

FACES OF POWER

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MANIPULATING DESIRES

WHAT IS THE 'MANIPULATING DESIRES' FACE OF POWER?

This third face of power is so subtle that some may not even realise it exists. Lukes calls this face of power the 'bias of the system' that ensures some groups and individuals exercise greater power because they are attuned to these practices, while others find it difficult to succeed against these biases.

Unlike the first two faces of power, the 'manipulating desires' face can be viewed as a form of thought control. Lukes believed that this third face of power was wielded by influencing, shaping or determining the individual's wants.

EXAMPLE

An example of the 'manipulating desires' face can be seen in relation to Feminist theory. In the UK, there is now formal equality in most areas of social life, with women and men having the same legal rights; but many feminists would argue though that this is only formal equality, not true equality as there's still inequality in pay. Many feminists point out the extent to which patriarchy still dominates the social world. When specific ideas are cemented into society as normal and inevitable, feminists believe that women accept their subordinate role as carers and housewives because they have been 'sold' this idea. In general, women do not try to challenge these normal 'biological' ideas because if they do, they appear odd.

A large part of feminist theory and research has been devoted to explaining how the status, role, and position of women in the social world was socially constructed, and was not natural or unchangeable. This involved studies of the different experiences of women in different times and places, showing the great variety of ways that societies dealt with male/female relationships, resulting in the view that gender differences were much more variable and malleable than biological differences. For feminists, biological realities may be relatively unchangeable, but “what is constructed in social relations and in culture is more readily reconstructed”.

One feminist approach has been to argue that women should not be bound by biological realities, but participate fully in every aspect of society. Where such activities necessitate leave for childbirth, laws, policies, and organisational structure should be amended to accommodate a female labour force. Though this has occurred to some extent career public life will require more change if this is to occur to achieve full equality with men.

Harvard Business Review reported in May 2020 that despite the fact that in the US women outnumber men in the paid workforce, women still do more of the domestic work and childcare – almost twice as much as their male partners. The pandemic has closed many schools and daycare centers, creating childcare scarcity and exacerbating the stresses and strains of caregiving, home-schooling, and domestic duties, especially for dual-earner mothers who were already doing more unpaid work. Even with expanded use of telework and flexible work arrangements by many businesses, working from home isn't necessarily easier when parents are juggling job responsibilities, full-time childcare, and supervision of children's education.

Because 44% of all U.S. households with children are comprised of married dual-earner full-time working couples, and because 1.57 billion children are currently out of school globally and most non-critical workers are now teleworking from home, a seismic shift in the traditional division of household responsibilities is likely. It is not a stretch to expect that men are doing more housework and childcare during the pandemic — an enlightening experience for many.

Many men teleworking from home for the first time are getting a front row seat to the daily demands of running a home and caring for kids, as well as a crash course in learning to “balance” work and family. Although many men have experienced traditional role reversals for short stints, most have never worked from home for an extended period while leaning in as primary caregiver for children. Nowhere is this more evident than among men who are partnered with women who are essential healthcare professionals, currently required to work even longer hours outside the home. Because the healthcare industry is female-dominated (25 of 30 occupations are majority women), many of these families include a husband who is taking on primary caregiver and household responsibilities during the pandemic.

The presence of more men sharing more fully in domestic duties for an extended period of time has the potential to create a sea change in gendered norms – at home and at work. Men teleworking during the pandemic are more likely to appreciate women's work-family experiences, understand the value of flexible work arrangements, appreciate the benefits of relationships with work colleagues, and role model more equitable work-family gender roles for their children.

The UN's report, 'The World's Women 2020: Trends and Statistics', identified that while unpaid domestic and care work has intensified for both men and women during the COVID-19 pandemic, women continue to do the lion's share. On an average day, women globally spend about three times as many hours on unpaid domestic and care work as men (4.2 hours compared to 1.7). In Northern Africa and Western Asia that gender gap is even higher, with women spending more than seven times as much as men on these activities.

This lopsided distribution of unpaid domestic and care work prevents women from participating in the labour market. In 2020, only 47% of women of working age participated in the labour market, compared to 74% of men – a gender gap that has remained relatively constant since 1995. In Southern Asia, Northern Africa and Western Asia, the number is even lower, with less than 30% of women participating in the labour market. And the pandemic is expected to exacerbate these gender disparities, as many women work in the subsectors hardest hit by COVID-19 and lockdown measures, including in paid domestic work, accommodation and food services, and the retail trade. Women also make up over 70% of workers in the health sector, therefore facing higher infection risks than men in the workplace.

HOW RELEVANT IS THE 'MANIPULATING DESIRES' FACE?

In terms of power and decision making, women held only 28% of managerial positions globally in 2019 – almost the same proportion as in 1995. And only 18% of enterprises surveyed had a female Chief Executive Officer in 2020. Among Fortune 500 corporations only 74%, or 37 Chief Executive Officers, were women.

In political life, while women's representation in parliament has more than doubled globally, it has still not crossed the barrier of 25% of parliamentary seats in 2020. Women's representation among cabinet ministers has quadrupled over the last 25 years, yet remains well below parity at 22%.

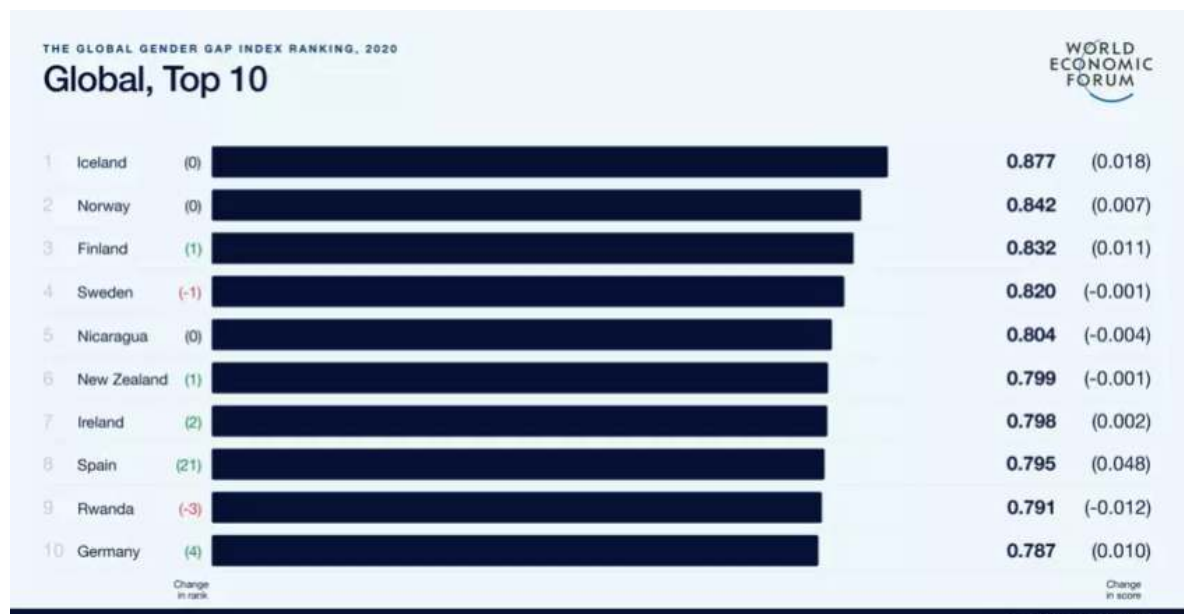
The report '[COVID-19 and gender equality: Countering the regressive effects](#)', from [McKinsey Global Institute](#), estimates that women make up almost two-fifths of the global labour force but have suffered more than half of total job losses from the crisis. That's left them 1.8 times more vulnerable to the pandemic's impact than men. One reason for this is that the virus has increased the burden of unpaid care for children, the elderly and the sick, which is disproportionately taken on by women. The situation is compounded by existing gender inequalities:

Of course, the virus doesn't specifically target women – but it does impact some parts of the economy more than others. McKinsey notes that men and women tend to cluster in specific occupations, leaving women more vulnerable to the disruption caused by the pandemic in both developed and developing economies.

Women's jobs are at 19% greater risk than men's, the report estimates. While women account for 39% of the global workforce, they are over-represented in three of the four most in-decline parts of the global economy: accommodation and food services (54%); retail and wholesale trade (43%); and services such as arts, recreation and public administration (46%).

That said, labour market dynamics differ between countries and regions, as do attitudes to women's employment and access to the labour market. The report found that women were disproportionately represented in industries affected by COVID-19 in places including Nigeria, for example, while in other countries such as France men were more affected.

While countries like Iceland, Norway and Finland top the [Global Gender Gap Index](#) rankings in the Global Gender Gap Report 2020, the report forecasts that gender parity will not be realised for 99.5 years, unless action is taken to redress gender imbalance.



IN CONCLUSION

Overall, it could be argued that the 'manipulating desires' face of power remains relevant today, it is perhaps most prominent in parts of the world that do not prioritise gender parity in terms of social expectations and gender roles. Whether this lack of prioritisation is a result of a desire to manipulate women into fitting into stereotypical gender roles is complex to quantify. It could be the case that for some women, the traditional gender role is desirable. It is very difficult to determine definitively that the way individuals act and perceive are a delusion. How can it be possible to determine what an individual's 'real' interests are? Lukes believed that people's real interests are "what they would want and prefer were they able to make the choice." This means that only rational and autonomous individuals are capable of identifying their own 'real' interests...but how can we determine who these individuals are and when they are making these identifications?