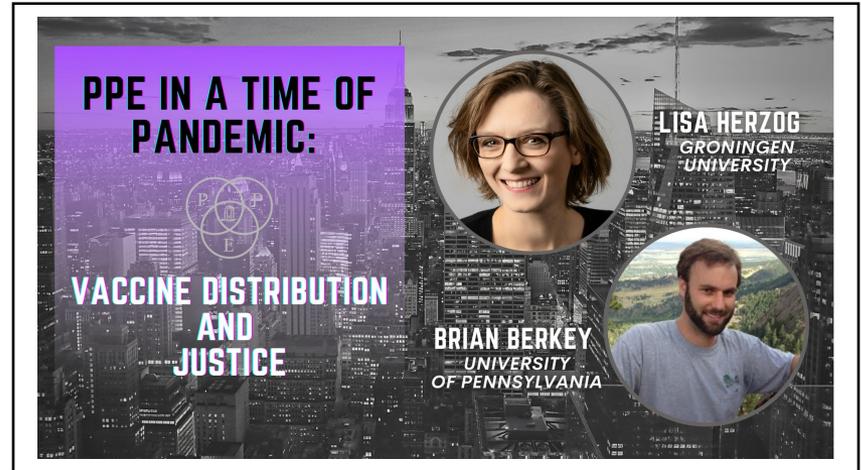


The Pandemic and Gender Equality

PHIL 334: Pandemic Ethics



PPE in a Time of Pandemic

Thursday, March 4th

1pm ET / 10am PT

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Lisa Herzog (Groningen University) and Brian Berkey (University of Pennsylvania) on Vaccine Distribution and Justice



How the pandemic is forcing women out of the workforce

Vox

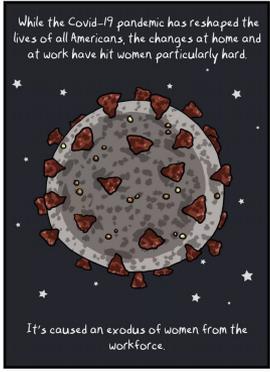


How the pandemic is forcing women out of the workforce, explained in a comic

Between child care and homeschooling, women's time is becoming worth less. It could take years to recover lost ground.
By Aubrey Hirsch | Updated Dec 20, 2020, 11:20am EST

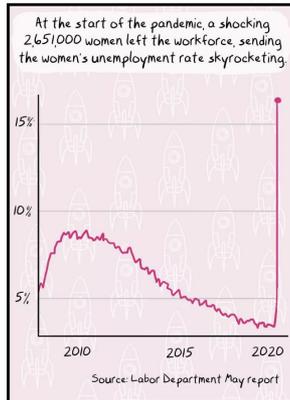
The Highlight
BY **Vox**

While the Covid-19 pandemic has reshaped the lives of all Americans, the changes at home and at work have hit women particularly hard.



It's caused an exodus of women from the workforce.

At the start of the pandemic, a shocking 2.65 million women left the workforce, sending the women's unemployment rate skyrocketing.



Source: Labor Department May report



Many women eventually returned to work. But a huge number are leaving their careers entirely to fill gaps in child care. This calls into question whose time we value, and whose we see as dispensable.

The coronavirus smashes up the bargain that so many dual-earner couples have made in the developed world: "We can both work because someone else is looking after our children."



Helen Lewis, journalist

Now, couples have to make difficult decisions about how to distribute these massive new child care responsibilities.

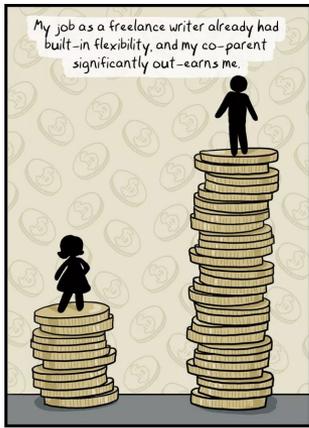


In my family, most of the responsibility for the kids fell to me.

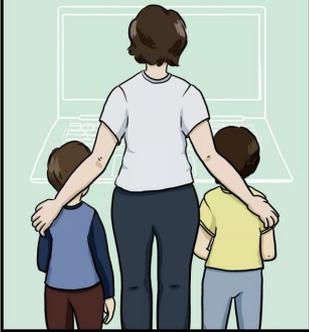
Author: Aubrey Hirsch



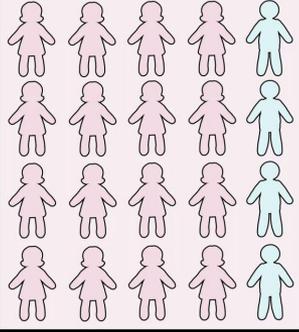
My job as a freelance writer already had built-in flexibility, and my co-parent significantly out-earns me.



We couldn't afford to lose his salary, so I canceled my existing contracts and sealed way back to look after our kids and take the lead on their distance learning.



My story is typical. According to the Lerner Center for Public Health Promotion of the adults who aren't currently working because of caregiving obligations, 80% are women.



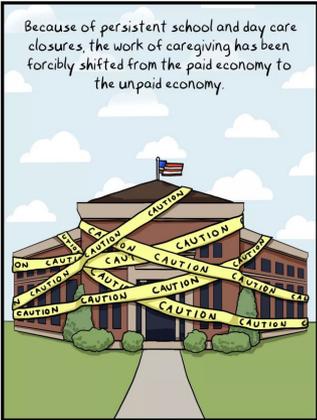
617,000 women — eight times more than the number of men — were forced out of the workforce in September alone, just as school would typically be ramping up.



According to US Current Population Survey data, mothers who continue to work have had to reduce their work hours at a rate five times greater than that of fathers.



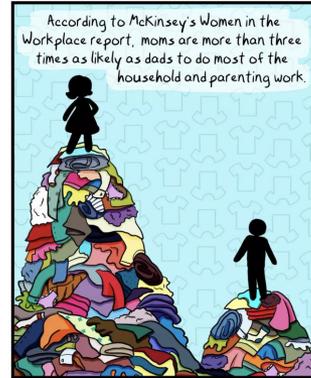
Because of persistent school and day care closures, the work of caregiving has been forcibly shifted from the paid economy to the unpaid economy.



And women have always run the unpaid economy.



According to McKinsey's Women in the Workplace report, moms are more than three times as likely as dads to do most of the household and parenting work.



And on average, they spend twice as much time on household chores, for a total of more than 18 hours a week — nearly a half-time job.



The situation is even worse for women of color. Latina mothers are over one and a half times more likely than white mothers to perform all the child care and housework.



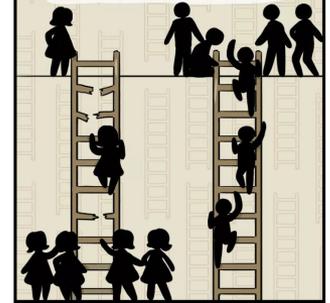
Black mothers are twice as likely to shoulder all of this responsibility on their own. Women of color also earn less and are more likely to work in high-contact jobs, those most affected by the pandemic.



The career hits that women are taking now are almost certain to have dramatic effects on workplace equity moving forward.



Women's disproportionate responsibilities at home were already a major contributing factor to their lower pay and difficulty advancing at work. Now men will have an even greater advantage when it comes to increased opportunities, promotions, and raises.



The reverberations of this pandemic will be felt by women for years to come.



When things fall apart, we are quick to sacrifice women's time and expect them to pick up the pieces. But the paid economy does not value the competency we demand from them in times of crisis.

Now that I've added two new unpaid jobs (kindergarten teacher and 2nd grade teacher) to my usual slate of domestic work with no acknowledgment from our leadership of the magnitude of this sacrifice, I'm even more acutely aware of how little my time seems to be worth.



The government appears to be either willfully ignoring the massive gender imbalance in these statistics or happy to have us back in the kitchen.





Aubrey Hirsch is a writer and illustrator in Berkeley, California. Her work has appeared in the *Nib*, the *New York Times*, the *Rumpus*, and elsewhere. She's created comics about *adult friendships* and the *women's happiness gap* for *The Highlight*.

The Highlight

by Vox

How the pandemic is forcing women out of the workforce, explained in a comic.

The Pandemic and Gender Equality

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The Pandemic and Gender Equality

 Gina Schouten · Jan 12 · 7 min read

The Pandemic May Set Gender Equality Back by Decades. Should Liberal Feminism Declare Bankruptcy?

The Pandemic and Gender Equality



Nancy Fraser

Gina Schouten



Liberal Feminism



Nancy Fraser

Gina Schouten



The Pandemic and Gender Equality

Liberal Feminism:

Focuses on freedom and equality

Envisions a world in which everyone (including women) are free to make their own choices.

Associated with *first-wave* feminism

Think: women's suffrage, equal access to education, etc.



Liberal Feminism fights for complete gender equality through social, political and legal means.

The Pandemic and Gender Equality

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SC



Liberal Feminism
Feminism Series

What is Liberal Feminism?

1. It asserts the equality of men and women through political and legal reform
2. Focuses on women's ability to access and maintain their equality through their own actions and choices
3. States that all women are capable of asserting their own ability to achieve equality, therefore it stands that it is possible for change to happen without altering the structure of society

"Feminism is not simply a matter of getting a smattering of individual women into positions of **power and privilege** within existing social hierarchies."

"It is rather about **overcoming those hierarchies.**"

Gary Gutting: You've recently written: "As a feminist, I've always assumed that by fighting to emancipate women I was building a better world — more egalitarian — just and free. But lately I've begun to worry that . . . our critique of sexism is now supplying the justification for new forms of inequality and exploitation." Could you explain what you have in mind?

Nancy Fraser: My feminism emerged from the New Left and is still colored by the thought of that time. For me, feminism is not simply a matter of getting a smattering of individual women into positions of power and privilege within existing social hierarchies. It is rather about overcoming those hierarchies. This requires challenging the structural sources of gender domination in capitalist society — above all, the institutionalized separation of two supposedly distinct kinds of activity: on the one hand, so-called "productive" labor, historically associated with men and remunerated by wages; on the other hand, "caring" activities, often historically unpaid and still performed mainly by women. In my view, this gendered, hierarchical division between "production" and "reproduction" is a defining structure of capitalist society and a deep source of the gender asymmetries hard-wired in it. There can be no "emancipation of women" so long as this structure remains intact.



Nancy Fraser

The Pandemic and Gender Equality

Gina Schouten doesn't think that "Liberal Feminism" should "Declare Bankruptcy".

Liberal Feminism is not the same thing as corporate 'lean in' feminism.

Gina Schouten



What's her argument?

The Pandemic and Gender Equality

PHIL 334: Pandemic Ethics

PHIL 334 - Pandemic Ethics: Podcast Assignment

Due: March 12th

Midterm

Podcast Assignment

See Blackboard for details

Instructions:

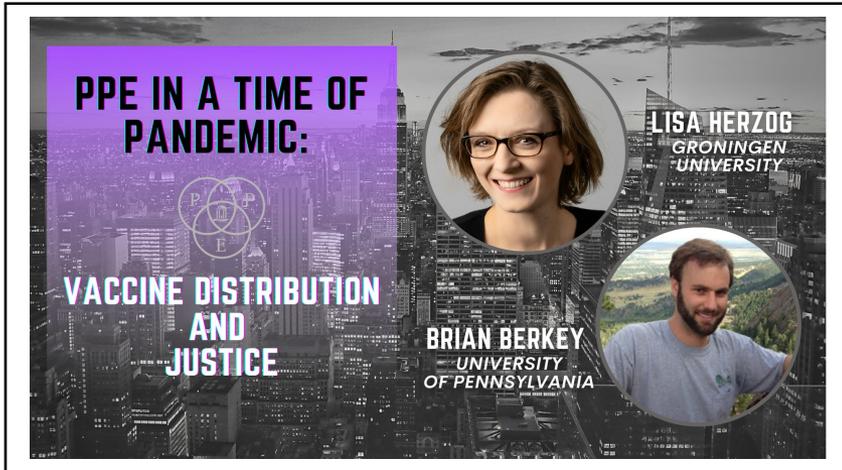
Imagine that our class is producing its own podcast series on the pandemic. You have been tasked with making one episode in the series. **Episodes are 6-10 minutes long.** You will need to write, present, record, and edit your episode.

In your episode, you will use a story as a vehicle for introducing philosophical concepts and ways of thinking about the world. Your target audience is made up of curious and relatively well-educated members of the general public (but not, importantly, philosophers).

You may complete this assignment on your own, or in a group.

Prepare a script for your podcast:

1. Identify a pandemic-related story with *ethical significance* (it can be a story you hear about through the news media, or through your own social circles or experience).
2. Write a script for a podcast that features this story, and highlights aspects of its philosophical significance. In doing so, draw on and clearly explain relevant ideas or arguments presented in this course. (You should make reference to at least two ideas, arguments, or philosophers that we've encountered in the course.)



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Gina Schouten in Defense of Liberal Feminism

Gender Equality and The Pandemic



- (1) Mothers are 3 times as likely as fathers to have lost their jobs during the pandemic.
- (2) 33% of unemployed women cite “childcare demands” as the reason (compared to 12% for men).
- (3) Over half of “essential workers” are women (which are often underpaid).

Why?
Because women-dominated sectors (e.g., hospitality) have been hard hit. Also, women have been shouldering a disproportionate amount of parenting work.

“The suffering wrought by the pandemic has fallen heavily on low-income and minority women and single mothers, who do the bulk of jobs that involve virus exposure and the bulk of work in the service industry that has seen the greatest job losses.”

Discussion Questions

Discussion Question

1

Gendered Division of Labor:
What is it?

In the background of this dispute is that there is a “gendered division of labor”.

Do you think this is true? Can you think of examples?

Discussion Question

2

Gendered Division of Labor:
Unjust?

In the background of this dispute is that there is a “gendered division of labor”.

Is it unjust? And, if so, for what reason? (Is it because of an unfair distribution of goods?)

Gender Equality and The Pandemic

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Nancy Fraser's Critique of Liberal Feminism

"The trouble is, this feminism is focused on encouraging **educated middle-class women** to 'lean in' and 'crack the glass ceiling' --- in other words, to **climb the corporate ladder.**"

"...Its beneficiaries can only be women of the professional-managerial class."

"So this is not, and cannot be, a feminism for all women!"

G.G.: Why can't responding to feminist concerns be seen as just one major step in correcting the social and economic flaws of our capitalist society, not a fundamental transformation of the system?

N.F.: It certainly can be seen that way. But I am questioning whether today's feminism is really advancing that process. As I see it, the mainstream feminism of our time has adopted an approach that cannot achieve justice even for women, let alone for anyone else. The trouble is, this feminism is focused on encouraging educated middle-class women to "lean in" and "crack the glass ceiling" -- in other words, to climb the corporate ladder. By definition, then, its beneficiaries can only be women of the professional-managerial class. And absent structural changes in capitalist society, those women can only benefit by leaning on others -- by offloading their own care work and housework onto low-waged, precarious workers, typically racialized and/or immigrant women. So this is not, and cannot be, a feminism for all women!

Mainstream feminism is focused on encouraging educated middle-class women to "lean in" and "crack the glass ceiling" -- in other words, to climb the corporate ladder. By definition, then, its beneficiaries can only be women of the professional-managerial class.

But that is not all. Mainstream feminism has adopted a thin, market-centered view of equality, which dovetails neatly with the prevailing neoliberal corporate view. So it tends to fall into line with an especially predatory, winner-take-all form of capitalism that is fattening investors by cannibalizing the living standards of everyone else. Worse still, this feminism is supplying an alibi for these predations. Increasingly, it is liberal feminist thinking that supplies the charisma, the aura of emancipation, on which neoliberalism draws to legitimate its vast upward redistribution of wealth.

RELATED BOOK

The Stone Reader: Modern Philosophy in 133 Arguments

An anthology of essays from The Times's philosophy series.

What is Nancy Fraser's worry?

Gender Equality and The Pandemic

 Gina Schouten · Jan 12 · 7 min read

The Pandemic May Set Gender Equality Back by Decades. Should Liberal Feminism Declare Bankruptcy?

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Gina Schouten doesn't think that "Liberal Feminism" should "Declare Bankruptcy".

Liberal Feminism is not the same thing as **corporate 'lean in' feminism**.

Is she right? Can *Liberal* Feminism condemn corporate 'lean in' feminism?

Gender Equality and The Pandemic

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"I argue ... that by the lights of **liberalism** properly understood, **egalitarian structural change** isn't optional. It's a demand of **legitimacy**, and those who invoke liberalism to oppose it are making a mistake about liberal values and the reasons they generate."

Is Egalitarian Liberal Feminism Irrelevant?

First Thought:
Liberal Feminism contributed to the rise of **neoliberalism**.



Egalitarian:
In favor of equality (of some sort or other)

Liberal:
Emphasizes the importance of individual rights, liberties, autonomy, tolerance of others' choices, etc. [19th century]

Neoliberalism:
Emphasizes economic liberty, free enterprise, and free-market capitalism (incl., privatization, deregulation, globalization, free trade, austerity measures, etc.) [20th century]

Is Egalitarian Liberal Feminism Irrelevant?

First Thought:

Liberal Feminism contributed to the rise of **neoliberalism**.

Schouten's Response:

"But liberals too can condemn feminist complicity with neoliberalism, and they can do it without relinquishing their characteristic commitment to preserving women's **autonomy** and **choice**."

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Second Thought:

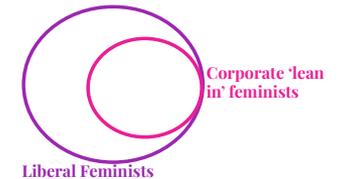
Many *liberals* are more focused on women "breaking the glass ceiling" rather than the women left to "clean up the shards".

Egalitarian:

In favor of equality (of some sort or other)

Liberal:

Emphasizes the importance of individual rights, liberties, autonomy, tolerance of others' choices, etc. [19th century]



Is Egalitarian Liberal Feminism Irrelevant?

Second Thought:

Many *liberals* are, in fact, corporate 'lean in' feminists.

Schouten's Response:

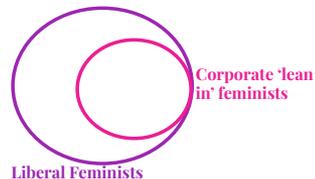
"But non-corporate liberal feminism is vast, and it has the theoretical resources to criticize corporate feminism from within."

Egalitarian:

In favor of equality (of some sort or other)

Liberal:

Emphasizes the importance of individual rights, liberties, autonomy, tolerance of others' choices, etc. [19th century]



Is Egalitarian Liberal Feminism Irrelevant?

Third Thought:

Even non-corporate liberal feminists ignore the women "left cleaning up the shards".

It is "middle-class feminism" because it focuses on policies that rely on **exploited labor**.

Egalitarian:

In favor of equality (of some sort or other)

Liberal:

Emphasizes the importance of individual rights, liberties, autonomy, tolerance of others' choices, etc. [19th century]



“The trouble is, this feminism is focused on encouraging **educated middle-class women** to ‘lean in’ and ‘crack the glass ceiling’ --- in other words, to **climb the corporate ladder**.”

“...Its beneficiaries can only be women of the professional-managerial class.”

“**So this is not, and cannot be, a feminism for all women!**”

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Even non-corporate liberal feminists ignore the women “left cleaning up the shards”.

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How does Schouten respond?

Egalitarian:

In favor of equality (of some sort or other)

Liberal:

Emphasizes the importance of individual rights, liberties, autonomy, tolerance of others' choices, etc. [19th century]



Liberal Feminists

Is Egalitarian Liberal Feminism Irrelevant?

Gina Schouten



How do I answer it? Part of my answer involves making the case that the social value of the policies in question is *primarily* about their potential to erode the gender norms that oppress *all* women—most acutely those cleaning up the shards—and many men as well. Part of my answer is that I also write about economic justice, and, while I endorse intersectionality, I think that we'd ideally not have to rely on caregiver support policy to compensate for the lack of needed structural reform. Of course, we should be concerned if such policy *exacerbates* economic injustice. But we shouldn't conclude that the caregiver support policy is flawed; rather, we should conclude that the depth of economic injustice makes everything else go wrong.

Is Egalitarian Liberal Feminism Irrelevant?

Gina Schouten



Schouten continues:

“Liberalism offers a strong evaluative grounding for demands of justice on behalf of **women across the social hierarchy**—and indeed for demands that that hierarchy be demolished. **The social subordination to which we subject the women sweeping up the shards is unjust on grounds of the freedom and equality that liberalism celebrates.** Precisely because I think liberal feminism furnishes compelling diagnoses of these injustices and illuminating prescriptions for rectification, it strikes me as important to address the *hard cases* that it faces. These are cases wherein apparent choice seemingly shields inequity from censure—the cases that have long been regarded ... as poison for liberal feminists.”

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Discussion Question

3

Gendered Division of Labor:
Solutions?

In the background of this dispute is that there is a “gendered division of labor”.

What could be done about this? What *should* be done about this?

Questions?