party, in the bathroom. The easy accessibility of devices and its connection to work duties allows this transfer of work from the work space to more and more areas outside the labor designation.

Technology’s convenience has served to confuscate the labor it requires. In a study in which participants were asked if they worked from home, participants initially responded in the negative. Asked if this included attending to emails, however, they altered their answer, stating that yes, they did do that.⁴⁹ The guidelines surrounding email and other programs such as Slack and Microsoft Teams in professional culture are ambiguous at best, with few official protocols in place in work settings and no outline of expectations on job descriptions. The absence of official rules around technological communication leads workers to believe that email and other correspondence is not a formal duty of their employment, and therefore does not count as proper nor paid labor. Further, the ease with which an individual can send an email obscures the unpaid hours

⁴⁷ Gregg, *Work’s Intimacy*, 169.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁴⁹ Gregg, *Work’s Intimacy*, 47.

that it actually accumulates to. The convenience, in other words, hides “the amount of additional work [technology] demand[s].”⁵⁰

Workers do recognize that the mesh of technology and work strains the notion of work life balance. One respondent states:

“it’s really hard for me to have that work/life balance when I - like I was doing my conference call last night while doing the groceries and driving to the grocery store, and this morning trying to do it on the train with all these people, customers around me who are not supposed to know this confidential customer incident.

And then, you know, again trying to have some balance in your lunch hour with some gym, and that doesn’t ever happen. I’ve had a membership for six months now and I’ve gone maybe for the first two months, and then I had it scheduled today to go and then a bridge was called in the middle of it. So I couldn’t go.”⁵¹

Further, Jodi, another respondent, found it difficult to relax at home without thinking about her work, in part propelled by her awareness of the technology in her house serving as an indicator of the tasks she had to complete. This “material reminder of work” in the form of phones and laptops exacerbates the “psychological connection” between employees and their work.⁵² Through this psychological connection, workers find themselves compelled to work more – in more places, during more and increasingly odd hours, and without proper recognition of the time or type of labor they are putting in.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 2.

⁵¹ Gregg, *Work’s Intimacy*, 161.

⁵² Ibid., 50.

This state of “uninterrupted connection” inevitably leads to work-life conflict.⁵³ Employers, however, evade responsibility for this phenomenon, refusing to recognize the multiple forms of unpaid labor pervading work today such as online messaging outside of work hours, commute times in big cities, or emotional labor such as found in service jobs.⁵⁴ Most notably, though management itself assigns workloads, they employ rhetoric and events that shift the burden of work-life balance from the employer to the individual, which Gregg describes as a “concrete calculation.”⁵⁵ Gregg points out the rise of workshops surrounding “coping with stress,” “dealing with change,” and “time management.”⁵⁶ According to this culture, individuals must learn how to establish a healthy work-life balance themselves, and if they are unable to do so they are simply inefficient with their time, or too emotionally deficient to deal with the stress of an increasingly intense work environment. Through work-life balance rhetoric, management absolves itself of both its role in creating a strenuous workload and its lack of recognition of additional forms of labor, ultimately perpetuating both job creep and its resulting presence bleed. This shift of burden from employers to employees to cultivate a satisfactory work experience reflects the broader message of ‘Do What *You* Love’ culture, in which the individual is solely responsible for their relationship to their employment.

Business Propagation of Do What You Love Culture

⁵³ Diaz, I., Chiaburu, D. S., Zimmerman, R. D., & Boswell, W. R. (2012). Communication technology: Pros and cons of constant connection to work. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 80(2), 500-508.; Boswell, W. R., & Olson-Buchanan, J. B. (2007). The use of communication technologies after hours: The role of work attitudes and work-life conflict. *Journal of Management*, 33(4), 592-610.

⁵⁴ Ayşegül Akdemir, “Love Your Job Discourse and Its ... - Dergipark.org.tr,” LOVE YOUR JOB DISCOURSE AND ITS AFFECTIVE INFLUENCE ON CONTEMPORARY JOB MARKET, accessed April 19, 2022, <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/1268654>, 1104.

⁵⁵ Gregg, *Work's Intimacy*, 5.

⁵⁶ Gregg, *Work's Intimacy*, 5.

The production power of DWYL culture is well known in the business community. The Professional–Managerial Class, as defined by Barbara and John Ehrenreich in 1977, are “salaried mental workers who do not own the means of production and whose major function in the social division of labor may be described broadly as the reproduction of capitalist culture.”⁵⁷ This class emerged in the Progressive era (1890-1920) alongside the development of management theory and business schools and journals. Frederick Winslow Taylor, a management guru of this period, established the management rubric commonly known as Taylorism, in which management worked to constantly monitor workers to “ensure that their division of labor, individual movements, and rest periods were ceaselessly refined to maximize efficiency of production.”⁵⁸ A powerful tool to ensure this efficiency, DWYL culture has been incredibly beneficial for employers, providing them access to production powers that “still slumber in the bosom of social labor”⁵⁹ Popular articles deem happiness and love at work as “reservoirs of energy, concentration, and motivation.”⁶⁰ It is a mindset that “allows you to maximize performance and achieve your potential,” and “strongly related to productivity.”⁶¹ In other words, “happiness is good for business.”⁶² This sentiment is supported by research, with a study finding that ‘happy workers’ experience a 12% increase in productivity, while also decreasing burnout, improving employee retention, and even have the potential to save a company from going under during recessions. The energy that a ‘happy’ job evokes is

⁵⁷Tokumitsu, *Do What You Love and Other Lies about Success & Happiness*, 42.

⁵⁸ Tokumitsu, *Do What You Love and Other Lies about Success & Happiness*, 46.

⁵⁹ Weeks, “Down with Love: Feminist Critique and the New Ideologies of Work.”

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Pryce-Jones, Jessica. (2010). *Happiness at Work: Maximizing Your Psychological Capital For Success*. Happiness at Work: Maximizing Your Psychological Capital For Success. 10.1002/9780470666845.

⁶² Alexander Kjerulf, *Happy Hour Is 9 to 5: How to Love Your Job, Love Your Life, and Kick Butt at Work* (Frederiksberg: Woohoo Press, 2016), 115.

invaluable to employers who hope to optimize production and are looking to extract as much labor from their workers as feasible.

Today, the business and managerial community employs DWYL as a fulfillment of Taylor’s rubric under the guise of increasing ‘employee engagement.’ In the 2008 Towers Perrin Global Workforce Study, the consulting firm defines employee engagement as the “ability to contribute to company success” which is characterized by worker’s willingness to “‘go the extra mile’ and put discretionary effort into their work — contributing more of their energy, creativity and passion on the job.”⁶³ They found that the companies with high employee engagement had a 19% increase in operating income and almost a 28% growth in earnings per share.⁶⁴ The report proceeds to review strategies to harness the “full power” of the workforce, such as improving the organization’s “reputation for social responsibility,”⁶⁵ “tangibly aligning workforce strategies with business priorities” and to “customize and shape the work environment and culture.”⁶⁶ Shaping the work culture to fit the mold of DWYL is a particularly powerful tool for increasing engagement, and is present as early as the recruiting process, with ‘passionate’ and ‘dedicated’ permeating many job descriptions. The next portion will explore further strategies management uses to reap the productivity benefits of DWYL culture.

Team Dynamics

⁶³ “Report: Closing the Engagement Gap (Integrity Enabler).” Engage for Success, April 4, 2021. <https://engageforsuccess.org/insights-data-surveys/report-closing-the-engagement-gap-integrity-enabler/?highlight=culture>, 3.

⁶⁴ “Report: Closing the Engagement Gap (Integrity Enabler).” Engage for Success, April 4, 2021. <https://engageforsuccess.org/insights-data-surveys/report-closing-the-engagement-gap-integrity-enabler/?highlight=culture>, 5.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

Through management's wielding of DWYL, the workplace has become a mesh of the professional and personal, and acutely so in interpersonal dynamics between coworkers. Central to DWYL is the emphasis of the 'family dynamic.' As Ayşegül Akdemir states in *Love Your Job Discourse and Its Affective Influence on Contemporary Job Market*, "the family metaphore is highly internalised by both the employers and the employees."⁶⁷ Supervisors and team leaders utilize DWYL culture as a motivator through first establishing a "family-like environment,"⁶⁸ facilitated by using the language of intimacy which associates work with the emotion of love. Management harvests these family-like interpersonal relationships between team members as a means to increasing productivity, in which they push workers into "specific social situations management deems advantageous to its bottom line."⁶⁹ In her book, *Do What You Love: And Other Lies About Success and Happiness*, Miya Tokumitsu describes a call center's discovery that 'tight-knit' work groups resulted in greater productivity and reduced turnover. In response the center implemented daily 15-minute coffee breaks to facilitate social communication, documenting 10 percent greater productivity and a 70 percent drop in turnover.⁷⁰ The employer's profit motive behind building team relationships is indicative of the broader tendency of employers to establish friendly and family dynamics solely driven by hopes of economic benefit. As a commercial and industrial training study states, "there is huge potential for making teams and organizations" to be used to "drive organizational success or deliver return on investment" through the use of a "framework

⁶⁷ Ayşegül Akdemir, "Love Your Job Discourse and Its ... - Dergipark.org.tr," LOVE YOUR JOB DISCOURSE AND ITS AFFECTIVE INFLUENCE ON CONTEMPORARY JOB MARKET, accessed April 19, 2022, <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/1268654>, 1118.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Tokumitsu, *Do What You Love and Other Lies about Success & Happiness*, 38.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

rooted in something that matters intuitively to everyone.”⁷¹ The rise of team building activities such as icebreakers, retreats, and after hour get togethers represent a surge in management’s recognition of team dynamics as a means to productivity.

Business strategy further encourages the cultivation of a culture of team loyalty, for which the ‘team’ serves as a symbol of devotion to “close colleagues who are the main point of daily interaction.”⁷² This allegiance “has the effect of making extra work seem courteous and common sense.”⁷³ In the instance of emailing outside of work hours, the “perception that other co-workers might be waiting for responses and actions is a recurring reason employees give” for doing so.⁷⁴ Adding to the pressure to be constantly available, one respondent notes that “no one else really is going to remember what days you work and what days you don’t.”⁷⁵ Her motivation for engaging in work outside of work hours is, in this way, interpersonal rather than work related, and her flexibility with her coworkers makes her feel “appreciated by the team,” in turn making her “feel better.”⁷⁶ Team loyalty is in some cases so extreme that one respondent recalls her concern for her team even during a visit to an emergency ward in the hospital. She told her husband upon arrival, “You’ve got to call Holly and tell her that I might not make it in tomorrow to give the presentation ... but bring my laptop in tomorrow and I’ll be able to get it to her for Tuesday.”⁷⁷ The emotional drive to remain on good terms with team members is a result of the human need for connection itself. Forging meaningful

⁷¹ Pryce-Jones, Jessica, and Julia Lindsay. “What Happiness at Work Is and How to Use It.” Industrial and Commercial Training. Emerald Group Publishing Limited, April 1, 2014. <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/ICT-10-2013-0072/full/html>.

⁷² Gregg, *Work’s Intimacy*, 85.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Gregg, *Work’s Intimacy*, 73.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 77.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 169.

interpersonal relationships with coworkers adds an intrinsic incentive to do whatever is necessary to contribute to the team workload in order to preserve those relations. But as Gregg points out, “if it is loyalty to the team that governs workers’ motivations, what must be recognized is that management strategies are the driver for the notion of ‘the team’ in the first place.”⁷⁸

One such strategy of management that Weeks notes is the exploitation of team roles and specialization. Jodi, a Telco employee, had been told by her superiors that “someone has to do it and you’re the one that’s skilled to do it.”⁷⁹ Claire, often the recipient of similar requests in her role as a marketing professional, recognized that it was “her unique skills that are required to facilitate the smooth running of things,” and so felt “called upon to continue offering her expertise outside of work hours.”⁸⁰ Despite the violation of her personal time, Claire felt pressured to complete the work because “having upfront conversations about the actual as opposed to the relative urgency of tasks being handled...may entail splintering the cohesiveness of the team’s shared purpose.”⁸¹ Loyalty to the team allows management to not only exploit worker’s willingness to labor beyond their designated hours, but further allows a company to remain inadequately staffed – instead able to pressure their specialized workers to take on an excessive workload lest they let down the team. The family dynamic, therefore, both propagates and conceals the exploitative demands of management.

Finally, technology has greatly facilitated the establishment of the familial DWYL culture through serving as a catalyst for interpersonal relations in the workplace. Team

⁷⁸ Ibid., 74.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 162.

⁸⁰ Gregg, *Work’s Intimacy*, 77.

⁸¹ Ibid.

members are easily able to contact one another and expand upon their relationships. Gregg interviews one employee who states that online “chat was less about work and more of a social how you going, I’m not there, what’s happening in the office kind of thing . . . [if] I’m working from home or away I’ll use it to contact my old team back here or for personal [reasons].”⁸² Gregg states that the success of recent online platforms like the office software packages have served to further blur work and friendship, which exacerbates pressures for workers to maintain positive team dynamics.

Conclusion

Important for this section is the recognition that loving your work environment and your coworkers *can* be healthy. Not only does it create a more fulfilling work space through transforming work into an endeavor to look forward to, but the efficiency of positive team dynamics is invaluable for achieving company goals. However, the insidious profit motivations behind crafting these environments suggests a common theme recurrent throughout this section: that employers do not have employees’ interests in mind. The culture must be maintained at a healthy standard which does not impede on life outside of work, on an individuals’ emotional stability, and does not seek to coerce workers through the capture of interpersonal relationships. Most importantly, employers must be held accountable for their role in the inflation of labor through understaffing and for their unhealthy propagation of DWYL as a means to justify exploitative work expectations.

PART II: Cultural Propaganda

⁸² Ibid., 83.

As explored in the first part of this section, DWYL culture is often wielded as a deliberate tactic in the workplace. While employers are fundamental perpetrators of DWYL culture and contribute greatly to its prevalence, there is another aspect of its propagation that must be explored. There is no uniform understanding of culture; it is a fusion of beliefs, social institutions, customs, rhetoric, and more. Because of this, the strategies of employers are effective but still limited in their ability to penetrate broad cultural sentiment. Part II explores the social propagation, normalization, and internalization alongside other motivations that help further explain why Do What You Love culture is so prominent today. Important for understanding the arguments in Part II is how explicit propaganda can be transformed into the implicit, residing in the collective unconscious, undetected yet pervasively damaging.

Purported Benefits of Do What You Love

Fundamental to DWYL culture is the insistence that both employees and employers benefit equally, though in different ways, from an employee's passionate relationship with work. One of the largest drivers behind this sentiment is the pop psychology articles surrounding happiness at work. An article from the HuffPost claims that loving your work will improve your health, however, the relationship is correlative at best, premised on a study that found the most common time for heart attacks was on a Monday morning.⁸³ Another assures you that your health will improve if you are happy at work, but is once again correlative in its assumption, concluding from another study that found that generally happy people live longer, with no specifications about happiness at

⁸³ Bluerock, Grace. "7 Surprising Benefits of Doing Work You Love." HuffPost. HuffPost, August 20, 2016. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/work-love_b_8010174.

work.⁸⁴ An additional article promises that happiness at work will improve your relationships at home, citing no evidence to support its claim.⁸⁵ Relying on pop-psychological studies, a plethora of online articles make broad conclusions from correlational evidence, telling their readers that work in and of itself is the driver of health, happiness, and relationships. These claims, manipulated to fit with the DWYL narrative, perforate the internet, and specifically, Google, an accessible source from which the majority of Americans collect their information. These sources espousing such benefits serve to indoctrinate Americans into the imperative of finding happiness at work.

However, many of the perks of DWYL for employees are equally or more so beneficial for employers. For example, one impact happiness at work specifically has related to health is a study conducted by psychology professor and social psychologist D.G. Myers, in which they compared stressed, depressed employees to happy ones, finding that happy workers incur lower medical costs.⁸⁶ However, emphasized in a Guardian article covering the study is the profitability of this for employers that cover health care.⁸⁷ The recent mobilization of corporations to increase subjective well-being is, as consistent with DWYL culture's implementation into the workplace, motivated not by concern for employees, but for profit.

⁸⁴ Garnett, Laura. "5 Reasons Loving Your Job Helps You Live Longer." Inc.com. Inc., April 14, 2015. <https://www.inc.com/laura-garnett/5-reasons-loving-your-job-helps-you-live-longer.html>.

⁸⁵ Heikkila, Andrew. "4 Reasons It's Important to Love Your Job." Business 2 Community, September 18, 2018. <https://www.business2community.com/human-resources/4-reasons-its-important-to-love-your-job-02120452>.

⁸⁶ Myers, David G., and Ed Diener. "Who Is Happy?" *Psychological Science* 6, no. 1 (January 1995): 10–19. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.1995.tb00298.x>.

⁸⁷ "Happy Employees Are Healthier (and Cheaper)." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, June 18, 2014. <https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2014/jun/18/happy-employees-are-healthier-and-cheaper>.

Further, many of the cited positive effects of being happy at work, such as working “more efficiently,”⁸⁸ being “more effective leaders,”⁸⁹ and thinking “more creatively,”⁹⁰ contribute more to productivity rather to an individual’s explicit wellbeing. A further benefit is increased ability to cope with and recover from “work strain,”⁹¹ the strain which, as discussed in the previous section, is often induced by management itself. The benefits of happiness at work for the employee specifically are both misrepresented and disproportionate to the profit benefits garnered by employers, whether through an increase in worker productivity or a decrease in health care costs. And though happiness generates more profit for employers, this rarely results in inflation adjusted wage increases for employees, leaving workers with little financial gain.⁹² Yet while employers reap material benefits of DWYL culture, popular media suggests workers be content with the significantly less tangible and highly asymmetrical benefits that DWYL provides them. A primary result and arguably, purpose, of DWYL, then, is to convince the labor force that investing romantically in their work is an endeavor beneficial for everyone, rather than for the profit gains of employers.

Normalization of Do What You Love Culture

⁸⁸ “Why Being Happy in the Workplace Matters.” The ONE Thing, July 11, 2021. <https://the1thing.com/2016/02/18/why-being-happy-in-the-workplace-matters/>.

⁸⁹ Ellis, Lindsay. “Harvard Wants M.b.a.s to Learn How to Be Happy at Work.” The Wall Street Journal. Dow Jones & Company, February 14, 2022.

⁹⁰<https://www.wsj.com/articles/harvard-wants-m-b-a-s-to-learn-how-to-be-happy-at-work-11644836400>.; “Why Being Happy in the Workplace Matters.” The ONE Thing, July 11, 2021. <https://the1thing.com/2016/02/18/why-being-happy-in-the-workplace-matters/>.

⁹¹ Shellenbarger, Sue. “When Stress at Work Creates Drama at Home.” The Wall Street Journal. Dow Jones & Company, July 15, 2019.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/when-stress-at-work-creates-drama-at-home-11563183015>.

⁹² Molla, Rani. “Nice Raise. Too Bad about Inflation. .” Vox. Vox, February 16, 2022.

<https://www.vox.com/recode/22933594/pay-raise-price-inflation-employers-great-resignation>.

Throughout history technology has altered the workforce, making it so that humans no longer need to labor as many hours to produce the same product a machine can. Labor unions and movements activated around this issue, periodically calling for a reduction in hours as industrial capabilities increased. According to Robert Whaples, “the reduction in the length of the work week in American manufacturing before the Great Depression was primarily due to economic growth and the increased wages it brought.”⁹³ However, subsequent to the economic turmoil of the Great Depression, employees were disenchanted by the idea of losing an additional two hours of pay and did not support the push for a 30 hour work week.⁹⁴ This disincentivization of reduced work hours persists to the current economy, in which purchasing power of today’s average hourly wage has just about the same purchasing power it did in 1978.⁹⁵ Workers aren’t necessarily against a reduction in work hours, but rather a reduction in their income. Hence, the culture which accepts at face value the persistence of work hours which fill up a large portion of a person’s life.

The Forbes article, “Should We Be Happy At Work?” states, “the average person spends 90,000 hours at work over their lifetime. Is it unreasonable to expect that the majority of those should be happy ones?”⁹⁶ Despite the technological advances of today, rather than questioning the hours that workers currently contribute to the labor force, which, as Steve Jobs states in a 2005 Stanford commencement speech, “is going to fill a

⁹³ Whaples, Robert. “Hours of Work in U.S. History.” EHnet. Accessed April 19, 2022. <https://eh.net/encyclopedia/hours-of-work-in-u-s-history/>.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ DeSilver, Drew. “For Most U.S. Workers, Real Wages Have Barely Budged in Decades.” Pew Research Center. Pew Research Center, May 30, 2020. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/08/07/for-most-us-workers-real-wages-have-barely-budged-for-decades/>.

⁹⁶ Henley, Dede. “Should We Be Happy at Work?” Forbes. Forbes Magazine, May 1, 2018. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/dedehenley/2018/04/30/should-we-be-happy-at-work/?sh=7a3434fc59ea>.

large part of your life,”⁹⁷ DWYL advises workers to find a way to be happy about it. As explored in section one, DWYL therefore seeks to replace the process of labor with the ‘search for happiness,’ allowing employers to maintain excessive hours without complaint from the workforce.

Inciting this, intrinsic to the ability of DWYL to lead to more production for employers is its demand that employees work more. According to self help gurus, “the ultimate responsibility for your happiness at work can only lie with you.”⁹⁸ Placing the burden of finding joy in work on employees, they proceed to list actionable methods of achieving happiness at work. This includes getting more involved, developing new skills, taking on new responsibilities – in other words, working more, for longer hours, and in most cases, for the same amount of pay.⁹⁹ Popular culture validates this method, often promoting the Steve Jobs caricature – the overworked but wildly successful and fulfilled CEO. These DWYL figures ignore the importance of work-life balance, claiming that if an individual is truly passionate about their work they won’t *want* to be away from it.

Further, DWYL suggests that to cultivate happiness at work, employees should ignore poor working conditions and violations. Self help gurus advise workers to look for the redeeming qualities as well as their purpose within their occupation. “You have to stop saying your company doesn’t have a purpose or my job doesn’t have a purpose. Purpose is a choice.”¹⁰⁰ Self help gurus claim an individual can cultivate a certainty that

⁹⁷ University, Stanford. “Text of Steve Jobs’ Commencement Address (2005).” Stanford News, June 12, 2017. <https://news.stanford.edu/2005/06/14/jobs-061505/>.

⁹⁸ Alexander Kjerulf, *Happy Hour Is 9 to 5: How to Love Your Job, Love Your Life, and Kick Butt at Work* (Frederiksberg: Woohoo Press, 2016), 131.

⁹⁹ Kerry Hannon, *Love Your Job: The New Rules of Career Happiness* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2015), 152.

¹⁰⁰ Kerry Hannon, *Love Your Job: The New Rules of Career Happiness* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2015), 50.

through their labor they're contributing to an ultimate good, or that they can forge a better work environment by exhibiting kindness in the workplace. This search for redeeming qualities in work, however, requires undermining exploitative aspects such as overbearing hours, abusive upper management, and violations of ethical code. One author suggests for employees facing such situations to take care of themselves, but to continue looking for meaning in small acts.¹⁰¹ Another states that workers must learn to create deep reservoirs of resilience and “stop acting like a victim,”¹⁰² DWYL rhetoric pressures workers into accepting and finding joy in their own exploitation, akin to advising someone in a toxic relationship to simply make the best of it – “Falling in love with your job will take effort,” an author cautions; “good relationships,” like even the best marriages, “take work.”¹⁰³

Even those who have accepted that they cannot find happiness in their current job continue to prioritize the effort. An interviewee at a call center who was “extremely unhappy” with her job states,

“First it is important to love the job. I entered the job without loving it and it was not related to my education. I started reluctantly. But this was a big factor for me. I worked there but without loving it, all right you manage it somehow, but how successful can you become?”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Sharon Salzberg, *Real Happiness at Work: Meditations for Accomplishment, Achievement, and Peace* (New York: Workman, 2015), 206.

¹⁰² Hannon, *Love Your Job: The New Rules of Career Happiness*, 55, 47.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁰⁴ Ayşegül Akdemir, “Love Your Job Discourse and Its ... - Dergipark.org.tr,” *LOVE YOUR JOB DISCOURSE AND ITS AFFECTIVE INFLUENCE ON CONTEMPORARY JOB MARKET*, accessed April 19, 2022, <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/1268654>, 1114.

However, only after espousing the importance of DWYL culture does she talk about the structural issues with work such as lack of break times and the insufficient number of employees to handle the department's workload. In this way, DWYL discourse is so dominant that it overtakes discussion of labor inequalities, pushing "structural conditions to a secondary position," and simultaneously suggesting that to love a job you should "put up with difficulties."¹⁰⁵ This perspective, while beneficial for management who employ exploitative and abusive tactics to coerce productivity out of their workers, disempowers workers from asserting their safety and rights within a workplace.

Internalization of DWYL

Individuals are strongly influenced by their internalization of DWYL culture. One manifestation of this internalization is the assertion that workers' decision to engage in work to the extent that DWYL urges them to is autonomous. Reflecting on her job creep and presence bleed, respondent Tanya recognized that "there's not the explicit expectation that I'm going to do that, it's more up to me I suppose."¹⁰⁶ This view is common, with workers assuming their own autonomy in email culture despite the fact that checking emails is one of the "fundamental requirements of professional life."¹⁰⁷ This also reflects the emphasis DWYL has on individual actions – in asserting that happiness and work-life balance are cultivated by the individual as explored in the previous section, workers perceive their actions in relation to work on an individual basis. In Tanya's case, she believes the choice to engage in extra work is her decision rather than a coerced response to the workload her management has established.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 1115.

¹⁰⁶ Gregg, *Work's Intimacy*, 125.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 167.

Other workers view their excessive hours as necessary for their work in particular, stating “it’s the nature of project work,” “in this job you have to be committed,” “that’s the life of a journalist.”¹⁰⁸ Workers have followed the self help guru’s advice: they’ve found what is special about their place of employment. But as a result, they work longer, in more places, and without pay. However, the reality is that these expectations are not reserved for “creative,” cutting-edge or highly paid positions,” but have become ordinary in many “mid-range” and “information jobs regardless of status or financial compensation.”¹⁰⁹ There is nothing fundamentally different about these roles that actually require a different approach to work – rather, DWYL has been propagated across more employment sectors and has instigated a broad normalization for these work expectations.

Part III: Further Motivations for Adherence to Do What You Love Culture

A Competitive Market

Through neoliberal economic policy and labor union repression, the power of workers within the job market has diminished, creating a market defined by precariousness and largely controlled by employers.¹¹⁰ Individuals who seek to be competitive applicants must adhere to the precedents and expectations of their potential employers, and hired workers, too, comply for fear of unemployment and financial instability. Jodi, a marketing employee at Telco, described her work as a disruption to her sleep, her work life balance, and to her free time.¹¹¹ She was told by her manager to complete tasks that exacerbated her already strained workload, but recognized that her

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 46.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Lewis, H., Dwyer, P., Hodkinson, S., & Waite, L. (2015). Hyper-precarious lives: Migrants, work and forced labour in the Global North. *Progress in Human Geography*, 39(5), 580-600.

¹¹¹ Gregg, *Work’s Intimacy*, 161.

junior position gave her little room to complain without garnering negative consequences from management.¹¹² However, when Telco fired her and 800 other workers across the country, she was thrown into a job market with “so much competition out there” that Jodie realized she might have to go “down almost 50 percent of what I was getting paid, maybe even less.”¹¹³ Looking back at her work at Telco, she overlooks the exploitative work practices, stating “I did have it good.”¹¹⁴ Jodi’s story represents the broader lesson in an employer controlled job market: an overly demanding job is better than none at all. The mass number of workers who were let go by Telco, too, represent the trend towards “company flexibility” and “strict efficiency targets and mass outsourcing of jobs” which further threatens workers’ positions should they fail to comply with work demands.¹¹⁵ As Gregg puts it: “indispensability is an illusion.”¹¹⁶

Imbalance of Power

Many workers are disgruntled with the workload given to them, as well as unsatisfied with the benefits they are purported to receive. Gregg interviews a young librarian who explained of her employment: “They’re not reducing any work load, they’re just giving us more stuff to do. You kind of think something has to give, you know, you can’t just keep piling work on us.”¹¹⁷ But protesting is difficult. Tanya, another worker, asked her supervisor to reevaluate her workload but even after a reduction continued to struggle with completing it during work hours. She refused to inquire again about a reduction, stating “I feel like you ask so much,” she said, “and you think, well, I

¹¹² Ibid., 164.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 65.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Gregg, *Work’s Intimacy*, 2.

better not ask any more.”¹¹⁸ As Gregg states, due to their position which lacks bargaining power, workers “feel quite powerless to stop the structural influences forcing this change upon them.”¹¹⁹

This powerlessness is due to the imbalance between employee and employer power in shaping work culture. Elizabeth Anderson writes, companies are “small tyrannies.”¹²⁰ Workers do not have representation on corporate boards and are often blocked from forming unions to advocate for themselves, leaving workers with little influence over policies and the work culture that affect their daily life. Despite this, Alain de Botton notes the propagandized front of companies, detailing a company with “People. Power.” plastered on the walls of their building, with a tagline that reads: “People are the power behind [our company].”¹²¹ These messages are largely for public relations purposes, both external and internal, but serve to mask the real driver of companies: profit. Shareholders, not employees, determine the direction of corporations, and though employees may be the ‘people’ that comprise an institution, they have little power to rebel against employer expectations. If the company expects adherence to DWYL culture, in order to maintain job security, workers adhere. As Paolo Virno writes,

“Insecurity about one’s place during periodic innovation, fear of losing recently gained privileges, and anxiety about being ‘left behind’ translate into flexibility, adaptability, and a readiness to reconfigure oneself.”¹²²

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 51.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 17.

¹²⁰ Anderson, Elizabeth, and Stephen Macedo. *Private Government: How Employers Rule Our Lives (and Why We Don't Talk about It)*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019.

¹²¹ Alain De Botton, *The Pleasures and Sorrows of Work* (London: Penguin, 2015), 246.

¹²² Altomonte, Guillermina. “Historia Editorial Abstract - Ddd.uab.cat.” Accessed April 25, 2022. https://ddd.uab.cat/pub/athdig/athdig_a2020v20n2/athdig_a2020v20n2p2322.pdf.

Seduction and Love

Adherence to DWYL culture is propelled not only by employers and cultural phenomena, but also by a genuine interest in the premise of lovable work. Workers are attracted to a labor market which appears to value their passions and interests, and which reconfigures their understanding of their identity as a worker within a capitalist system. DWYL achieves through its surface level addressal of alienation, a theory by Karl Marx which describes the emotional disadvantages of laboring under capitalism.

Under the capitalist process, workers are forced to sell their labor power to the owners of production as a means to survival. Though capitalism premises this exchange as a “contractual relationship,”¹²³ Marx argues that economic coercion is the sole driver of the capitalist labor market. Under his Theory of Alienation, this compulsion relegates the worker to be “treated as a thing, as a machine” which is “purchased only when it is needed” by capitalists,¹²⁴ and is purported to have no further value than its potential for profit. The transformation of an individual into a commodity is an unattractive notion, and DWYL seeks to recharacterize the worker’s role in the capitalist process. Management achieves this through, as Miya Tokumitsu notes, applying “persistent pressure on workers to align even their most personal desires, regarding everything from their hobbies to care of their own bodies, with their employers.”¹²⁵ As discussed in Section One, the worker’s robust investment in their work under DWYL serves as “an

¹²³ Wallimann, Isidor. “Estrangement: Marx's Conception of Human Nature and the ... - Syracuse University.” Accessed April 20, 2022. <https://surface.syr.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1021&context=books>, 27.

¹²⁴ Wallimann, Isidor. “Estrangement: Marx's Conception of Human Nature and the ... - Syracuse University.” Accessed April 20, 2022, <https://surface.syr.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1021&context=books>, 28, 30.

¹²⁵ Tokumitsu, *Do What You Love and Other Lies about Success & Happiness*, 36.

exceptionally tight fusion of interests between the two parties.”¹²⁶ The capitalist’s interest is profit and the enamored worker loves the work which provides them profit, and under DWYL both actors work towards achieving the institution’s goals; one out of desire for profit and the other out of love. Through the assumption of capital’s interests as their own workers feel closer to the role of ‘capitalist,’ thereby transcending their status as commodities.

DWYL further hides the worker’s exploitative relationship to labor by transforming work into an emulation of love and family. Marx states that the worker’s life, “for what is life but activity?”¹²⁷ is forced to consist predominantly of activity centering labor. By replacing labor with love, DWYL leads workers to believe that they are no longer coerced into labor for survival, and convinces them of their *desire* to work out of love. The potential for passion, identity, friends and family inherent in work culture today reshapes the worker’s life, which is coercively dedicated to labor, into a life dedicated to *love* of labor – an economic stockholm syndrome. By focusing on the potential for love within work, employees are distracted from the structural inequalities which deem them tools for use by the capitalist class. This is ultimately an emotional relief to the worker, quelling the anxieties of a realistic perception of the abusive dynamic between capital and labor.

According to Marx, workers are alienated from their labor when the products they produce are inaccessible to them, instead owned by the capitalist class to be sold for

¹²⁶ Weeks, “Down with Love: Feminist Critique and the New Ideologies of Work.”

¹²⁷ Wallimann, Isidor. “Estrangement: Marx’s Conception of Human Nature and the ... - Syracuse University.” Accessed April 20, 2022, <https://surface.syr.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1021&context=books>, 34.

profit. Do What You Love culture's appeal lies in the illusion of reunification with the products of labor through the insistence that both employers and employees will benefit equally from a romantic relationship with work. Though workers do not reap the profit benefits of their production, through loving their work they can still attach to the emotional output of a job well done. DWYL therefore provides workers the opportunity to claim an emotional value of their labor. Work is then no longer, as Marx outlines as the problem of alienation, "independent of him and not belonging to him."¹²⁸

Finally, due to coercion, the worker's production of labor ceases to reflect a worker's own "will and consciousness," transforming it into a process which is not instigated by their own desire to labor, and is therefore "alien" to them.¹²⁹ This alienation feels unpleasant, and the seduction of DWYL lies in its promise of an autonomous relationship with work. DWYL emphasizes capitalism's claim that workers are "free agents" through its individualist command – to find work that *you* love or to find ways for *you* to find joy in it. In this way DWYL insists that it is possible to achieve this imperative on an individual level, and ignores systemic barriers to finding meaningful labor as well as excuses capitalists from being held accountable for the jobs and work culture they create that make labor an unlovable endeavor. However, DWYL remains attractive because of the illusion of an individual being able to take control of their relationship with labor, providing them a feeling of autonomy in a market that in Marx's view, is inherently coercive.

Conclusion

¹²⁸ Wallimann, Isidor. "Estrangement: Marx's Conception of Human Nature and the ... - Syracuse University." Accessed April 20, 2022, <https://surface.syr.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1021&context=books>, 34.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 31.

For a culture to be successful, it must be robust and implicit, penetrating the minds of its adherents from a young age and retaining its prominence through constant perpetuation of its message. This section has discussed the explicit propaganda and strategies on behalf of employers, evolutions in work culture which facilitate DWYL's rise, as well as other aspects which strengthened the idea, such as popular articles, internalization, economic reinforcers, and the broad attraction of the promises of DWYL. The next section will explore the class dynamics and implications for each under DWYL culture.

SECTION III: Class Dynamics of Do What You Love

Social scientists define class through three mechanisms: occupation, income, and education. The class divisions of DWYL culture models these measures, and more specifically, how they either impede or assist individuals in their effort to find lovable work. For the lower class, DWYL culture serves as a distant and broad aspiration rather than a reality due to its promotion of three ideas: job satisfaction is rooted in passion rather than income, work is a form of identity, and workers have autonomy in choosing their place of employment. While these claims are far removed from the low-income existence, workers still retain an ideological attachment to the importance of finding lovable work, and further are expected by employers to fulfill the demands of DWYL culture.

DWYL culture is more so targeted at and especially attractive to workers “less constrained by immediate economic need” – specifically, the middle and upper class.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ Weeks, “Down with Love: Feminist Critique and the New Ideologies of Work.”

However, despite DWYL's insistence on the accessibility of the 'dream job,' the feasibility of finding and obtaining such an opportunity is limited to the upper class who have the resources and financial backing to facilitate their efforts. The middle class, meanwhile, internalizes the urges of DWYL culture at high cost, reaps few returns, and abstains from protesting the culture due to the complacency of the professional class at large.

The Lower Class

As discussed in Section I, under DWYL culture love is meant to be the primary instigation of work, effectively replacing income as a motivator. However, the lower class' priorities are incompatible with DWYL culture, as income must be prioritized over passion due to financial precariousness. Though especially so for the lower class, in fact the majority of the workforce experiences income as a large determinant of job satisfaction. According to the Pew Research Center, about six-in-ten (59%) of those with an annual family income of \$75,000 or more say they're very satisfied with their current job. Alternatively, the lower class and lower middle class experience lower levels of satisfaction, with 45% of those making \$30,000 to \$74,999 and 39% of those making less than \$30,000 saying they are satisfied with their job.¹³¹ This lies in direct contradiction to DWYL's insistence that passion rather than income drives satisfaction, and exemplifies the broader tendency of DWYL to ignore the reality of economic survival under capitalism: that having a bed to sleep in, food to eat, and funds to spend on enjoyable activities *depends* on income. As Miya Tokumitsu states, "as long as our well-being

¹³¹ "3. How Americans View Their Jobs." Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends Project. Pew Research Center, September 28, 2021. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2016/10/06/3-how-americans-view-their-jobs/>.

depends on income, and income, for most, depends on work, love will always be secondary as a motivation.”¹³² For many in the lower class who live paycheck to paycheck, income directly impacts their ability to pay rent or buy groceries. Low wages that don’t enable workers to properly support themselves therefore can foster stress and breed resentment in workers towards their place of unemployment, as well as cause workers to feel undervalued. Low wages and the attitudes it fosters disincentives workers to do more than the bare minimum of their job description.¹³³ This bare minimum turns work into drudgery, a means to an end, and as Cederstrom and Fleming argue, for the majority of workers, the end of work is what they are working for.¹³⁴

DWYL culture’s promotion of identifying with work is also inapplicable to the lower class. Workers with a postgraduate degree are the most likely to say their job gives them a sense of identity (77%), while the same applies to 60% of those with a bachelor’s degree, and 48% of those with some college education. Only about four-in-ten (38%) of those with a high school diploma or less say the same.¹³⁵ College degrees provide opportunities for workers to pursue a wider range of careers through granting them the credentials, contacts, and exposure necessary to identify and obtain their ‘dream job.’ However, much of the lower class do not pursue college degrees, and this lack of educational credentials greatly inhibits their employment options and hinders the process of finding a field of interest.¹³⁶ Further, the Pew Research Center found that 62% of those

¹³² Tokumitsu, *Do What You Love and Other Lies about Success & Happiness*, 15.

¹³³ Wilkie, Dana. “Miserable Modern Workers: Why Are They so Unhappy?” SHRM. SHRM, July 6, 2021. <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/employee-relations/pages/employee-engagement-.aspx>.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹³⁵ “3. How Americans View Their Jobs.” Pew Research Center’s Social & Demographic Trends Project. Pew Research Center, September 28, 2021.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2016/10/06/3-how-americans-view-their-jobs/>.

¹³⁶ Morin, Rich, and Seth Motel. “A Third of Americans Now Say They Are in the Lower Classes.” Pew Research Center’s Social & Demographic Trends Project. Pew Research Center, May 30, 2020.

in managerial positions experienced job satisfaction compared to 42% of people working in hospitality, 43% for manual and physical, and 36% in retail or wholesale trade.¹³⁷ The low satisfaction rates for these jobs, staples of the working class which do not require college degrees, suggest that these individuals are not employed in this field because they enjoy it, but rather because it is the only job they have access to or are qualified for. It then follows that those employed in fields for financial security rather than passion, are less inclined to identify with such an occupation.

Further, DWYL's command to find lovable work fails to take into account the barriers from doing so faced by low-income communities. This idea parallels modern bootstrap theory, which similarly asserts a base level of self-determination from which an individual can achieve their goals – should they work hard enough to do so. In his commencement speech to Stanford University in 2005, Steve Jobs stated, “The only way to do great work is to love what you do.”¹³⁸ DWYL rhetoric such as this suggests that “great work,”¹³⁹ or more generally, success is contingent on pursuing work that fulfills you, but as Miya Tokumitsu points out, “if people are successful because they “choose” lucrative work that they love, then people must also “choose” to be poor and exploited.”¹⁴⁰ DWYL culture places the burden of finding and obtaining a lovable job on the individual, but does not distinguish between the ease of the process based on class. When it comes to supporting a family, an attempt to “follow your bliss” as CNN anchor

<https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2012/09/10/a-third-of-americans-now-say-they-are-in-the-lower-classes/>.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ University, Stanford. “Text of Steve Jobs' Commencement Address (2005).” Stanford News, June 12, 2017. <https://news.stanford.edu/2005/06/14/jobs-061505/>.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Tokumitsu, *Do What You Love and Other Lies about Success & Happiness*, 15.

Anderson Cooper advised,¹⁴¹ could result in crippling financial debt should a business fail, or a loss of food and housing security while unemployed and searching for a new job. The consequences of taking a risk for new job pursuits is severe for those who don't have the financial safety net to catch them if it, as risks are prone, does not work out. As a means to avoid these dangers when in an already vulnerable economic position, many in the working class are unable to pursue jobs they are interested in and instead must search for employment which provides more immediate financial security. DWYL culture is therefore primarily approachable for those who have financial resources such as a trust fund, a large sum of savings from a three figure job, or financially supportive parents, all of which greatly facilitate and provide a safety buffer during the search, acquisition, and transition into a new job.

Despite their exclusion from DWYL culture in practice, the lower class remains loyal to the broad concept of finding lovable work. Ayşegül Akdemir studied workers in the service sector, examining how 'love your job' discourse impacted their view of employment. Akdemir found through interviewing call center employees that more than half of the participants disliked their jobs, finding it "unsuitable for their level of education or personality" and more broadly, "routine and stressful."¹⁴² Despite their admitted incompatibility with their employment, they persisted in their efforts to find enjoyment in their work. They also emphasized the importance of doing lovable work generally, naming it alongside two other attributes they deemed essential for call center

¹⁴¹ Ajcaren. "Anderson Cooper on 'Finding Your Bliss.'" NH Archive, April 25, 2014. <https://www.thenewshouse.com/nharchive/anderson-cooper-on-finding-your-bliss/>.

¹⁴² Akdemir, "Love Your Job Discourse and Its Affective Influence on Contemporary Job Market," 1101.

work: patience and communication skills.¹⁴³ The dissonance between these employees' feelings towards their place of employment and the ideological beliefs they hold about lovable work exemplifies the cultural hold DWYL has even on sectors of the workforce which are unable to relate to its tenets.

The working class also remains subject to the expectations the culture has established within the workplace. Defined by Arlie Hochschild in her book *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*, 'emotional labor' is a form of labor that "induces or suppresses" feelings for the purpose of maintaining the "countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others."¹⁴⁴ Hochschild describes "seeming to love the job" as a common form of emotional labor especially required for working class roles.¹⁴⁵ She notices "deep acting" from service workers such as airline hostesses and parking infringement officers, in which workers feel pressured by manager expectations of them to "manipulate the emotions of others" and provide "service with a smile," even in emotionally volatile situations.¹⁴⁶ Studies show that deep acting can not only be as physically tiring as a manual labor job, but a "risk to psychological health."¹⁴⁷ The forced display of emotions which contradict worker's authentic feelings for the purpose of "satisfy[ing] an employer's expectation of happy workers," leads to burnout,¹⁴⁸ stress,¹⁴⁹

¹⁴³ Ibid., 1114.

¹⁴⁴ Hochschild, Arlie Russell. *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Pr., 2012.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Hochschild, Arlie Russell. *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Pr., 2012.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Weeks, "Down with Love: Feminist Critique and the New Ideologies of Work."; Yetim, B., & Erigüç, G. (2019). Sağlık Çalışanlarında Duygusal Emek ile İlgili Yapılan Çalışmalara Yönelik Bir İnceleme. *Anadolu Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 19(2), 225-240.

¹⁴⁹ Lewig KA and Dollard MF (2003) Emotional dissonance, emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction in call centre workers. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* 12(4): 366–392.

and decreases satisfaction.¹⁵⁰ The pressure from management to engage in deep acting is complemented by technology designed for “managing the social interactions of workers” to “generate value.”¹⁵¹ The recently designed sociometric badge is a technology equipped with a microphone and an accelerometer, able to record an employee's “tone of voice, posture, and body language, as well as who spoke to whom and for how long.”¹⁵² This technology would enforce ‘deep acting’ in service workers, relegating them to the physical and mental consequences in the name of job security. Though currently most popular in working class positions, these surveillance measures are likely to expand to the professional class, as the badge has garnered interest from companies in the banking, pharmaceutical, and health-care industries.¹⁵³

The Middle Class

Despite the prominence of DWYL culture in the discourses of both the middle and upper class, there remains a nearly imperceptible class divide pertaining to the feasibility of obtaining lovable work. While the upper class enjoys most direct and consistent access to the ‘dream job,’ the middle class sacrifices relentlessly for but regularly falls short of these same aspirations, crafting DWYL culture into a near oppressive force. Central to the disconnect between the upper and middle class is higher education, as college debt serves as a major separator between the wealthy and middle class. College debt, networking, and access to prestigious institutions specifically serve as

¹⁵⁰ Özkan, G. (2013). Çağrı merkezlerinde duygusal emek ve örgütsel iletişim. Selçuk Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi Akademik Dergisi, 7(4), pp.64-80.

¹⁵¹ Tokumitsu, *Do What You Love and Other Lies about Success & Happiness*, 38.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

deterrents to success for the middle class while simultaneously elevating the upper class in their efforts.

Steve Jobs, an icon of the DWYL culture, created his company in the 1970s. Since his rise, the economy has changed so significantly that since his parents paid for him to attend Reed College, private school tuition has increased 567%,¹⁵⁴ and middle class parents can no longer support their children's educational endeavors without taking out extensive loans. Further, Steve Jobs eventually dropped out, comfortable to do so in a market that did not require college degrees to the extent it does today for upward mobility. In fact, in 2013, a four year college degree earned workers 98 percent more per hour than workers without, and a total of \$500,000 more over a lifetime.¹⁵⁵ It is clear that college degrees are necessary for upward mobility, however, the high costs of college tuition, lack of financial aid provided to middle class students, and a limit to financial support from parents necessitate many middle class students to take out loans. In 2015, about 70 percent of middle class students graduated with debt, with a median of \$26,000 in loans.¹⁵⁶ In fact, there exists today more than \$1 trillion in student debt, which is higher than almost all other forms of private debt. Additionally, if these students find their debt too much of a financial burden to bear, they are unable to declare bankruptcy under current laws. Should an individual wish to obtain a college education necessary for the pursuit of their dream job, these financial barriers are more than enough to dissuade them,

¹⁵⁴“Digest of Education Statistics, 2019.” National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Home Page, a part of the U.S. Department of Education. Accessed April 20, 2022.
https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_330.10.asp.

¹⁵⁵ Leonhardt, David. “Is College Worth It? Clearly, New Data Say.” The New York Times. The New York Times, May 27, 2014.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/27/upshot/is-college-worth-it-clearly-new-data-say.html>.

¹⁵⁶ “College Financing and the Plight of the Middle Class.” AAUP, October 21, 2020.
<https://www.aaup.org/article/college-financing-and-plight-middle-class#.YmBhGNrMKUk>.

especially as the job market for college graduates today grows more crowded and therefore competitive. Further, concern about paying off student debt leads graduates to pursue jobs that provide them the most compensation rather than pursuing an occupation they find authentically fulfilling. These financial barriers are inevitable for the middle class, but largely absent for members of the upper class who have the means to pursue degrees and employment without considering the financial burdens.

Additionally, DWYL's common conflation of impassioned work with career success ignores the possible conflicts between the 'dream job' and financial prosperity. Despite Oprah Winfrey's claim that passion is essential "if you really want to fly," obtaining a dream job in no way increases the likelihood of success or is even an indicator of a stable income.¹⁵⁷ There are many jobs, such as becoming an artist or working at a nonprofit, that are low paid and cannot supply the wages necessary to properly support an individual, and especially not a family. These opportunities are most feasible for the already wealthy, who can rely on previously developed reservoirs of wealth to sustain their lifestyles while pursuing low-paying occupations. In fact, employment itself is not enough to pull people out of poverty no matter how passionate they are about their work: the International Labour Organization found that only jobs which provide adequate earnings, security and safe working environments have this potential.¹⁵⁸ But even if a job does pay well, Thomas Piketty found that capital grows in value far more quickly than wage income. In other words, "owning, not working, is what

¹⁵⁷ "Does a Growth Mindset Equal Success?" The Sterling Choice, May 25, 2021. <https://www.thesterlingchoice.com/does-a-growth-mindset-equal-success/>.

¹⁵⁸ Gammarano, R. (2019) The working poor or how a job is no guarantee of decent living conditions (April 2019) retrieved on 01.09.2020 at <https://ilostat.ilo.org/the-working-poor-or-how-a-job-is-noguarantee-of-decent-living-conditions/>

generates most significant wealth.”¹⁵⁹ Once again, the promise of success propagated by DWYL is largely reserved for those who are already wealthy, yet continues to serve as a misleading motivator for the middle class.

Additionally, should either a lower or middle class individual discover a job opportunity they believe will be fulfilling, their chances of being hired are vastly limited by both their degree and network. According to Opportunity Insights, the middle class is heavily underrepresented in Ivy-plus enrollment, attending at rates lower than the lowest income quintile.¹⁶⁰ Bill Hall, founder and president of Applied Policy Research Inc says that middle-income families are unable to afford higher education, especially the tuition of elite private institutions, as their expected contribution can be too large to be feasible.¹⁶¹ The middle class therefore must compete against wealthy individuals with Ivy-plus degrees, putting them at a disadvantage in the job application process.

Further, according to LinkedIn, 70% of hires in 2016 had a professional connection at the company.¹⁶² However, networks are mostly comprised of the people an individual grows up with, that their parents have contact with, and their peers, coworkers, and alumni. Middle class individuals often have a middle class personal and familial network, while wealthy individuals are more likely to have a personal and familial

¹⁵⁹ Piketty, Thomas, and Arthur Goldhammer. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Harvard University Press, 2014. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvjnrvx9>.

¹⁶⁰ “The Determinants of Income Segregation and ...” Accessed April 20, 2022. https://opportunityinsights.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/undermatch_summary.pdf.

¹⁶¹ Middle class heavily underrepresented at top private colleges, report finds. Accessed April 20, 2022. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/02/21/middle-class-heavily-underrepresented-top-private-colleges-report-finds>.

¹⁶² CommunicationsShareLinkedInFacebookTwitter, LinkedIn Corporate. “Eighty-Percent of Professionals Consider Networking Important to Career Success.” LinkedIn Pressroom. Accessed April 20, 2022. <https://news.linkedin.com/2017/6/eighty-percent-of-professionals-consider-networking-important-to-career-success>.

network of financially successful and powerful contacts. Useful alumni networks are largely dependent on prestige and culture of the college, and the wealthy are admitted to and can afford to attend elite institutions at higher rates, providing them with an expansive and influential peer and alumni network. These contacts facilitate job searches and attainment to the detriment of middle and lower class applicants, who are likely applying for the same positions. The middle class who often must obtain student debt, lacks an elite degree, has a limited network, and is dependent on income to pay back debt, has little momentum in their journey to find and obtain lovable work compared to the wealthy.

The sustained prominence of DWYL in the face of these middle class adversities attest to both the seduction and coercion inherent to the culture. As explored above, many labor under debt, and as Miya Tokumitsu states, these debt payments are dependent on “job security,” causing a higher risk to be affiliated with innovation, challenging the status quo, and revolting against poor working conditions.¹⁶³ The transformation of much of the middle class into a class of debtors is, as Chris Maisano states, an “insidious form of social control with a deceitfully cheery exterior.”¹⁶⁴(7%)

Further, the professional middle class has “traditionally been allergic to mass protest,” often expressing discontent through “angry mutterings rather than collective action.”¹⁶⁵ This aversion to open resistance is part of what defines the professional class as the *petit bourgeois*, as protestation necessitates “turning on members of their own class.”¹⁶⁶ Further, much of the professional middle class are hopeful for an elevation of

¹⁶³ Tokumitsu, *Do What You Love and Other Lies about Success & Happiness*, 13.

¹⁶⁴ Tokumitsu, *Do What You Love and Other Lies about Success & Happiness*, 13.

¹⁶⁵ Tokumitsu, *Do What You Love and Other Lies about Success & Happiness*, 49.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

their position from petit bourgeois through promotions, which makes open confrontation unattractive. Instead, they “redouble their efforts to show their bosses and announce to the world how happy and grateful they are for their work,”¹⁶⁷ supporting and exalting the very oppressive measures they internally lament. It is important to recognize how the “acclaim,” “celebration” and “exuberance” for work under DWYL, as Weeks states, “is intended to manufacture workers who will embrace rather than protest the insecure conditions and intensified workload that are increasingly endemic to the contemporary employment contract.”¹⁶⁸

Conclusion

Recognition of DWYL’s varied feasibility specific to class is essential for analysis of the broader ills of DWYL culture. Ignorance of class dynamics results in the most drastic harm occurring to the most vulnerable communities who lack the resources and power to change their conditions. It further conceals and therefore maintains inequalities within the middle class, propagating specious ideals of autonomy. Class divisions must be brought to the forefront of discussions centering Do What You Love culture and how it can be shaped to be more equitable in the future.

Chapter I Remarks

This chapter has sought to illuminate the various components of Do What You Love culture, as well as explore the explicit and implicit harms of its presence in American work culture today. It has identified the aspects which contribute to the culture’s propagation, noting that its propagation through cultural diffusion is a complex

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 51.

¹⁶⁸ Weeks, “Down with Love: Feminist Critique and the New Ideologies of Work.”

one, and requires a broader conception of propaganda than is commonly understood today. DWYL culture's penetration of the modern worker must be discussed further to ensure that work culture in the United States reflects its power to instill a workplace premised in autonomy and equity, and that it does not enable exploitation of the labor force by employers.

CHAPTER II

Structural Propaganda and the Neoliberal Science

Introduction

This chapter explores the field of economics, and how over time it has come to represent the interests of the neoliberal ideology. It first examines whether economics can be ideologically driven, and determines that the field's capacity for objectivity is minimum. Premised on this, Section II investigates the rise of neoliberalism and the shift towards formalism within the field, which created a study of economics which simultaneously asserts its own objectivity *and* adheres to the neoliberal ideological position. I identify actors which propelled each movement and their motivations, as well as the harm this fusion causes.

SECTION I: Is Economics Ideologically Driven?

This chapter defines ideology through Berger and Luckmann's definition, which describes ideology as "social constructions of reality."¹ Importantly, ideology represents a belief system that is genuinely adhered to in constructing one's perspective, usually supported by empirical data or "plausible generalizations."² Though it is rare that the proponent is putting forth a deliberate deception,³ these perspectives may be "selective" or only "partial representations" of a reality and subject to "oversights" or "indifference"

¹ Peter Ludwig Berger, *The Social Construction of Reality* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976), 102.

² Robert Heilbroner, "Economics as Ideology," *Economics As Discourse*, 1990, pp. 101-128, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-1377-1_4, 103.

³ Schumpeter, Joseph A. "Schumpeter Science and Ideology - University of California ..." Science and Ideology . Accessed April 25, 2022. <http://bev.berkeley.edu/ipe/Schumpeter%20Science%20and%20Ideology.pdf>.

to fallacies.⁴ Robert Heilbroner in “Economics as Ideology” asserts that ideology signifies the “inextricable” factors of “social power, position, and values” that motivate actors towards their beliefs.⁵ These factors vary widely, ranging from race to place of employment to religion, and serve as shapers of a given perspective, which then form a belief system, or the ideology.

According to Heilbroner, economics is a “discipline that has always established objectivity as its norm,”⁶ and this has largely informed the view that economics is not ideologically driven, but rather propelled by quantitative and qualitative analysis which can produce results and conclusions replicating the objective findings of science. In this section I compare the field of science and economics to argue that economics cannot be objective nor scientific, and is further guided by ideology. This is important to recognize in order to prevent ideologically motivated economic findings, frameworks, and recommendations from shaping public policy under the guise of objectivity.

Is Economics Value Free?

Science seeks to understand and explain “what is,” not “what ought to be,”⁷ and undertakes this work devoid of personal bias or emotions, as well as any interference from the scientist. Nearly all economists would “gladly and wholeheartedly subscribe” to this challenge of “value-neutrality,”⁸ and a plethora of “remote, abstract, and socially detached” terms permeate the field in pursuit of this condition.⁹ However, this value free

⁴ Robert Heilbroner, “Economics as Ideology,” 103; 104.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁶ Robert Heilbroner, “Economics as Ideology,” 102.

⁷ Robert Heilbroner, “Economics as a 'Value-Free' Science - JSTOR,” accessed April 25, 2022, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40970129>, 129.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 107.

condition has been criticized both within the scientific field and as an economic mechanism.

The value free nature of science as a field has been questioned considering the psychological and sociological relationship between a scientist and their subject. It is assumed within the field that scientists approach their studies without conscious bias. Polanyi and Kuhn, however, found that scientists often work to interpret “anomalies” in a way that validates their established paradigm, resulting in “explaining away” or disregarding results that contradict preconceived beliefs.¹⁰ Heilbroner argues that economics is even more so subject to these biases. He describes the tendency of economists to handle topics such as imperialism and international trade in a manner which ignores aspects such as the damage done to “poorer lands,”¹¹ as well as notes the subjectivity of economics, directing his reader to compare the content of *The American Economic Review* with the *Review of Radical Political Economics* as an example of the political bias inherent in selection of economic topics.¹²

Further, economists stand to benefit from the success and continuation of the field and as a result are more inclined to support the status quo. Many economists operate through developing academic expertise or writing papers premised on the ideas and parameters of economics as it is understood today. As Heilbroner states, the economist belongs to a certain economic order: “has a place in it” through occupation, and therefore “benefits and loses from it.”¹³ This results in a perception of a “future bound up” with the

¹⁰ Polanyi, Michael. *Personal Knowledge*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958.

¹¹ Robert Heilbroner, “Economics as a 'Value-Free' Science - JSTOR,” accessed April 25, 2022, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40970129>, 139.

¹² *Ibid.*, 137.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 139.

“success or failure” of the field.¹⁴ Because of this “inescapable existential fact,” objectivity from economists is psychologically impossible.¹⁵ For example, in the field of science, should an actor uncover an anomaly, it has the potential to threaten their “intellectual security” and even may have a psychological impact on them.¹⁶ If an economist discovers an anomaly, however, they face not only these two potential ramifications but also must face a threat to the validity of the field they are enmeshed with, and to the society that is built on the field. The actor in this situation is confronted by the morality of their field, their lifestyle, and the society they live in, potentially requiring a complete reframe of their worldview. Economists therefore face higher stakes in their inquiry than scientists do.

With this conclusion, Heilbroner asserts that economists likely approach their work with “a wish, conscious or unconscious” to validate the framework they believe and operate in. He assumes that both the neoclassist and marxist “struggles mightily” to produce results that fit their ideological hypothesis and to diminish results counter to it.¹⁷ He notes that these biases still maintain a “gloss” of objectivity despite being premised on “arbitrary and value-laden assumptions.”¹⁸ For example, neoclassical economics is often used to “disprove” the necessity for minimum wage laws, but he notes that this cannot lay any claim to “scientific validity” but is rather motivated by the possible consequences for certain stakeholders in the issue, such as corporations.¹⁹

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Robert Heilbroner, “Economics as a 'Value-Free' Science - JSTOR,” 139.

¹⁸ Ibid., 142.

¹⁹ Ibid.

However, Heilbroner does not object to the use of values in economics, but instead recognizes the necessity of incorporating values as the foundation for economic conclusion. Heilbroner argues that economics is inherently a normative field of study, and that without subjective recommendations the field would be rendered useless for real world application.²⁰ For example, many economists use data and economic laws to develop a policy suggestion for taxes, housing tactics, and more. These recommendations are dependent on the economist moving beyond the scientific method of simple observation and entering into the subjective realm. Economics, therefore, is unable to persist as a field without the assumptions it makes. This transition from observations to assumptions is where Heilbroner argues values become non-negotiable. Assumptions draw on perspective, which is influenced holistically by background, experiences, and quirks specific to the individual making the assumption. Values are intrinsically tied to perspective, and so are any assumptions made.²¹ Therefore, to exist as a field, economics must root itself in the subjective ideological. It is important, however, that rather than claim impartiality, the field recognizes and is transparent about its value-laden inferences.

Economic Laws

Scientific laws describe natural phenomena that the field has deemed provable. The process of achieving this status includes the repeated observation of a phenomenon that does not change under differing circumstances. Economics has set many 'laws' of its own within the field, translating human behavior into economic principles that are applied broadly to explain social and economic phenomena. One such law is the assumption of maximization, in which consumers, workers, and businessmen alike are

²⁰ Ibid., 134.

²¹ Ibid.

naturally inclined towards maximizing economic or material gain. Economists base their predictions of behavior on this premise, however, the concept of maximization is unspecific. As Heilbroner points out, there is not a single, generalizable approach to maximization because any assumptions made in one context will likely fail to remain applicable in another.²² Therefore, the laws of economics differ from the scientific laws they are perceived to emulate. Scientific laws assume consistency, and economic laws are unable to provide regularly accurate predictions or understandings of economic behavior. This is because economics studies human behavior, and unlike the objects of scientific study, humans are conscious beings with a complexity that cannot be generalized. Therefore, economic laws are capable of, at best, “partial descriptions of reality,” and at worst, “outright mis-descriptions of it.”²³ Despite the precariousness of economic laws, the field remains loyal to them, teaching these understanding in academic settings and addressing societal problems through this lense. This is at odds with the scientific inclination to discard hypotheses that are inconsistent, putting the field of economics at odds with any claim to objective recommendations.

Conclusion

Despite a modern understanding of economics as largely objective and result driven, human bias inevitably colors not only motivations for economic pursuits, but the explanation and framing of economic findings. It is further influenced by the tendency of economists to generalize complex human behavior, laying the foundation for biased interpretations propelled by the personal understandings that comprise ideology. The next part explores how the assumption of objectivity combined with a rise of the neoliberal

²² Robert Heilbroner, “Economics as a 'Value-Free' Science - JSTOR,” 135.

²³ *Ibid.*, 136.

ideology formed the modern academic field which is imperceptibly skewed towards the neoliberal framework of thinking.

SECTION II: The Rise of Neoliberalism and the Economic Science

Definition and Inception of Neoliberalism

The economic ideology of neoliberalism emerged in the 1930s as a response to collectivism and central planning. As Ben Jackson writes, “the chief enemy of the neo-liberals was not the nascent welfare state or even Keynesian economics,” but rather the rise of socialism, communism, and fascism.²⁴ Austrian economist Friedrich Hayek, recognizing the declining popularity of laissez faire economics and the unfettered market advocated by liberalism,²⁵ pursued a liberal revival altered with a more staunch and active defense of the market. Defined at a 1938 conference in Paris, neoliberalism prioritizes “the price mechanism, free enterprise, the system of competition, and a strong and impartial state.”²⁶ It holds that both political and economic institutions should be “robustly liberal and capitalist,” and should seek “the right state and the right law to serve the market order.”²⁷

Business Interest in Neoliberalism and Hayek’s Strategy

²⁴ Thomas Biebricher, *Political Theory of Neoliberalism* (Stanford University Press, 2019), 19.

²⁵ Thomas Palley. “From Keynesianism to Neoliberalism: Shifting Paradigms in Economics.” From keynesianism to neoliberalism ... - Thomas Palley. Accessed April 25, 2022. http://www.thomaspalley.com/docs/articles/macro_policy/keynesianism_to_neoliberalism.pdf.

²⁶ Gertz, Geoffrey, and Homi Kharas. “Beyond Neoliberalism: Insights from Emerging Markets.” Brookings. Brookings, May 7, 2019.

<https://www.brookings.edu/multi-chapter-report/beyond-neoliberalism-insights-from-emerging-markets/>.

²⁷ Vallier, Kevin. “Neoliberalism.” Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Stanford University, June 9, 2021. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/neoliberalism/>.

In the aftermath of WWII, corporations were faced with a Keynesian dominant economy in which the global economic landscape became increasingly difficult to engage with and develop in.²⁸ Further, due to the growing power of unions domestically, though the economy was flourishing and profits were high, corporations were forced to redistribute wealth through corporate taxes and workers' salaries.²⁹ Hayek's neoliberalism sought to repress these progressive governmental measures and redirect the state to manage the interests of the market. The enthusiasm for Keynesian thinking at the time made Hayek's retreat to liberal ideas a perspective on the fringe, but it drew interest from business who "saw in the philosophy an opportunity to free themselves from regulation and tax."³⁰ As a result, Hayek was largely supported by corporations throughout his career, funded by corporate sponsors to stay at the University of Chicago and regarded as a "stock rightwing man" with a "stock rightwing sponsor" by his coworkers.³¹

Shortly after WWII, economist Milton Friedman and Hayek formed the Mont Pèlerin Society, an international scholar community dedicated to "spread[ing] the doctrine of neoliberalism."³² Mirowski dubbed it "the premier site of the construction of neoliberalism."³³ The society was funded by businessmen, millionaires, and their foundations, who had a vested interest in the domestic and global perpetuation of the

²⁸ Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine* (Henry Holt and Co., 2010), 56.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Monbiot, George. "Neoliberalism – the Ideology at the Root of All Our Problems." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, April 15, 2016.

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/apr/15/neoliberalism-ideology-problem-george-monbiot>.

³¹ Metcalf, Stephen. "Neoliberalism: The Idea That Swallowed the World." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, August 18, 2017.

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2017/aug/18/neoliberalism-the-idea-that-changed-the-world>.

³² Shammass, Victor L. "Burying Mont Pèlerin: Milton Friedman and Neoliberal ...". Accessed April 25, 2022. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1467-8675.12322>.

³³ Philip Mirowski, *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go to Waste: How Neoliberalism Survived the Financial Meltdown* (London: Verso, 2014), 29.

neoliberal ideology.³⁴ In his 1949 article, “The Intellectuals and Socialism,” Hayek asserted that the path to the success of neoliberal ideas was to influence the position of intellectuals, recognizing that it was the most successful strategy considering “ideas seeped into policy only very slowly.”³⁵ Hayek sought to target journalists, experts, politicians, and policymakers to promote neoliberalism through think tanks and the popularization of the concept in mainstream journal and political realms.

Business interests acted on Hayek’s strategy, and over the course of thirty years funded the creation of think tanks meant to propagate the ideology such as the American Enterprise Institute, the Heritage Foundation, the Cato Institute, the Institute of Economic Affairs, the Centre for Policy Studies, and the Adam Smith Institute.³⁶ One of these organizations, the Institute of Economic Affairs, dedicated itself to “the study of markets and pricing systems as technical devices for registering preferences and apportioning resources.”³⁷ The organization, though registered as a charity and formally unpolitical, released pamphlets and books which promoted privatization, deregulation, market oriented solutions to economic problems, and methods which eventually led to policy formation along these tenets.³⁸ This and other think tanks served as a fundamental contributor to the rise of neoliberal sentiment.

The Formalist Revolution

³⁴ Monbiot, George. “Neoliberalism – the Ideology at the Root of All Our Problems.” The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, April 15, 2016.

³⁵ Hayek, Friedrich. “The Intellectuals and Socialism : F. A. Hayek : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming.” Internet Archive. Accessed April 24, 2022. https://archive.org/details/Hayek_201804.

³⁶ Monbiot, George. “Neoliberalism – the Ideology at the Root of All Our Problems.” The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, April 15, 2016.

³⁷ Day, Alan J. “Thinking the Unthinkable: Think-Tanks and the Economic Counter-Revolution, 1931–1983.” *International Affairs* 71, no. 2 (1995): 379–80. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2623469>.

³⁸ Roger E. Backhouse, *The Puzzle of Modern Economics: Science or Ideology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 141.

In his economics textbook, *Principles of Economics* (1920), prominent Cambridge economist Alfred Marshall dubbed economics “the study of mankind in the ordinary business of life.”³⁹ Scientific rigor in economics was considered the grounding of theory in and ensuring its applicability to the real world, and the use of mathematics was limited in the field, with Marshall even refusing to include mathematics in the main text.⁴⁰ However, beginning in the 1930s, the field of economics began shifting towards a formalist approach. Formalism at its inception took the formal rules of neoclassical economic theory and sought to universalize them into economic laws. Rooted in the study of capitalist market societies, it assumes its tenets, such as scarcity and maximizing behavior, “can be used to explain the nature and dynamics of non-capitalist economies.”⁴¹ Victoria Chick further describes it as an encapsulation of an “idea in an equation or system of equations,”⁴² which similarly derives from the study of the capitalist economy and standardizes findings.

First, in the 1930s multiple organizations formed which instigated the formalist approach through the use of mathematics and statistics in economics. The Econometric Society was founded in 1930 and sought to fuse the “theoretical-quantitative and the empirical-quantitative approach” in order to create a field that more similarly reflected the process within the field of natural science.⁴³ This was deemed the ‘rigorous approach’ because it focused on mathematical methods rather than verbal analysis. The

³⁹ Ibid., 101.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Lata, Kusum. “UNIT 2 FORMALISM AND SUBSTANTIVISM.” Accessed April 25, 2022. <https://blog.egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/76985/1/Unit-2.pdf>.

⁴² Victoria Chick, “Formalism in Economics - JSTOR,” accessed April 25, 2022, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/2565849.pdf>.

⁴³ “Please Make Your Donation to Further the Goals of the Econometric Society.” About | The Econometric Society. Accessed April 24, 2022. <http://www.econometricsociety.org/society.asp#constitution>.

mathematical method involved “simplifying problems so that they could be formulated as sets of equations, which could then be manipulated using suitable mathematical techniques.”⁴⁴ This conception of rigor became increasingly influential in the field over time and economics transitioned into a “technical discipline centered on modeling.”⁴⁵

Further, established two years later in 1932, the Cowles Commission was a research institute founded by a businessman named Alfred Cowles. Cowles supported the Econometric Society’s push for incorporating mathematics as he sought to understand how economics could be used to predict events in the stock market.⁴⁶ The ‘Cowles Commission approach’ to economics expanded on models for markets, assuming perfect competition and advancing statistical methods that validated the models with economic data. Initially criticized for its “intentionally gross simplification” of markets as perfectly competitive,⁴⁷ it came to dominant economic thought by the 1960s.

Supplementing the shift to formalism, during WWII many economists worked with the government to solve problems related to the war effort. Operating alongside physicists and engineers, their proximity to these fields and engagement in interdisciplinary work caused economists to adopt a more math oriented perspective. After the conclusion of the war, many went on to become influential figures in academia, effectively converting interest in the field towards a more qualitative framework.⁴⁸

One academic figure, MIT economist Paul Samuelson, was resolute in his support of mathematical economics, stating: “The laborious literary working over of essentially

⁴⁴ Roger E. Backhouse, *The Puzzle of Modern Economics: Science or Ideology*, 99.

⁴⁵ Roger E. Backhouse, *The Puzzle of Modern Economics: Science or Ideology*, 100.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 101.

simple mathematical concepts such as is characteristic of much of modern economic theory is not only unrewarding from the standpoint of advancing the science, but involves as well mental gymnastics of a peculiarly depraved type.”⁴⁹ Samuelson went on to produce the best-selling textbook *Economics* (1948) which promoted the formalist approach to economic problem solving.⁵⁰ He served as a leading figure in what Mark Blaug dubbed the “formalist revolution,” identified, “by an absolute preference for the form of an economic argument over its content.”⁵¹ Importantly, many proponents such as Samuelson were not neoliberalist, but rather encouraged formalism from a left leaning perspective. In fact, Samuelson went on in 1982 to “confess” that mathematization was “. . . one of the mortal sins for which I shall have to do some explaining when I arrive at the heaven’s pearly gates.”⁵²

Neoliberalism as Science

As Peter-Wim Zuidhof states, economics today, in the “popular imagination” is regarded as the “science of neoliberalism.”⁵³ In his study of economic textbooks, Zuidhof found a “widening call to think like an economist,” a thought process which centered around neoliberal understandings of the economy.⁵⁴ Textbooks approached “social problems in economic terms” such as incentives, representing neoliberalism’s emphasis

⁴⁹ Backhouse, Roger E. “Zachary Carter, the Price of Peace: Money, Democracy, and the Life ...” *Æconomia*. History, Methodology, Philosophy. Association *Æconomia*, September 1, 2021. <https://journals.openedition.org/oeconomia/11285>.

⁵⁰ Roger E. Backhouse, *The Puzzle of Modern Economics: Science or Ideology*, 106.

⁵¹ Blaug, Mark. “The Formalist Revolution of the 1950s.” *A Companion to the History of Economic Thought*, n.d., 395–410. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470999059.ch25>.

⁵² Varoufakis, Yanis. “They Don’t Make Them like They Used to! Why Even the Best Post-War Economist Ended up a Tragic Figure,” January 25, 2018. <https://mronline.org/2011/01/03/they-dont-make-them-like-they-used-to-why-even-the-best-post-war-economist-ended-up-a-tragic-figure/>.

⁵³ Peter-Wim Zuidhof, “Thinking like an Economist: The Neoliberal Politics of the Economics Textbook,” *Review of Social Economy* 72, no. 2 (October 2014): pp. 157-185, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00346764.2013.872952>, 158.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 179.

on market base solutions.⁵⁵ Despite this, Zuidhof notes an attempt by the textbooks to frame these conceptions as an “objective presentation,”⁵⁶ following the formalist approach.

Further, many economists agree with the sentiment expressed by MIT economist Olivier Blanchard, who rejected the ability of economics to be driven by ideology. Blanchard instead describes it as “common language and common methods” devoid of a “common ideology.” He goes on to assert that economics is “characterized by its pragmatism” and “there is little ideology in this.”⁵⁷ However, as determined in Section I, economics is incapable of being utilized without ideological motivations and sentiment, and as the following paragraphs will explore, despite formalists’ claims, neoliberalism transformed into the predominant ideology which economics is premised in today.

The fusion of neoliberalism and formalism was most prominently propelled by Hayek’s own residence, the University of Chicago’s Economics Department in the 1950s. The University’s Free Market Study, piloted in 1946 at the behest of Hayek, included members such as Milton Friedman and Frank Knight, and its goals parallel that of the Mont Pelerin Society.⁵⁸ In Hayek’s “Draft Statement of Aims” for the MPS, he stated: “The preservation of an effective competitive order depends upon a proper legal and institutional framework. The existing framework must be considerably modified to make the operation of competition more efficient and beneficial.”⁵⁹ The Free Market Study

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ eter-Wim Zuidhof, “Thinking like an Economist: The Neoliberal Politics of the Economics Textbook,” 146.

⁵⁸ Horn, Robert Van. “Chicago Neoliberalism versus Cowles Planning: Perspectives on Patents and Public Goods in Cold War Economic Thought.” *Journal of the history of the behavioral sciences*. U.S. National Library of Medicine. Accessed April 24, 2022. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21732377/>.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

parroted this goal, searching for a framework to establish a competitive order, and the work performed under this endeavor incited the “development of Chicago neoliberalism.”⁶⁰

Simultaneously, formalism was becoming increasingly popular within the University. Economist Milton Friedman, who founded the Mont Pelerin society alongside Hayek, was a staunch advocate of neoliberalism and also spoke in support of the formalist approach, stating that economics is “in principle independent of any particular ethical position or normative judgments” and is “an ‘objective’ science, in precisely the same sense as any of the physical sciences.”⁶¹ Further, one of the schools’ founders, Frank Knight, encouraged professors to “inculcate” their students with the belief that the economic theories taught at the school were each “a sacred feature of the system” rather than a “debatable hypothesis.”⁶² The Chicago approach, employed in student workshops, forced active questioning of theories or beliefs that failed to align with standard price theory, which was the “basic theory of the rational consumer and competitive markets.”⁶³ Economic objections to the market or the rationality principle were “examined until they were reconciled” with the department's beliefs. The school taught that concepts such as supply, demand, inflation and unemployment were akin to the rules of nature – “fixed and unchanging.”⁶⁴ These rules were said to exist in perfect equilibrium. This was, according

⁶⁰ Horn, Robert Van. “Chicago Neoliberalism versus Cowles Planning: Perspectives on Patents and Public Goods in Cold War Economic Thought.” *Journal of the history of the behavioral sciences*. U.S. National Library of Medicine. Accessed April 24, 2022. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21732377/>.

⁶¹ Metcalf, Stephen. “Neoliberalism: The Idea That Swallowed the World.” *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, August 18, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2017/aug/18/neoliberalism-the-idea-that-changed-the-world>.

⁶² Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine* (Henry Holt and Co., 2010), 50.

⁶³ Roger E. Backhouse, *The Puzzle of Modern Economics: Science or Ideology*, 149.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

to Mark Blaug, one of the “worst features of formalism” in that it “made the existence and determinacy of equilibrium the be all and end all of economic analysis.”⁶⁵

Hayek’s peers at the University of Chicago, enchanted by both neoliberalism and formalism, first promoted the combined approach, and it continued to be replicated in subsequent economic thought. Though Hayek did not support formalism as a practice, he played a “foundational role in the development of both the economics of information and mechanism-design theory.”⁶⁶ Hayek took seriously “the limited, subjective nature of human knowledge,”⁶⁷ and in “Economics and Knowledge” outlined the bounds of formal economic analysis in evaluating real-world phenomena.⁶⁸ However, Peter Boettke argues that economists subsequent to Hayek speciously built on his economic thought. Swept up by the formalism movement in the field, Boettke asserts that Hayek was “cited but not read,” and economists took his neoliberal ideals and constructed “models that attempted to formalize the essential aspects.”⁶⁹

By the 1980s, think tanks propagating neoliberalism had successfully brought neoliberalism to the forefront of not only the field, but society at large, demonstrated by the popularity of Milton Friedman's book and television show in 1979, which taught about ‘the power of the market’ and ‘the tyranny of control.’⁷⁰ Simultaneously, formalism was prominent in economic methods, and as politicians turned to economists for policy

⁶⁵ Blaug, Mark. “The Formalist Revolution of the 1950s.” *A Companion to the History of Economic Thought*, n.d., 395–410. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470999059.ch25>.

⁶⁶ Boettke, Peter J. “The Failed Appropriation of F. A. Hayek by Formalist Economics.” Taylor & Francis. Accessed April 24, 2022. <https://cogentoa.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08913811.2013.853857>.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Hayek, Friedrich. “Economics and Knowledge - JSTOR.” Accessed April 25, 2022. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2548786>.

⁶⁹ Boettke, Peter J. “The Failed Appropriation of F. A. Hayek by Formalist Economics.” Taylor & Francis. Accessed April 24, 2022. <https://cogentoa.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08913811.2013.853857>.

⁷⁰ Boettke, Peter. “Milton and Rose Friedman’s ‘Free to ... - Dallasfed.org.” Accessed April 25, 2022. <https://www.dallasfed.org/~media/documents/research/pubs/ftc/boettke.pdf>.

solutions, economists increasingly deviated from humanistic elements and developed market solutions.⁷¹ The Carter administration began to adopt neoliberal recommendations, as well as the Thatcher and Reagan administrations, and thus the neoliberal and formalist economic structure was established.

Erasing Neoliberalism as an Ideology

Milton Friedman first used the term ‘neoliberalism’ in an essay called ‘Neo-Liberalism and its Prospects’ presented to the Colloque Walter Lippman in 1951.⁷² The “neo” was meant to distinguish it from the liberalism that had adopted a negative connotation in the public view due to its role in the Great Depression. In its early stages, the term was rarely used, likely because neoliberalism “lacked concrete political success” outside of Germany, was still being “generated” and “matured,” and so likely meant “little in an American context.”⁷³ In fact, neoliberalism was never explicitly named during its surge in popularity within American policy. Proponents such as Ronald Reagan and Barry Goldwater never defined themselves as ‘neoliberals’, but rather included the ideological ideals in their broader beliefs about individualism, libertarianism, and conservatism.⁷⁴ However, in the early 1980s editor of the *Washington Monthly* Charles Peters wrote “A Neo-Liberal’s Manifesto,”⁷⁵ bringing the term into the public eye. The article established a sense of neoliberals as “conservatives in sheep clothing,” expositing

⁷¹ Roger E. Backhouse, *The Puzzle of Modern Economics: Science or Ideology*, 138.

⁷² Peters, Michael. “The Early Origins of Neoliberalism: Colloque Walter Lippman (1938) and the Mt Perelin Society (1947).” Taylor & Francis. Accessed April 24, 2022. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00131857.2021.1951704>.

⁷³ Daniel Stedman Jones, *Masters of the Universe: Hayek, Friedman, and the Birth of Neoliberal Politics* (S.I.: Princeton University Press, 2014), 24.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁷⁵ Peters, Charles. “A Neo-Liberal’s Manifesto.” *The Washington Post*. WP Company, September 5, 1982. https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1982/09/05/a-neo-liberals-manifesto/21cf41ca-e60e-404e-9a66-124592c9f70d/?utm_term=.addfcc829916.

it as another variant of the Hooverian ideology of liberalism.⁷⁶ To distance themselves from the word's new significance, the few that used the term disowned it and new proponents of the ideology never picked up its use. Today, some economists reject the existence of a neoliberal ideology, and within the field of both economics and politics the phrase is “ambiguous” and “contested.”⁷⁷ Some view the term as an ideology that does not exist but rather is a term used to disparage politically – a “political swearword.”⁷⁸ Most recognize that the term remains difficult to define and has become an “amorphous catch-all” term due to its popularity.⁷⁹

The ambiguity and therefore invisibility of neoliberalism allows it to continue to exist as the dominant ideological driving force of economics today. Without explicit recognition of the ideology within the field, it is difficult to discern neoliberalist economics from the field of economics as a whole. Further, if the field of economics is perceived as objective under formalist sentiment, neoliberal economics, though driven by subjective values and parameters, is also seen as objective. The assumption that neoliberal endeavors are objective then shields neoliberalism from critique as an ideology even as its policies create crises such as the 2008 global financial crisis and its role in exacerbating wealth inequality. The next part further theorizes the harms of neoliberalism's appropriation of the field.

SECTION III: Theoretical Understandings of the Neoliberal Consequence

⁷⁶ McWhorter, John. “When People Were Proud to Call Themselves 'Neoliberal'.” *The Atlantic*. Atlantic Media Company, May 30, 2017.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2017/05/history-of-neoliberal-meaning/528276/>.

⁷⁷ Thomas Biebricher, *Political Theory of Neoliberalism* (Stanford University Press, 2019), 1.

⁷⁸ Hartwich, Oliver Marc. “Neoliberalism: The Genesis of a Political Swearword.” Accessed April 25, 2022. <https://www.cis.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/op114.pdf>.

⁷⁹ Thomas Biebricher, *Political Theory of Neoliberalism* (Stanford University Press, 2019), 3.

Neoliberalism today frames the field of economics around its own ideology, positing its values, definitions, and parameters as objective and qualitative truth. However, neoliberalism's exclusion of some principles and propagation of others is dedicated to creating a dogmatic adherence to an economy which best suits the needs of the wealthy capitalist and justifies the growing inequality in wealth in the United States.

Moral Neutrality

Neoliberalism's most prominent use of formalist objectivity is its disregard for moral and ethical considerations. It claims that morals can only culminate into opinion, and is therefore ill suited for the field of economics, which is declared a more objective study.⁸⁰ The assumption that neoliberal economics is objective ultimately triumphs over the subjectivity of morality, automatically deeming any ethical objections to economic findings or decisions null. But economics is inherently unable to remain independent from morals or ethics, as the outcomes and culture that the field creates makes moral statements. Because economics influences moral outcomes, it should therefore be incorporated into economic thought.

Under capitalism, money is necessary for food, water, and shelter, and therefore the survival of an individual is fully dependent on the funds at their disposal. As economics is concerned with the question of allocation of money and resources, every decision rooted in economics explicitly impacts the life of any given individual. These society-wide impacts can and are often considered morally good or morally bad, but by excluding the consideration of ethics in allocation, economists enable the adoption of that which is morally bad.

⁸⁰ Friedman, Milton. "The Methodology of Positive Economics." Accessed April 25, 2022. https://thaleszp.com/files/Friedman_methodology.pdf.

The history of gynecology exemplifies the danger of a lack of ethical considerations and the adoption of that which is morally bad as a result. Gynecology, a field which has provided incredible medical gains for women's reproductive health, was founded by James Marion Sims. To better understand the female body, Sims performed medical operations on enslaved Black women.⁸¹ These women could not themselves consent to undergoing an operation, but rather were subjected to experiment at the behest of their slave owners. Sims did not use anesthesia for his operations, and his victims endured excruciating pain, often taking months to recover. Though his methods garnered some criticism from the medical community, he was primarily praised for the discoveries he made through his operations. Once he established a safe protocol, Sims went on to operate on white women, this time under anesthesia.⁸² Without consideration of the ethical dimension of this history, Sims' results overshadow his tactics, allowing for a validation of the exploitation and suffering of Black women.

Further, slavery was incredibly profitable for both individuals and the market as a whole. In line with common economic sentiment, the maximization of production is both desirable and good. If slavery is economically desirable, without moral considerations it *remains* good. Therefore, the objective economic framework today would support slavery due to its production of that which is economically good, rather than consider whether slavery is *morally* good. By doing so, the framework supports that which is morally *bad*.

Degradation of Morality

⁸¹ Zellars, Rachel. "Black Subjectivity and the Origins of American Gynecology." AAIHS, October 25, 2018. <https://www.aaihs.org/black-subjectivity-and-the-origins-of-american-gynecology/>.

⁸² Zellars, Rachel. "Black Subjectivity and the Origins of American Gynecology." AAIHS, October 25, 2018. <https://www.aaihs.org/black-subjectivity-and-the-origins-of-american-gynecology/>.

Further, the neoliberal tenets of economics today threatens to degrade morality as a consideration in and of itself. Neoliberalism formalism conveys human beings as enslaved to their own self interest, and economic policy and thought has promoted incentives as a means to tapping into self interest to achieve economic and moral good.⁸³ However, neoliberalism's emphasis on self interest ultimately justifies exploitative actors within the economy who discard morals in pursuit of personal gain. For example, it is assumed that actors within the economy will pursue profit maximization because they are self interested, and this is deemed 'rational behavior.' The rationalization of the desire for as much money as one can feasibly gain has culminated into an economy in which the top ten percent of richest people in the US own more than 70 percent of the wealth while homelessness and hunger persist throughout the country.⁸⁴ Therefore, when self interest is received as an inevitability, it serves to normalize exploitation and wealth accumulation at the expense of the general population as an inherently human endeavor, or as Samuel Bowles states, the economic "framing of a decision situation makes the pursuit of individual self- interest ethically permissible."⁸⁵

As the tenets of neoliberalism such as incentives evolve and are further integrated into the social consciousness and the structures that enforce it, morality will continue to degrade at the expense of the wellbeing of society. As Uri Gneezy found in his study of tardiness at daycare, the assignment of an economic penalty to tardiness created a new,

⁸³ Wrenn, Mary V., and William Waller. "The Pathology of Care." *Economia*. History, Methodology, Philosophy. Association *Economia*, June 1, 2018. <https://journals.openedition.org/oeconomia/3195>.

⁸⁴ Buchholz, Katharina, and Felix Richter. "Infographic: The Top 10 Percent Own 70 Percent of U.S. Wealth." Statista Infographics, August 31, 2021. <https://www.statista.com/chart/19635/wealth-distribution-percentiles-in-the-us/>.

⁸⁵ Bowles, Samuel. "Is Liberal Society a Parasite on Tradition?" *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 39, no. 1 (2011): 46–81. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1088-4963.2011.01201.x>.

economically motivated framework through which parents made their decisions.⁸⁶

Therefore, economic incentives can replace the moral incentive of an act, ultimately replacing personal values with the values of the economy.⁸⁷ These values, however, have little to do with moral good and are most relevant to creating a labor force dedicated to production. David Hume and Adam Smith applaud capitalism for bringing about the values of “punctuality,” “assiduity,” and Samuel Richard exalts the “bending and serviceable” man.⁸⁸ These qualities do not produce a just society, but rather workers that are open and adherent to exploitation.

Neoliberalist capitalism replaces social norms of morality with its own values rooted in production and the attainment of wealth, and enforces them through creating an economy that is impossible to survive in without adhering to them. Today, an individual cannot obtain the basic necessities for survival, such as food and shelter, without laboring. Individuals cannot engage in meaningful and enjoyable activities without the money they receive in return for labor, as extracurricular activities, spaces, and supplies for hobbies become increasingly commodified. Even social interactions have become commodified through social media and its algorithm which exploits its consumers' information and platform for the profit of exogenous businesses. In a society which requires participation in the economy to survive, the norms of neoliberalism are then bolstered. Through the strength of these new norms, neoliberalism reconditions the

⁸⁶ Gneezy, Uri. “A Fine Is a Price - Rady School of Management at UC San Diego.” Accessed April 25, 2022. <https://rady.ucsd.edu/faculty/directory/gneezy/pub/docs/fine.pdf>.

⁸⁷ Bowles, Samuel. “Policies Designed for Self-Interested Citizens May Undermine ‘The Moral Sentiments’: Evidence from Economic Experiments.” *Science* 320, no. 5883 (2008): 1605–9. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1152110>.

⁸⁸ Hirschman, Albert O. “Rival Interpretations of Market Society: Civilizing, Destructive, or Feeble?” Accessed April 25, 2022. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2724829>, 1465.

collective by “reward[ing] self-interest” and penalizing “those with other-regarding or ethical values.”⁸⁹ This ultimately weakens aspects of the individual sense of morality which conflicts with neoliberalism’s values. Bowles notes that “as markets become more extensive, this framing is extended to relations with family, neighbors, fellow citizens, and workmates.”⁹⁰ These values will continue to replace moral considerations, accelerating the formation of a society which centers its ideological beliefs and actions around the principles of neoliberalism.

As Hirschman states, with the promotion of self interest as the foundation of human interaction and the decline of moral consideration in opposition to it, it is “more difficult to secure the collective goods and cooperation increasingly needed for the proper functioning of the system.”⁹¹ Bowles further writes that moral crowding could result in “economic dysfunction, instability, and the collapse of liberal society.”⁹² Examining the political system is an illuminating vehicle for the ills of centering self interest as predicted by Bowles. Because the capitalist system “has no way of generating the proper motivation” to act in the general public’s interest and everyone is already presumed to act out of self interest,⁹³ it can be assumed that those who are elected into public office pass laws that favor their self interest. Considering more than half of Congress members are millionaires, compared to the 1% of the population who share the same status,⁹⁴ it can be

⁸⁹ Bowles, Samuel. “Is Liberal Society a Parasite on Tradition?” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 39, no. 1 (2011): 46–81. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1088-4963.2011.01201.x>, 54.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Hirschman, Albert O. “Rival Interpretations of Market Society: Civilizing, Destructive, or Feeble?” Accessed April 25, 2022. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2724829>, 1466.

⁹² Bowles, Samuel. “Is Liberal Society a Parasite on Tradition?” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 39, no. 1 (2011): 46–81. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1088-4963.2011.01201.x>, 54.

⁹³ Hirschman, Albert O. “Rival Interpretations of Market Society: Civilizing, Destructive, or Feeble?” Accessed April 25, 2022. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2724829>, 1466.

⁹⁴ “Majority of Lawmakers in 116th Congress Are Millionaires.” *OpenSecrets News*, June 16, 2020. <https://www.opensecrets.org/news/2020/04/majority-of-lawmakers-millionaires/>.

assumed that these figures who make and hope to retain their wealth propose and vote on policy which allows them to do so, as well as shape socio-economic rhetoric to justify their actions. Bootstrap theory is an example of this rhetoric, which espouses the aforementioned values centered around hard work and claims that adherence to these will result in wealth. This in turn makes it appear that those who own wealth worked hard to obtain it, when the reality is that much of wealth is garnered from intergenerational capital. But if bootstrap theory is propagated, then policy makers do not have to work towards redistribution or economic welfare policies, which would negatively impact their finances through increased taxes, because the populace believes that those who have wealth *earned* their wealth. The simultaneous erosion of morality is fundamental for this ideology to work, as many religious moral systems advocate for aid to the poor and harbor disdain for immense wealth. By reframing morality in capitalist terms, the beneficiaries of the system can ensure that the system not only continues to exist, but is discussed and shaped in a way that will retain and build upon their capital.

Socioeconomic Inequality

In excluding moral objections on the basis of subjectivity while reshaping current forms of morality into values more aligned with capitalism's goals, formalist neoliberal economics is able to propagate its own ideological thought without challenge and evade accountability for the moral wrongs it produces. Specifically, both the disregard for moral considerations and the degradation of morality on an individual basis serve to justify neoliberalism's exacerbation of socioeconomic inequality. Despite the United States' extreme wealth inequality,⁹⁵ the field of economics has remained largely silent on the

⁹⁵ Siripurapu, Anshu. "The U.S. Inequality Debate." Council on Foreign Relations. Council on Foreign Relations. Accessed April 24, 2022. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounders/us-inequality-debate>.

topic.⁹⁶ There is a general consensus among neoliberal economists that globalization and technology have driven inequality due to the mobility of high-skilled workers and stagnation of those without such skills.⁹⁷ Margaret Thatcher herself stated in a speech, "It is our job to glory in inequality and see that talents and abilities are given vent and expression for the benefit of us all."⁹⁸ The perspective that humans are, by nature unequal, is paired with the assertion that those who succeed will produce a trickle-down beneficial effect that serves as a justification for socioeconomic inequality. James Galbraith, an economist at the University of Texas focusing on global inequality, states that any alternative explanations for the growing inequality crisis is "not open to any discussion" within the field.⁹⁹ Instead, "distributive questions" are met with "hostility," according to Athur Goldhammer, a senior affiliate at Harvard's Center for European Studies.¹⁰⁰ This formalist approach to inequality dates back to the Chicago school's influence on the field. The economics department, which has received more Nobel Prizes than any other university economics department, did not concern itself with the topic of inequality. Emeritus professor at SUNY Stony Brook stated that its focus was "driven from discipline," and that "in the American economics profession, the scope of economics as a field has been reduced to a study of the market, as though the market was the same thing as the economy."¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Semuels, Alana. "Why so Few American Economists Are Studying Inequality." *The Atlantic*. Atlantic Media Company, September 13, 2016. <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/09/why-so-few-american-economists-are-studying-inequality/499253/>.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ George, Susan. "A Short History of Neoliberalism." *Transnational Institute*, April 11, 2018. <https://www.tni.org/en/article/short-history-neoliberalism>.

⁹⁹ Semuels, Alana. "Why so Few American Economists Are Studying Inequality." *The Atlantic*. Atlantic Media Company, September 13, 2016.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Semuels, Alana. "Why so Few American Economists Are Studying Inequality." *The Atlantic*. Atlantic Media Company, September 13, 2016.

The use of the market as an objective study and measure enables neoliberalism's ramifications such as socioeconomic inequality to be disregarded. Moral objections are compared with increased Gross Domestic Income figures, and the gains of the market used to justify the losses of the masses. With an economic explanation and justification for the phenomenon, the moral implications are deemed null, and even the topic declared irrelevant to the study of the economy.

Conclusion

The rise of neoliberalism in conjunction with increased formalist sentiment within the field of economics has created an academic study which serves as an echo chamber for the ideological ideals of the market. The formalist approach has validated neoliberalism's disregard for morality, creating an economy premised in the 'objective' rejection of values such as equity. The justification of socioeconomic inequality has served the proponents of the neoliberal ideology, business leaders and wealthy capitalists, by validating their pursuit of wealth at the expense of the broader population.

Chapter II Remarks

Recognition of neoliberalism as an ideological driver of economics today is essential for addressing the economic problems persistent in the U.S. economy. Operating within a framework that does not allow economic thought outside of neoliberal's bounds has exacerbated the issues caused by neoliberalism itself – predominantly socioeconomic inequality. It further limits the advancement of the field as a whole, confining economists to the established paradigm and marginalizing new conceptions of the economy. The combined force of formalism and neoliberalism must be recognized to allow

development within the field that serves not an ideology and its proponents, but the American public and the obstacles facing them today.

CHAPTER III

Political Propaganda and Black Capitalism

Introduction

This chapter explores political economic propaganda through examining the use of Black capitalism as a political tool. It first disputes the main premises of Black capitalism in the theoretical, explaining why it cannot be used as a means to mobility or racial upliftment. Part II analyzes the historical uses of Black capitalism through case studies, and identifies three tenets as explanation of the incitement and failure of Black capitalist endeavors. Understanding the motivations and deliberate framing of Black capitalism is important for recognizing other forms of political economic propaganda, and is further essential for forming an effective and historically informed approach to advancing racial economic justice.

SECTION I: The Argument Against Black Capitalism

As Boom and Ward state, “there are many different interpretations given to the meaning of black capitalism.”¹ Throughout history the definition and goals of Black capitalism have shifted alongside its adoption by political actors with varied motivations and visions for the endeavor. However, for the sake of cohesion in this chapter, I define Black capitalism as the use of market values and mechanisms, specifically targeted at the Black American population as a means to economic upliftment. The mechanisms have taken the form of banks, political

¹ Bernard H. Booms and James E. Ward, “The Cons of Black Capitalism: Will This Policy Cure Urban Ills?,” *Business Horizons* (Elsevier, November 10, 2004), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/0007681369900378>, 17.

campaigns, and organizations, while the values have manifested as an emphasis on entrepreneurship and Black economic solidarity.

Black capitalism advocates for the use of the market as a means to mobility and expanded opportunity. Pro-capitalist Black thinkers such as Frederick Douglas and Walter Williams viewed markets as the best vehicle to produce and increase access to goods that improve quality of life, whether it be essentials such as food and shelter or luxury and entertainment goods.² Williams believed that Black participation in the market would alleviate the economic and social problems of the community, but to do so the systematic barriers that African Americans faced in their pursuit of wealth required reform. He asserted that the main obstacle was “government programs” which “subsidize irresponsible behavior” and prevent communities from addressing their issues “without waiting for the government.”³ In his 1982 book, *The State Against Blacks*, he outlined the regulations that prevented Black participation in the market, highlighting the high financial barriers to entry to driving a taxi, working at a railroad, or getting a plumbing license.⁴

Douglas, too, viewed capitalism as a means to liberation, stating of his first job after his escape from slavery, “I was now my own master.”⁵ He argued that capitalism “is not harm in itself” and that possession was man’s “duty.”⁶ Douglas perceived racism and capitalism as “separable” and “amenable to reform.”⁷ Williams, too, downplayed racism’s role in Black economic disadvantage, instead citing cultural deficiencies in the Black community, such as the

² “Capitalism: Arguments in Black Intellectual Tradition.” Heterodox Academy, April 17, 2021.

<https://heterodoxacademy.org/blog/arguments-for-and-against-capitalism-in-black-intellectual-tradition/>.

³ “Walter E. Williams on Race in America: A Tribute by His Former Student: Lawrence J. McQuillan.” The Beacon, February 9, 2021. <https://blog.independent.org/2021/01/28/walter-e-williams-on-race-in-america-a-tribute/>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Root, Damon, Elizabeth Nolan Brown, C.J. Ciaramella, Charles Oliver, Jacob Sullum, and Fiona Harrigan. “Frederick Douglass on Capitalism, Slavery, and the 'Arrant Nonsense' of Socialism.” Reason.com, August 28, 2016.

<https://reason.com/2016/08/28/frederick-douglass-on-capitalism-slavery/#:~:text=%22In%20leaving%20you%2C%20I%20took,fact%20of%20self%20Downership%20necessarily.>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ “Capitalism: Arguments in Black Intellectual Tradition.” Heterodox Academy, April 17, 2021.

<https://heterodoxacademy.org/blog/arguments-for-and-against-capitalism-in-black-intellectual-tradition/>.

“breakdown of the family structure” and the “70 percent illegitimacy rate.” He doubted there was “any significant problem that blacks face that is caused by racial discrimination.”

The argument that racism and capitalism are and can be exclusive from one another is central to Williams’, Douglas’, and the broad arguments for Black capitalism. Many proponents perceive racism as only explicit actions, such as Williams’ discussion of racism in terms of the KKK “riding through the neighborhood” and what he calls “gross discrimination.” They argue that through the market, actors will be financially disincentivized from such explicit racism. But racism ingrained within the capitalist system, and therefore the market, is not explicit, nor are the perpetrators easily identifiable. Individual human actors may be pliant to market incentives against racism, but systems are not so easily dissuaded. To understand the relationship between capitalism, class, and race, there must be a broader and more theoretical examination of its origins.

Central to the argument for Black capitalism is William’s claim that the poor condition of the Black community is caused by their exclusion from markets, or the capitalist system. However, Boggs asserts that Black communities *are* capitalist communities, but that their participation in the market has led to “Black underdevelopment” as a means to “capitalist development.”⁸ Capitalism, according to Claude Light-foot, is rooted in the drive to make profit, and in order to maximize profit capitalists drive down wages to exploitative levels.⁹ It is intrinsically a system premised in competition, and a group can only be successful at the expense of another. Therefore “the very laws of capitalism require that some forces have to be exploited.”¹⁰

⁸ James Boggs, “The Myth and Irrationality of Black Capitalism,” *The Review of Black Political Economy* 1, no. 1 (1970): pp. 27-35, <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf03037540>, 28.

⁹ Tolson, Arthur L. “Historical and Modern Trends in Black Capitalism.” *The Black Scholar* 6, no. 7 (1975): 8–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00064246.1975.11413704>.

¹⁰ James Boggs, “The Myth and Irrationality of Black Capitalism,” 29.

Boggs claims that the Black community has throughout history been the primary population which is exploited “as a means to produce profit” for the white race under capitalism.¹¹ Slavery was the first inception of Black exploitation for profit, and served as the “foundation of the capital necessary for early industrialization.”¹² The Black community has continued to be the vulnerable underclass which remains subjected to exploitation today, and there is “no one underneath them to exploit.”¹³ Boggs states that “there is no such thing as Black capitalism which is different from white capitalism or capitalism of any other color,” as it is a system reliant on exploitation, and Black capitalist exploitation will only serve to target the “very bottom of the Black community.”¹⁴ Earl Ofari Hutchinson notes the real world application of this concept, revealing that Black consumers are asked to support Black commerce, yet there is a lack of clarity as to how Black elites will return “tangible economic and social benefits.”¹⁵ Rather, it is the sole Black elite actors who will benefit from such a system, and the remaining community who descends into further economic disrepair. As Boggs writes, development for the Black community must rely on abolishing exploitation, “not replacing white exploiters by Black ones.”¹⁶

Further, the goals of Black capitalism are incompatible with the state of the Black community. Brimmer identifies the main target of Black capitalism, specifically the goals of creating “new jobs and profit centers inside ghetto areas,” and building “new banks, insurance companies, production, and service facilities.”¹⁷ However, these communities are poor economic

¹¹ Ibid., 30.

¹² Ibid., 28.

¹³ Ibid., 29.

¹⁴ James Boggs, “The Myth and Irrationality of Black Capitalism,” 30.

¹⁵ Earl Ofari Hutchinson, “The Continuing Myth of Black Capitalism - Jstor.org,” accessed April 25, 2022, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/info/41069658>, 18.

¹⁶ James Boggs, “The Myth and Irrationality of Black Capitalism,” 31.

¹⁷ Andrew F Brimmer, “The Economic Potential of Black Capitalism,” Statements and speeches, member - fraser.stlouisfed.org, accessed April 25, 2022,

environments which are not able to facilitate economic success. The economic infrastructure, characterized by low-income wages, high levels of unemployment, relatively large debts and small holdings of financial assets,¹⁸ has neither been designed nor is able to handle “capital retention or inflow.”¹⁹ For example, Black families survive on a “week to week” basis, retaining little liquid wealth.²⁰ Black banks, a popular endeavor under Black capitalism to support the accumulation of Black wealth, therefore struggle to make profit serving a customer demographic that remains economically unstable.

Black capitalists often point to other racial groups such as Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Cuban immigrants, noting their economic success as a blueprint for the development of Black communities. These communities have garnered stakes in business, real estate, manufacturing, and retail trade, as well as substantial political power in cities such as Miami, New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.²¹ However, as Ofari points out, the starting point of Asian and Hispanic immigrants differs from that of Black Americans. For example, a study of Korean small businesses in Atlanta in 1984 found that 79% were able to secure bank loans or credit. Many of the merchants had successful business experiences while in Korea and as a result were skilled in management and retailing. Cubans refugees under Fidel Castro received funds for resettlement, welfare, and income subsidies, as well as business loans and grants.²² Many in these demographic groups were college educated, and the systemic support they received does not

https://fraser.stlouisfed.org/files/docs/historical/federal%20reserve%20history/bog_members_statements/brimmer_19680919.pdf, 2.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Earl Ofari Hutchinson, “The Continuing Myth of Black Capitalism - Jstor.org,” accessed April 25, 2022, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/info/41069658>, 17.

²⁰ Darity, William. “What We Get Wrong About Closing the Racial Wealth Gap.” Accessed April 25, 2022. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324544206_What_We_Get_Wrong_About_Closing_the_Racial_Wealth_Gap.

²¹ Earl Ofari Hutchinson, “The Continuing Myth of Black Capitalism - Jstor.org,” accessed April 25, 2022, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/info/41069658>, 16.

²² Ibid., 17.

parallel that given to the Black population, who faced extensive barriers to acquiring capital and the training necessary for success in enterprise. These obstacles become apparent through examination of the wealth gap at the time; for example, in 1987 the average Black firm profited \$46,592 in sales, compared to Asian American average profits standing at \$93,221.²³

Further, Black capitalism's emphasis on entrepreneurship and small Black business ignores many of the barriers and deficiencies of this method to garnering profit. Brimmer analyzes the potential of Black entrepreneurship and finds that the goals of building wealth in ghettos run "against a strong national trend."²⁴ He finds that self-employment lacks potential in that salaried managerial positions, or employment as a craftsman provide "roughly one-third to two-thirds higher" rewards than self-employment in the same field.²⁵ Boggs notes that small businesses are only able to employ sweatshop methods and machinery, which he recognized at the time would "soon become obsolete,"²⁶ leaving Black businesses with outdated methods, thereby accelerating their failure.

Further, the capital necessary to start a business excludes non-wealthy individuals from doing so.²⁷ The systematic denial of Black wealth accumulation through mechanisms such as exclusion from business credit markets makes it so that neither Black individuals nor communities have access to the resources essential for creating enterprises with the potential to be globally or nationally competitive.²⁸ Black communities and businesses are therefore unable

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Andrew F Brimmer, "The Economic Potential of Black Capitalism," 2.

²⁵ Andrew F Brimmer, "The Economic Potential of Black Capitalism," 2.

²⁶ James Boggs, "The Myth and Irrationality of Black Capitalism," 32.

²⁷ Darity, William. "What We Get Wrong About Closing the Racial Wealth Gap."

²⁸ Ibid.

to “compete successfully” with white competitors because of their inefficiency and inability to establish or expand to larger operations.²⁹

This disadvantage compounds with the control major corporations hold over consumers, in which their domination of the market forces Black consumers to purchase from white producers. Black workers in turn serve as the corporation’s pool of low-wage labor, thereby lacking the capital they need to begin their own business endeavors. Ofari deems this “capital flight,” stating that white corporate monopolization and the withholding of capital to Black communities ensures that Black business stays at the outer fringes of the corporate economy.³⁰

Conclusion

Black capitalism’s proponents are adamant about its potential for uplifting the Black community and alleviating racism. However, Black capitalism ignores the features of capitalism which relegated the Black population to economic disrepair, and the consistent need for an underclass in an economically competitive system. Black capitalist programs have also done little to address the barriers to building wealth and creating business ventures, and to provide opportunities to the Black population which does not put them at an economic disadvantage. Despite mechanisms of Black capitalism being used throughout history, the Black community remains the second highest impoverished group in the nation, only 1.2 points behind the Native population.³¹ Further, contemporary examination of Black wealth from enterprise today shows that the top 100 Black owned firms of 2016 grossed \$24 billion, but in contrast, Walmart's annual revenue exceeded those of all 2.58 million Black owned businesses combined.³² It is clear that

²⁹ Charles Tate, “Brimmer and Black Capitalism: An Analysis - Charles Tate, 1970,” accessed April 25, 2022, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1007/BF03037544>, 85.

³⁰ Earl Ofari Hutchinson, “The Continuing Myth of Black Capitalism - Jstor.org,” accessed April 25, 2022, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/info/41069658>, 17.

³¹ Bureau, US Census. “Poverty Rates for Selected Detailed Race and Hispanic Groups by State and Place: 2007-2011.” Census.gov, October 8, 2021. <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2013/acs/acsbr11-17.html>.

³² Darity, William. “What We Get Wrong About Closing the Racial Wealth Gap.”

Black capitalism does not and cannot function the way its proponents claim it to. The next section explores reasons why Black capitalism, despite its deficiencies, has continued to be propagated throughout history.

SECTION II: Black Capitalism as Propaganda

Despite arguments against Black capitalism which outline its deficiencies in achieving economic mobility and autonomy for the Black community, Black capitalism has recurrently cropped up throughout history as an antidote to Black economic inequality. This section argues that proponents of Black capitalism have motives outside of the wellbeing of the Black community, and that its use has largely served as a form of political propaganda.

More specifically, Black capitalism, though perceived by proponents as an economic ideology or idea, is easily adopted into the political sphere, centering around policies, institutions, and campaign promises. It has been employed in this way by various political actors and elites to subvert radical demands made by Black communities. Endeavors under Black capitalism are then sabotaged or neglected, ultimately leaving the Black community in sustained or further disrepair. This section examines three case studies through which it becomes apparent that Black capitalism postured as an antidote to centuries of oppression while in reality acting as a disruptive measure against change on behalf of genuine racial justice.

Radical Subversion

The emergence of Black capitalism is often paired with radical demands on behalf of the Black community, serving as a stand-in for the implementation of such policies. Black banking, Black capitalism's earliest form, served as a substitute for the radical policy of land redistribution to freed slaves. After his victory against the Confederacy in Savannah, Georgia, General William

T. Sherman issued Field Order 15 which dedicated 400,000 acres of confiscated Confederate land to freed slaves. When Congress created the Freedmen's Bureau two months later, the bill included designs for land redistribution on a national level.

However, backlash took the form of violence, fraud, and coercion, resulting in an overthrow of the Republican Party and the rise of the Johnson administration.³³ Johnson, who pledged his support for a "white man's government,"³⁴ oversaw the return of the land provided to freed slaves under General Sherman. He sought to undermine the national efforts under the Freedmen's bill, claiming that land redistribution advantaged Blacks over whites. However, during his term Johnson signed the Homestead Act, which redistributed millions of acres of government land to white settlers.³⁵ The administration's push for the policy proved Johnson did not oppose land redistribution, but rather, he sought to prevent freed slaves specifically from becoming land owners. Johnson further voted to repeal the Freedmen's Bureau and argued against school and job training for the Black community, preventing them from alternative avenues to garnering land.

Even so Johnson did approve of one aspect of the Freedmen's Bureau: the Freedmen's Savings and Trust Company.³⁶ Also known as the Freedmen's Savings Bank, it was chartered the same day as the Bureau itself. Johnson supported it as a diversion from calls for land distribution, with the Bank's founder, John Alvord, claiming that the desire for "land given to them by government" through land distribution was "passing away" in the Black community. Further,

³³ Baradaran, Mehrsa. *The Color of Money: Black Banks and the Racial Wealth Gap*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019. 17.

³⁴ "Andrew Johnson: The Most-Criticized President Ever?" National Constitution Center – constitutioncenter.org. Accessed January 10, 2022.

<https://constitutioncenter.org/blog/marking-the-passing-of-maybe-the-most-criticized-president-ever#:~:text=Although%20Johnson%20had%20supported%20an,and%20Johnson%20became%20a%20pariah.>

³⁵ "S. 416, The Homestead Act, June 20, 1860." U.S. Capitol Visitor Center. Accessed January 10, 2022. [https://www.visitthecapitol.gov/exhibitions/artifact/s-416-homestead-act-june-20-1860.](https://www.visitthecapitol.gov/exhibitions/artifact/s-416-homestead-act-june-20-1860)

³⁶ Baradaran, Mehrsa. *The Color of Money: Black Banks and the Racial Wealth Gap*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019. 22.

though the Black community had not asked for the bank, he stated that he “heard them saying ‘We will work and save and buy for ourselves,’”³⁷ and reformers claimed that saving wages in the bank was in fact the “preferred and proper means” to achieving land ownership.³⁸ The result of replacing land redistribution with a bank was the shift of the burden of ensuring the economic autonomy of freed slaves from the government to Black people themselves.

Black capitalism was again employed to prevent radical demands from coming to fruition in the 1960s under the Nixon administration, motivated by an attempt to garner political power from a white voter base. In 1966 the Black Panther Party released a ten point program of demands including military exemption, an end to police brutality, and reparations.³⁹ Further radical Black power groups developed across the country, including the Black nationalist group, Republic of New Africa, which in 1968 demanded \$400 billion in reparations from the U.S. government to establish a state “forever free and independent of the jurisdiction of the United States.”⁴⁰

In response to these demands as well as the Chicago riots following Martin Luther King Jr.’s assassination in 1968, white Americans became concerned with violence and radicalism in the Black community. They further resented Black communities for what they perceived as a monopoly on welfare. An article by Pete Hammill which influenced Richard Nixon’s welfare stance during his term stated: “Who feeds my wife and kid if I’m dead? Lindsay? The poverty

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Baradaran, Mehrsa. *The Color of Money: Black Banks and the Racial Wealth Gap*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019. 22.

³⁹ “A Copy of the Black Panther Party Platform and Program, 1966.” A copy of the Black Panther Party Platform and Program, 1966. | DPLA. Accessed January 10, 2022.

<https://dp.la/primary-source-sets/the-black-power-movement/sources/388>.

⁴⁰ Greve, Eric. *Republic of New Africa (1968-)* • January 30, 2020.

<https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/republic-new-africa-1968/>.

program? You know the answer: Nobody. But the niggers, they don't worry about it. They take the welfare and sit out on the stoop drinkin' cheap wine and throwin' the bottles on the street."⁴¹

In the 1969 election, Richard Nixon set out to capitalize politically on the racial tension of the time by appealing to white Americans' fear of radicalism and their resentment towards the benefits marginalized communities received. Nixon introduced his Black capitalism campaign for which he sought to remove Black enrollment in welfare and to placate the political demands of the Black community. In years leading up to the election, Black leaders such as Malcolm X and James Foreman called for control of infrastructure and institutions of local power.⁴² Rather than grant the resources and authority necessary for economic autonomy in Black communities, Nixon demanded that the Black population gain ownership of land, businesses, and homes with no further instruction or aid than to simply "build from within."⁴³ He released campaign ads such as "Black Capitalism," which asserted the rescue of the Black community with a "hand up," not a "hand out," validating already present associations of Black people with welfare dependency and further stoking racial resentments throughout his white voter base.⁴⁴

He appealed to white Americans by stating that the government's "overpromising and under-producing" incited riots,⁴⁵ suggesting to his panicked white voter base that violence could be avoided through Black capitalism's overhaul of the welfare system. He spoke of Black capitalism as a plan to provide "dignity" to the Black community as opposed to the "unfairness" of the welfare system.⁴⁶ However, his disdain for welfare had little to do with racial justice, but

⁴¹ SPITZER, SCOTT J. "Nixon's New Deal: Welfare Reform for the Silent Majority." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (2012): 455–81. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41684513>.

⁴² Baradaran, Mehrsa. *The Color of Money: Black Banks and the Racial Wealth Gap*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019. 165.

⁴³ Nixon campaign ad, "Black Capitalism." Described in Joe McGinnis, *The Selling of the President 1968* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1969).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877* (New York: Harper, 1989). 55-56.

⁴⁶ Richard Nixon, "Bridges to Human Dignity, The Concept," Washington, DC, April 25, 1968.

rather his beliefs that “Blacks could only marginally benefit from Federal programs because blacks were genetically inferior to whites,” as recounted by his inner circle advisor, John D. Ehrlichman.⁴⁷ Nixon further did not even believe in the effectiveness of Black capitalism, with Ehrlichman noting Nixon’s assertion that “Blacks could never achieve parity – in intelligence, economic success or social qualities.”⁴⁸ In evaluating his personal beliefs about both welfare and Black people, it is clear that Nixon’s introduction of Black capitalism served to garner white support for his candidacy through perverting radical demands and diminishing already existing aid for Black communities. Richard Nixon’s term and campaign exemplifies the vacuum for superficial political reform in response to radical demands and racial tension. These situations are easily exploited for political power, with Black capitalism serving, in this instance, as a powerful tool to shift material and political support away from Black communities to garner white voter support.

Co-Option

Co-option is defined as an existing idea or policy that is used for an individual's own use, separating it from more amenable phenomena such as compromise or agreement. While Nixon marketed Black capitalism to white America by targeting their fears and prejudices, to convince the Black community, Nixon employed propaganda in the form of co-option of Black radical language. Advisor John D. Ehrlichman described Nixon’s dominant campaign strategy as the

⁴⁷ Spitzer, Scott. “Nixon's Northern Strategy: Welfare Reform and Race after the Great Society.” SSRN, August 13, 2009.
<https://deliverypdf.ssrn.com/delivery.php?ID=364085089029102080124117111026122110062049053076063030120001103113094075076066111069032124000100104011004100120071081002025003051050047036006104105116008015005010026034058007122027095112003065117028094065093090018099122070079103092071073089011084092082&EXT=pdf&INDEX=TRUE>. 32.

⁴⁸ Spitzer, Scott. “Nixon's Northern Strategy: Welfare Reform and Race after the Great Society.” SSRN, August 13, 2009.
<https://deliverypdf.ssrn.com/delivery.php?ID=364085089029102080124117111026122110062049053076063030120001103113094075076066111069032124000100104011004100120071081002025003051050047036006104105116008015005010026034058007122027095112003065117028094065093090018099122070079103092071073089011084092082&EXT=pdf&INDEX=TRUE>. 32.

“co-opt[ion of] the opposition’s issues,”⁴⁹ in which he transformed verbal support for the Black nationalist movement into endorsements of Black capitalism.

Black nationalists at the time sought racial separation and economic self-sufficiency: the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) sought cooperative ownership of business,⁵⁰ and Malcom X called for revolutionary reclamation of land.⁵¹ Nixon insisted that Black nationalism and Black capitalism shared the same goals, asserting that “much of the black militant talk these days is actually in terms far closer to the doctrines of free enterprise than to those of the welfarist” and that “Black extremists” only spoke of violence as a means to “guaranteed headlines.”⁵² He claimed radicals “misapplied” the term ‘Black power,’ a phrase prominent in the Black Panther Party, but that he promised to deliver the “best,” most “constructive sense” of the word.⁵³ He further declared that “what most of the militants are asking is not separation” but to be “owners” and “entrepreneurs.” As a result of Nixon’s rhetoric, by 1971 many Black people regarded Black capitalism as a form of “Black control” over local neighborhoods and industry.⁵⁴ Nixon’s mislabeling of Black nationalist demands alongside his attempts to reshape radical terminology to better fit his own political ideals served to create a fusion of the community’s understanding of Black capitalism and Black radicalism.⁵⁵

Furthermore, Nixon directly co-opted phrases and ideas from the rhetoric of Malcolm X. As Malcom X lamented that the Black community had for too long “listened to the trickery and

⁴⁹ Ibid., 9.

⁵⁰ Frazier, Nishani, and Adam Simpson. “Episode 12: Black Power vs. Black Capitalism (w/ Nishani Frazier).” Episode Twelve: Black Power Vs. Black Capitalism (w/ Nishani Frazier), December 1, 2017.

<https://thenextsystem.org/learn/stories/episode-12-black-power-vs-black-capitalism-w-nishani-frazier>.

⁵¹ “Black Nationalism.” The Martin Luther King, Jr., Research and Education Institute, May 21, 2018. <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/black-nationalism>.

⁵² Baradaran, Mehrsa. *The Color of Money: Black Banks and the Racial Wealth Gap*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019. 178.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Sanneh, Kelefa. “The Plan to Build a Capital for Black Capitalism.” *The New Yorker*, January 28, 2021.

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/02/08/the-plan-to-build-a-capital-for-black-capitalism>.

⁵⁵ “Friday April 26, 1968.” *The New York Times Time Machine*. The New York Times. Accessed January 10, 2022. <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1968/04/26/issue.html>.

the lies” of the “white man,”⁵⁶ Nixon similarly villanized white America who he claimed “sought to buy off the Negro...not for anything except for keeping out of sight.”⁵⁷ Malcom X described the Black community as “more explosive than all of the atomic bombs” due to frustration over inaction of white Americans,⁵⁸ and Nixon warned against “more of the same explosive violence” should nothing change.⁵⁹ While Malcom X proposed Black nationalism as a means to avoid acting “ignorantly and disgracefully, boycotting and picketing some cracker someplace else trying to beg him for a job,”⁶⁰ Nixon asserted the Black community did not want “dependency” but rather “the pride, and the self-respect” of engaging in private enterprise.⁶¹ Nixon became a master at transforming radical rhetoric into taglines for his own policies.

However, Nixon deliberately left out aspects of Malcom X’s ideology, including his anti-capitalist views exhibited by the famous line, “show me a capitalist, I’ll show you a bloodsucker.”⁶² He likewise ignored the demands of the Black Panther platform that called for reparations, land, and political sovereignty. His campaign feigned solidarity with the Black radical community, but in actuality sought to construe their politically radical ideas through a neutralized, conservative perspective that better suited the goals of Nixon’s platform.

Cultural Propaganda

Black support for Black capitalism was greatly facilitated by the cultural influence of both Black elites and institutions. Booker T. Washington, president of the Negro Business League, declared “To those of my race who depend on bettering their condition in a foreign land...I would say, cast down your bucket where you are...Cast it down in agriculture, in

⁵⁶ Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet”, Detroit, Michigan, April 12, 1964.

⁵⁷ Richard Nixon, "Bridges to Human Dignity, The Concept," Washington, DC, April 25, 1968.

⁵⁸ Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet”, Detroit, Michigan, April 12, 1964.

⁵⁹ Richard Nixon, "Bridges to Human Dignity, The Concept," Washington, DC, April 25, 1968.

⁶⁰ Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet”, Detroit, Michigan, April 12, 1964.

⁶¹ Richard Nixon, “Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in Miami Beach, Florida”, Miami Beach, Florida, August 8, 1968.

⁶² Malcom X, “Malcolm X At the Audubon Ballroom”, Manhattan, New York, December 20, 1964.

mechanics, in commerce, in domestic service, and in the professions.”⁶³ Martin Luther King too, promoted what he deemed a ‘bank-in’ movement. In his 1968 speech “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop,” King called on his listeners to “strengthen black institutions” by taking “your money out of the banks downtown and deposit[ing] your money in Tri-State Bank.”⁶⁴

These leaders ascribed to what Martin Robinson Delany outlined as a crucial element of Black capitalism: that if an “elevation of the white” is dependent on business enterprise, then it is also necessary for the elevation of Black people, and they “cannot be elevated without.”⁶⁵ In *The Negro as Capitalist*, Abram L. Harris theorizes that through their education, many prominent Black leaders such as King and Washington found themselves in frequent contact with the “members of the white upper class.”⁶⁶ According to Harris, they sought to emulate the “social values and ideals of that class” in the hopes of “escaping the wage-earning class,” and this emulation indoctrinated them into supporting business enterprise, specifically Black capitalism.⁶⁷ E. Franklin Frazier, a scholar who dedicated much of his academic work to criticizing Black capitalism and its Black proponents, went further in accusing prominent Black leaders such as W.E.B. Du Bois of opportunism, stating that African American leadership “has no sense of responsibility to the Negro masses and exploits them whenever an opportunity offers itself.”⁶⁸

Regardless of motive, capitalism’s ideological capture of Black leaders greatly facilitated public support for Black capitalism. Jerome Davis in *Capitalism and Its Culture* describes culture as including “knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and all the rest of the social

⁶³ TOLSON, ARTHUR L. “HISTORICAL AND MODERN TRENDS IN BLACK CAPITALISM.” *The Black Scholar* 6, no. 7 (1975): 8–14. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41066364>, 11.

⁶⁴ Martin Luther King, “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop”, Memphis, Tennessee, April 3, 1968

⁶⁵ TOLSON, ARTHUR L. “HISTORICAL AND MODERN TRENDS IN BLACK CAPITALISM.” *The Black Scholar* 6, no. 7 (1975): 8–14. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41066364>, 10.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Teele, James. *E. Franklin Frazier and Black Bourgeoisie*. UNIV OF MISSOURI Press, 2018. 81.

heritage.”⁶⁹ As figures who employed their knowledge to speak out against moral wrongdoings as well as argue for the law and customs to change on behalf of racial equity, Black communities looked to Black leaders for cultural and ideological guidance. Their adherence to Black capitalism created what Davis describes as a “penetrating” economic culture which provoked an unconscious acceptance of “capitalism as part of the going routine” by the Black public.⁷⁰

Institutions such as the Freedmen’s Savings Bank further bolstered the adoption of Black capitalist values through capitalist rhetoric and propaganda. As explored in the previous section, In place of land grants to freed slaves, the government established the Freedmen’s Savings Bank. The bank’s founder, John Alvord, asserted that the freedmen’s sentiments were to “work and save and buy” land for themselves.⁷¹ President Johnson supported the bank, declaring that the laws of capitalism and free trade would allow the freedmen to accumulate land without any special help from the state.⁷² The bank maintained a formal presentation, with Massachusetts Senator Henry Wilson claiming the money held there “was just as safe there as if it were in the Treasury of the United States.”⁷³ The appearance of the bank and boot-strap rhetoric surrounding its establishment inspired confidence in Black communities. Believing in their ability to one day obtain land through savings, within ten years the Black population entrusted \$75 million of its funds in the bank.⁷⁴ Frederick Douglass, late President of the bank, further deemed it a teaching institute, meant to “instill into the minds of the untutored Africans lessons of sobriety, wisdom, and economy.” The bank distributed pamphlets and booklets containing poems, pictures, and short stories that taught Blacks that thrift lead to wealth, warned against gambling, and portrayed

⁶⁹ TOLSON, ARTHUR L. “HISTORICAL AND MODERN TRENDS IN BLACK CAPITALISM.” *The Black Scholar* 6, no. 7 (1975): 8–14. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41066364>, 10.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Baradaran, Mehrsa. *The Color of Money: Black Banks and the Racial Wealth Gap*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019. 22.

⁷² Ibid., 17-18.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 25.

Black banking as a necessary tool for racial progress.⁷⁵ In E. Frazier's words, the bank disseminated propaganda meant to instill "bourgeois ideals" in the freed slaves.⁷⁶ This indoctrination of the Black community with capitalist ideals made the future passage of Black Capitalist policies feasible despite its material harm to the community.

Media Propaganda and the Black Elite

Alongside Black political leaders, Black business leaders supported Black capitalism as a means to profit, specifically through media and advertisements. E. Franklin Frazier accused Black businessmen of desiring a utopia where the Black middle class "could exploit black workers without white competition," claiming they did not care about equality for the Black race.⁷⁷ Using Frazier's analysis as a reference point, author Earl Ofari asserted that the call for Black capitalism came primarily from the Black upper class, who acted out of their own economic interests.⁷⁸

Ofari's theory becomes evident through examination of Black business' and media ownership's introduction of a slew of media propaganda post-World War II. They developed a new form of Black capitalism known as 'Black buying power,' a concept used to convince the Black population of a different economic reality than their lived experience. The term 'Buying power' originated from government labor statistics which evaluated how much product workers in the nineteenth century could buy with the wages they received. At its inception, the government used 'Buying power' to control the labor force's view of their own economic conditions, often deliberately misrepresenting buying power to make it appear bigger.⁷⁹ Labor advocates regularly challenged the figures's representation of their economic influence, however,

⁷⁵ Ibid., 24.

⁷⁶ Teele, James. *E. Franklin Frazier and Black Bourgeoisie*. UNIV OF MISSOURI Press, 2018. 19.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 80.

⁷⁸ Hutchinson, Earl Ofari. *The Myth of Black Capitalism*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970. 10.

⁷⁹ Ball, Jared A. *The Myth and Propaganda of Black Buying Power*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020. 25.

the emergence of Black buying power met little suspicion or resistance from the Black community.

The separation of Black communities from one another made it difficult to discern the economic reality of the broader Black population, and Black elites exploited this ignorance. They asserted the feasibility of upward mobility using their own economic circumstances as testimony. They began deliberately defining power in terms of consumerism, leading the Black populace away from the demands for real political power made by Black radicals, who sought separatism rather than integration into the economy.⁸⁰ Frazier noted this decline of radical sentiment among the Black community, stating the movement for justice transformed into a “mouthpiece of Negro capitalists.”⁸¹

Black buying power came to prominence primarily through media propagation, spearheaded by the Black media that sought to profit from white advertising. Under the guise of aiding the Black populace in their entrance into the free market, Black businessmen sought to sell Black buying power to white advertising firms. Black media owner John H. Johnson was at the helm of this endeavor. Johnson produced the film, “The Secret of Selling the Negro,” which describes the Black consumer market as “neglected” and “fresh” but with “15 billion” in “buying power.”⁸² The proclamation of a new market brought white corporate advertising dollars to Black media outlets. The film further depicted a Black community transforming into its own local economy, suggesting to its Black viewers the potential of Black prosperity if they wielded their buying power wisely.⁸³ The widely successful film provided Black communities with a new framework for their political struggle: an economic rather than political movement, throughout

⁸⁰ Ibid., 26.

⁸¹ Teele, James. *E. Franklin Frazier and Black Bourgeoisie*. UNIV OF MISSOURI Press, 2018. 19.

⁸² Ball, Jared A. *The Myth and Propaganda of Black Buying Power*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020. 28.

⁸³ Ibid.

which elites urged them to express their power by buying Black.⁸⁴ Contented with this solution propagated to this, Black buying power served to quell the Black social unrest following the conclusion of the war, and redirect it to profit for Johnson. The Secret of Selling the Negro was just the first of a slew of propaganda Johnson created to bring advertisement money to his Black publications.⁸⁵

Black Capitalism's Impact

Such propaganda delivered promises of economic autonomy and prosperity under the values of Black capitalism; however, the institutions created to facilitate acceleration of the Black economy only further impoverished Black America. The emergence of Black banking as a substitute for land distribution served as a direct sabotage of Black wealth. Responsible for supervising national banks, The Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC) forbade real estate lending, however, the Freedmen's Saving Bank (FSB) submitted to the oversight of Congress rather than the OCC.⁸⁶ The FSB's management team urged Congress to permit loans backed by real estate, and with Congressional permission converted the bank into a highly leveraged investment bank. Taking advantage of the lack of oversight, a board member, Henry Cooke, invested the bank's money into railroad finance - the riskiest investment at the time.⁸⁷ The losses of the bank left 61,144 depositors with losses of nearly \$3 million before it closed the same year.⁸⁸ The FSB, meant to serve as a stable deposit for Black wealth, transformed into a

⁸⁴ Ibid., 26.

⁸⁵ Ball, Jared A. *The Myth and Propaganda of Black Buying Power*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020. 29.

⁸⁶ "The Freedman's Savings Bank: Good Intentions Were Not Enough; a Noble Experiment Goes Awry." OCC, March 14, 2019.

<https://www.occ.treas.gov/about/who-we-are/history/1863-1865/1863-1865-freedmans-savings-bank.html>.

⁸⁷ Baradaran, Mehrsa. *The Color of Money: Black Banks and the Racial Wealth Gap*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019. 27.

⁸⁸ "The Freedman's Savings Bank: Good Intentions Were Not Enough; a Noble Experiment Goes Awry." OCC, March 14, 2019.

<https://www.occ.treas.gov/about/who-we-are/history/1863-1865/1863-1865-freedmans-savings-bank.html>.

catalyst for Black impoverishment. This failure reflects the lack of commitment from Black capitalist proponents to ensure the endeavor's success and the tendency of those in charge to use Black capitalist programs as a vehicle for personal profit.

Nixon similarly neglected to equip his Black capitalist programming with the resources necessary to succeed, instead intending to use the program's symbolic value to propagate capitalist values in the Black community. Nixon's creation of the Office of Minority Business Enterprise (OMBE), meant to help minority businesses set up and participate in the economy, in reality achieved little due to its lack of funding. The OMBE operated without federal aid, instead reliant on private donations and assistance from other federal agencies.⁸⁹ The lack of a mandate obfuscated its purpose, harboring only a vague focus on creating small minority businesses in an economy that did not support such efforts. Large enterprises increasingly edged small businesses out of the market, and the poor economic conditions of the ghetto made it difficult to open or attract business.⁹⁰ In a letter to Commerce Secretary Maurice H. Stans, even Nixon recognized that “*Any* small business has a 75% chance of failing,” and a “*minority* small business has a 90% chance of failing—good luck.”⁹¹ Stans further diminished the opportunity for Black business ventures when he shut down a plan to invest \$8.6 billion in the creation of 400,000 minority businesses.⁹² Financial support stood counteractive to the OMBE's actual goal: the propagation of success stories to create “pride among the minority.” Stans sought to establish the OMBE as a symbol representing a “modern day Horatio Alger” in order to incite “aspirations of those down

⁸⁹ Baradaran, Mehrsa. *The Color of Money: Black Banks and the Racial Wealth Gap*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019. 180.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ “Black Power - Nixon Style: The Nixon Administration and Minority Business Enterprise.” The Free Library. Accessed January 10, 2022. <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Black+power+-+Nixon+style%3A+the+Nixon+administration+and+minority...-a053709743>.

⁹² Baradaran, Mehrsa. *The Color of Money: Black Banks and the Racial Wealth Gap*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019. 182.

the line.”⁹³ He achieved Nixon’s goal of placating Black unrest through instilling in Black communities a specious faith in enterprise as a means to upward mobility and racial equity, paired with a refusal to provide any of the resources necessary to turn Black prosperity into a reality.

The programs that did come to fruition under the OMBE not only faced backlash from white Americans, but ultimately benefited white business and Nixon himself at the expense of Black business. Funds from the Office of Economic Opportunity donated to OMBE programming faced criticism as “discrimination in reverse.”⁹⁴ The OMBE’s program coordinating contracts between government agencies and minority owned businesses similarly garnered backlash from blue-collar workers, white construction firms, and conservatives, who called it “preferential treatment.”⁹⁵ However, studies revealed that 20 percent of these contracts went to white owned firms, and further, that Nixon used the program to grant political favors.⁹⁶ Additionally, the OMBE’s Minority Enterprise Small Business Investment Program sought to provide minority owned businesses with credit, technical assistance, and mentorship. During an investigation of the program the Government Accounting Office found that the volunteer white firms were charging outrageous rates, taking up to 30 percent of the business profits of black businesses.⁹⁷

Chapter III Remarks

The propagation of Black entrepreneurship, buying power, and institutions as a solution to the racial wealth gap and Black economic disadvantage, has ultimately harmed Black

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Baradaran, Mehrsa. *The Color of Money: Black Banks and the Racial Wealth Gap*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019. 180.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 184.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 183.

communities financially, culturally, and politically throughout history. Today Black capitalism rhetoric is rampant, resurfaced in response to the radical demands made by Black Lives Matter. Mirroring the Black Panther Party, BLM calls for the end of policing, reparations, and proper political representation. Black buying power and entrepreneurship is repeatedly proposed as not only a stand in for meeting these demands, but as an answer to the racial wealth gap. However, Black capitalism cannot produce these results. Political actors today once again wield Black capitalism as a tool that places the burden of liberation from economic oppression on Black communities without providing them any form of aid in doing so. Black capitalism is not the answer to racial justice, and we must look beyond the options capitalism yields to truly create an equitable society.

Conclusion

This thesis has outlined three forms of economic propaganda: cultural, structural, and political. To understand the cultural dimension I studied ‘Do What You Love’ culture, determining that the pressures placed on the workforce under these tenets are in part employer driven, but further reinforced by cultural normatives. The culture encourages overworking and deep acting; justifying each with the replacement of labor with love. Chapter II determined that economics is inherently ideology driven, and examined neoliberalism’s use of formalism to propagandize its ideals as objective, ultimately legitimizing socioeconomic inequality within the field. The final chapter explores the theoretical critiques of Black capitalism, and further analyzes the prevalence of Black capitalist endeavors as a means to quelling Black radical sentiment. It is important to recognize and continue to identify forms of economic propaganda in further studies, as many of the examined populations in this thesis such as the labor force, the lower class, and the Black community have historically faced marginalization and barriers to economic mobility. In order to instill an economy which reflects the values of equality and justice, further critical review of economic phenomena such as this thesis is necessary.