INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL

WHY THE GENDER GAP IN HEALTH IS COSTING LIVES

Sarika Saiyara

Did you know that doctors treat male and female patients differently? As a woman, I am 10% less likely to have my pain assessed when I enter a hospital and also less likely to be given any pain medication.

This discrepancy stems from the longstanding and unquestioned stereotype that women are "hysterical" and have a higher pain tolerance than men. The result? On average, women are diagnosed with diabetes four and a half years later than men, and cancer diagnoses for women occur when they are, on average, two and a half years older.

But it's not just doctors.

In her 2019 book, Invisible Women: Exposing Data Bias in a World Designed for Men, British journalist Caroline Criado Perez makes a harrowing discovery: over the course of 15 years, men outnumbered women 3:1 in 31 medical trials for congestive heart failure. This bias begins long before treatment reaches patients. Even at the development stage, preclinical testing often focuses disproportionately on male animals and male cells. When the medicines move to human trials, women are consistently under-represented.

The consequences of this oversight are devastating.

According to the World Economic Forum, the women's health gap equates to 75 million years of life lost every year due to poor health or early death.
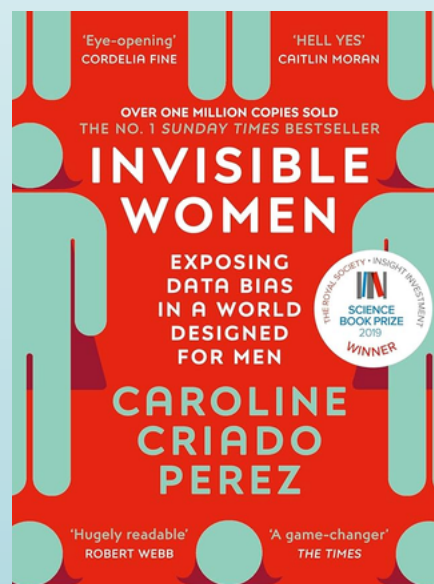
Don't women live longer?

Yes, and in poor health.

The majority of women older than 65 live in developing countries, where poverty, social exclusion, and discriminatory attitudes exacerbate women's health challenges. In these countries, women suffer from chronic poor health due to a combination of factors, including the preferential feeding and education of boys, leading to malnutrition in young women. Additionally, the numerous pregnancies many women undergo further compromise their nutritional health. To make matters worse, older women in these regions are often overlooked, maybe because, in the grand scheme of things, they have been considered unimportant and unproductive.

Why is there so little research on the female body?

Because the white male body is the default for scientific research.

Historically, researchers have believed that findings from male bodies could be applied to women, but that's far from the truth. The male body is generally larger, has a different fat content and processes drugs differently.

This bias doesn't just affect adults. Research has shown that female infants and children have less access to food and medical care, as researchers often treat households as single entities with uniform internal distribution. This leads to under-representation of female children in health research and further perpetuates disparities in care.

Another factor is the way women's bodies are often reduced to their reproductive capabilities. Beyond fertility and childbearing, there is a startling lack of research into other aspects of female health. For instance, because of being labeled a "baby-making machine," a woman's health outside of pregnancy is frequently neglected, particularly for adolescents and postmenopausal women.

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Lack of Progress in Fertility and Childbearing

Women are often prescribed drugs that are not only less effective but sometimes even less safe than for men. A notorious example is the thalidomide scandal, in which an anti-morning sickness drug caused devastating birth defects in babies more than 60 years ago.

Even today, drug safety for women, specifically pregnant women, remains a concern. Since the 1990s, the FDA has allowed clinical trials to begin before all animal studies have been completed, including those meant to measure reproductive toxicity. The result? Researchers may have no idea how an investigational drug could affect a developing fetus.

Endometriosis: A Silent Killer Ignored

Endometriosis, rightfully labeled as a "silent killer," affects 1 in every 10 women.

Yet it can take up to 11 years to diagnose, partly because medical science lacks non-invasive diagnostic tools like ultrasound or blood tests that can reliably detect the condition. For millions of women, this delay in diagnosis means years of debilitating pain and suffering that go untreated.

Menstrual Cycles: A Mystery Even to Women

Shockingly, many women themselves are unaware of the phases of their menstrual cycle beyond the actual menstruation —phases like the follicular, ovulatory, and luteal stages that can affect everything from energy levels to fertility. Despite the significant impact of these phases on a woman's health, little research has been done on how specific nutrients, minerals, and lifestyle choices can optimize each stage of the cycle.

In recent years, the rise of the TikTok trend called "cycle-syncing" has given women a glimpse into how their menstrual cycles affect their daily lives. While some of the advice circulating online is unscientific, it does show that women are eager to understand their bodies better.

Towards Bridging the Gender Health Gap

TikTok trends alone cannot empower women with the knowledge they deserve about their bodies. What we need is a global commitment to awareness, research, and innovation that puts women's health at the forefront.

Only by prioritizing these efforts can we equip women with the tools to demand equitable healthcare—care that is informed, inclusive, and truly reflective of their unique needs.

It's time to bridge the gender health gap, not just in words but through meaningful, lasting change.

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BEYOND THE CURRICULUM: THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN CLASSROOM INCLUSION

Samyuktha Radhika

From an early age, staying connected with your roots is essential in preserving your traditions, your *identity*. Yet, in many classrooms, cultural identity is often overlooked and ignored. In environments where students' cultures are not acknowledged or represented, their personal and/or cultural development can become stagnant. This article explores how cultural preservation in the classroom can be done, and why it matters.

Amidst all the chaos and conflict in the world, the classroom should serve as a safe space. A great teacher within can leave a lasting impression on every student; by helping them see how their cultural roots connect to the world around them. While the education system has made significant progress over the years, it still often fails to serve every student equally.

Many believe that if children want to grow up culturally engaged and proud of their heritage, cultural learning must be integrated into the curriculum.

A method known as **Culturally Responsive Teaching** has proven effective in achieving this goal. It emphasizes the value of incorporating cultural references in all forms of learning, empowering students to make connections and live in a way that honors their identities. Thaathwik Aarsha Abilash, a student who has benefited from culturally responsive teaching, shared his positive experience; "My school was very welcoming and open to many cultures, including Indian.

It made me feel comfortable expressing my heritage, especially on culture days when I could proudly wear my jubas." Culturally responsive teaching made him comfortable enough to embrace his culture through clothing expression - schools that embrace diversity in this way not only help students connect with their culture but also protect future generations from ignorance.

Similarly, Anjali Arat Tharakkal, a master's student, spoke about her opportunity to stay connected with her roots through cultural programs that represent her ethnicity. "We graduate students had a student body called SURABHI, which hosted events and celebrated Indian festivals," she said. Creating a community like this fosters a strong connection to one's heritage and encourages ongoing cultural engagement. Unfortunately, not all students are as fortunate as Thaathwik and Anjali.

The Role of the School Environment

It is not just the curriculum that affects cultural erasure or preservation—it is also the school environment. Events, policies, and attitudes all contribute to how students perceive and express their culture, much like Thaathwik's culture days and Anjali's student body. The lack of cultural responsiveness in schools can severely impact students. An anonymous student from Pakistan shared with me the challenges they faced: "My culture isn't often talked about in school. When it is, the conversation always reduces us to our food or mehendi. I wish people knew there's more to us than that." This highlights how culturally unresponsive teaching can lead to oversimplification and neglect of a student's cultural identity.

Avantika Jagdhari, a 16-year-old student from the United States, voiced similar frustrations: "I don't feel like my culture is accurately represented in school. We barely learn anything about Indian culture, and my school only started acknowledging Diwali as a holiday last year. There are also a lot of misconceptions about Indian culture, which can feel alienating." This illustrates how inadequate representation and understanding can make students feel disconnected and marginalized. Anjali echoed this sentiment, noting that "many traditions my parents' generation followed have faded over time. For example, we used to refrain from celebrating special occasions for a year after the death of a close relative, but this practice has become less common." The lack of culturally responsive teaching in schools not only fails to support students in maintaining their cultural practices but also contributes to the gradual erosion of these traditions.

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The Impact of Language and Teacher Authority

Language is often the first victim of cultural marginalization. Many students feel pressure to conform to English as their primary language, even at home. This pressure is compounded when teachers misuse their authority to isolate or ridicule students for speaking their native languages. Another anonymous student shared a heartbreaking memory, stating;

"A teacher put me in a time-out corner simply for speaking my native language when I could barely speak English. It was so isolating. I cried my eyes out."

Experiences like this reinforce the notion that some teachers target students based on race, causing a deeper disconnect between students and their ethnic backgrounds. Instead of this, teachers should encourage learning - even if it is a language unused in the classroom. Studies have shown the importance of learning more than one language! Whether through music, movies, or other forms of entertainment, universal meanings can transcend language barriers. For example, a study by Elisa Perego found that "the processing of subtitled films is cognitively effective because it leads to a good understanding of film content without a significant tradeoff between image processing and text processing."

The sad reality is that because of this racism, languages can be forgotten over time and cause disconnection.

This disconnect is something I can relate to personally. Over time, I completely forgot my first language—the language I'd known since birth—because I didn't feel the desire to learn or use it anymore. Now, I struggle to communicate with my relatives and deeply regret not maintaining that connection.

Similarly, Avantika shared that while she can speak basic Hindi, she can neither read nor write in the Devanagari script, a reality faced by many second-generation students today.

The Importance of Names

Furthermore, names carry deep cultural significance, yet they are often mispronounced or shortened for convenience. Many students, including myself, have been conditioned to accept this, but it has a lasting impact. It can create a feeling of embarrassment and possibly shame. In fifth grade, my teacher consistently mispronounced my name despite months of being in her class. Eventually, she 'gave up' and shortened it to "Samy," for her own ease; convenience. This has stuck with me for five years, and now, every time a teacher pauses while taking attendance, I immediately resort to saying, "You can just call me Samy."

Although it is a small moment in the grand scheme of things, it represents the larger issue of how easily cultural identity can be glossed over or erased. Teachers should at least try to pronounce ethnic names correctly.

Conclusion

The preservation of cultural identity is something I hold dear because it provides representation that resonates with my community. Whether it's Bharatanatyam or Día de Muertos, every tradition deserves to be acknowledged and celebrated. To achieve this, three key practices are essential: accurately pronouncing and respecting students' names, implementing culturally responsive teaching, and encouraging language learning. Correctly pronouncing names honors students' heritage and affirms their identity. Culturally responsive teaching integrates diverse cultural perspectives into the curriculum, ensuring that all students feel represented and valued. Encouraging language learning helps students maintain their cultural connections and deepens their understanding of different cultures. By embracing these practices, we can shape an educational environment that nurtures a generation that is accepting, open-minded, and proud of their heritage.

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THE TRAGEDY OF GETTING STUCK IN SPACE

Vedika Jain

Who wouldn't want to explore space? Most people would as it seems fascinating to learn about stars, galaxies, nebulas, black holes and many other secrets that lie out there. But despite its beauty, it's not very hospitable to humans, and imagine the tragedy of being stuck in such a place. In light of recent weeks, two NASA astronauts, Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore, were aboard Boeing's Starliner capsule for a week's long expedition when it turned into an eight-month ordeal making the astronauts get stuck in the space shuttle for a very long time. The reason behind this tragedy were some major technical issues with the spacecraft. As per reports they will not be returned by Starliner and will be aboard SpaceX's Crew Dragon and are expected to return by February 2025. But as the mission period has increased the supply of oxygen and water is critical. As a result, NASA is regularly conducting resupply missions for delivering fuel, additional food items, water and oxygen for the survival of astronauts. In spite of these problems, one of the most prominent issues is the effect of this long stay on their bodies. These prolonged space visits further accelerated the destruction of Red- Blood Cells. This condition is called hemolysis which can pose health problems like anemia.

The continuous feeling of weightlessness can also lead to further health risks.

In order to combat the aftereffects of weightlessness the astronauts engage in rigorous training and exercise using Advanced Resistive Exercise Device(ARED). These devices help to stimulate weightlifting that helps to maintain muscle and bone health. As we watch the story unfold, let's hope for a safe return for both the astronauts to Earth.

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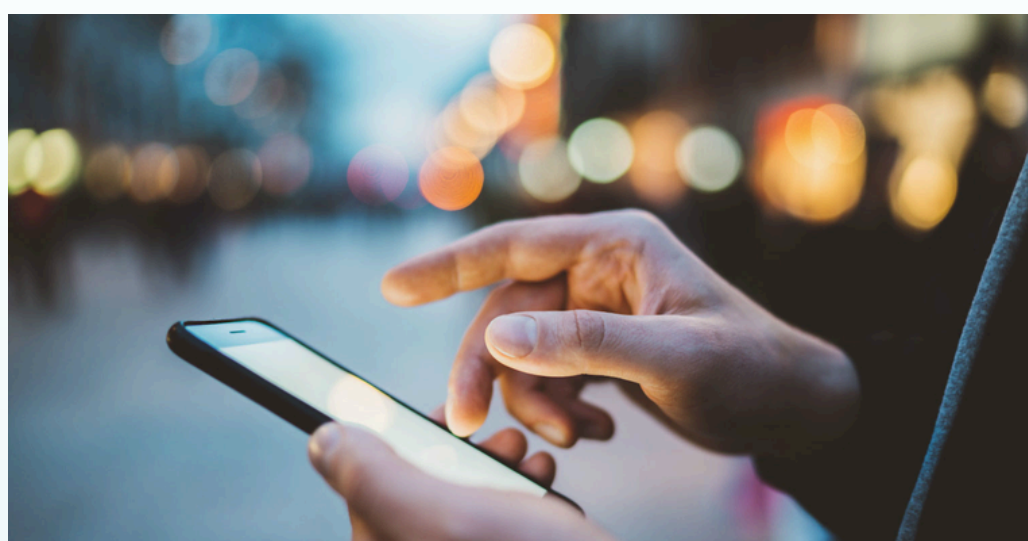
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TECHNOLOGY: THE ROAD TO INTROVERSION

Truong Bao Ngoc

As humans stepped into the 21st century, we started developing our current technology. Even before that time, people dreamed and believed in assumingly impossible machines, but impossible as it may seem, humans are bizarre enough to surpass our expectations and rise alongside technology. It is undeniable that technology serves as a keystone in our lives, both in mental and physical ways.

Technology may be advanced enough to help us with our daily lives, but is it helping us when considering the aspect of "socialization"?

Debate arises, questioning the actual effectiveness of technology in general, not just in the areas of development and production. The answer is that it indeed makes it significantly harder to create real friendships instead of just mere and coincidental connections.

Try to think of how many friends you have online. Maybe a few hundred, even a thousand for some. Well, that's what it seems to look like. Now try to count how many of those hundreds of friends you've make actually seem to be keeping in close contact with you and actually are trying to befriend you for the sake of companionship. Probably just a few. The problem with technology is that it gives us more opportunities to create "meaningful relationships" but with the speed that we've been scrolling through our social media sites now, it's impossible to actually create that many friendships with actual depth at all.

So, why does this happen?

Decreased Face-to-Face Interaction

Technology decreases the time we have to have face-to-face interactions with each other, and most interactions we have nowadays revolve around screens. Most of the time, we're either texting, scrolling through each other's posts and profiles, or calling each other for short, snappy chats. Unlike the classic way of going out to spend the day with your friends at the café, people now prefer staying at home and sticking their faces to their phones, deleting and adding new contacts to their tremendous list of social friends. Others tend to isolate themselves with the laziness of being drawn to their phones all day. This isolation can also cause people to demotivate themselves from going out and making new friends. Psych Central has found out that with the development of technology, people would more often miss out on their normal social activities to strengthen their connections and relationships with others, leading to less interactions and then ultimately less friendships. The number of friendships that could be created on a single trip to the park could surprise you, as just by bumping into another dog owner as you walk your golden retriever could end up with you planning a play date for your daughter. Decreased interactions also lowers the quality of the friendship you're having, and values the quantity over quality - which basically means befriending a lot of people but not actually developing the relationship with them. This is based on the theory of Dunbar number, which basically explains the maximum number of people you can maintain a stable social relationship with. Venture Academy found out that most people develop a huge number of social relationships online, but none of them actually are deep relationships as such with their immediate peers around them.
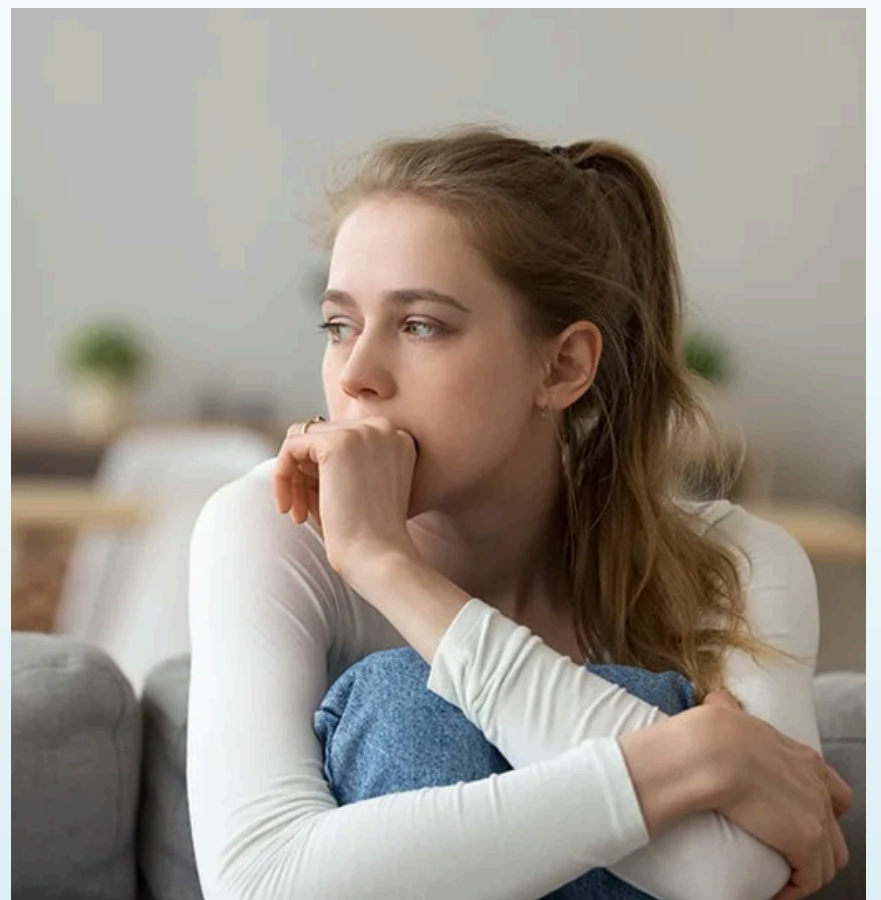
TECHNOLOGY: THE ROAD TO INTROVERSION

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Increased Social Anxiety

People often question whether or not technology makes it harder for people to approach each other. Before, it wasn't much of a problem, but now, when humans are unable to live without their phones, it's difficult to even talk to a person normally in comparison to how you text them. The time we've spent behind our screens make us more used to meeting and chatting people without actually preparing for the interaction, meaning it reduces the anxiety and awkwardness of meeting other people. Think of how a person living in the tropical areas is somewhat used to the hot and warm climate, with unpredictable rainfall and the scorching sun. The time they spent living in the tropical climate makes their bodies used to their surroundings, so when a tropical person is made to live in a temperate climate, they naturally react to the unusual bitterness of the freezing air around them and cannot behave like they do in their usual surroundings. Just like that, if a person is often used to interacting with others behind a screen, it makes it harder for them to behave the same way when they have to make interactions right at the spot.

Studies indicate that the use of social media can exacerbate social anxiety, making individuals less likely to initiate real-life friendships.

Clinic Psychology Associates found that social media can create pressure to present oneself in a certain way, leading to avoidance of in-person social situations.

However, nothing is perfect, and nothing is perfectly imperfect. In contrast with making us start many meaningless relationships, it also plays a very important part in helping socially anxious people reach out to the world.

A Great Start to Reach Out to the World

Going on the internet offers you anonymity, and this provides people the strength to speak up without fear of judgement, which can help them express themselves more freely than they could usually do in real life.
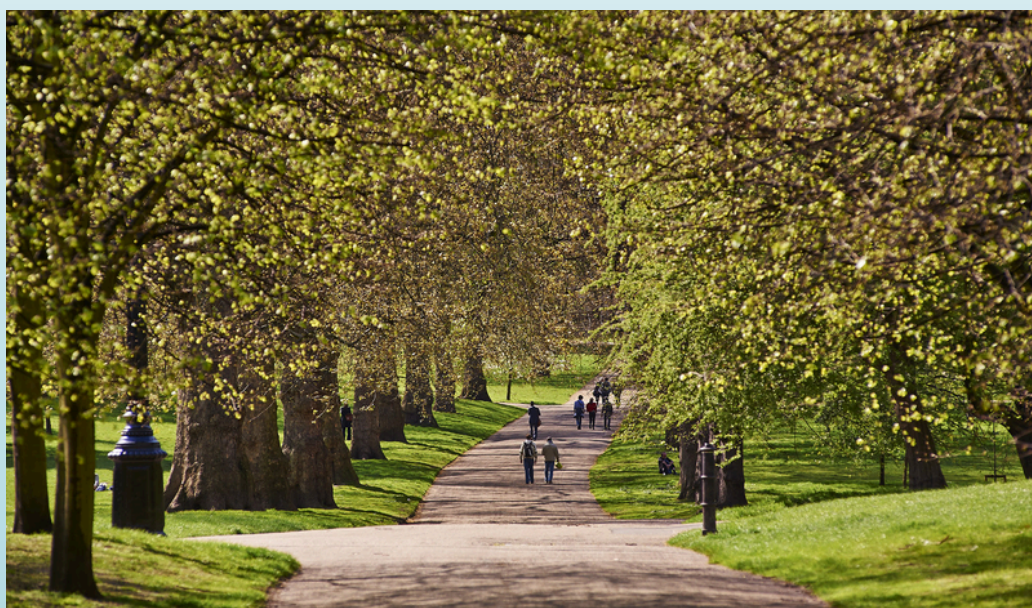
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One of the main reasons people are socially anxious is because they fear that their mistakes may lead to dire consequences of people neglecting them and excluding them from their social identification group, and erasing any chance of this can help anxious people find a better way to approach society. It also helps develop a solution for gradual change towards the society. Being able to approach people and then starting to feel more comfortable about interacting with other people in short chats is a significant step towards being less isolated. Technology also plays as the mold for daily interactions. Most people who are introverted struggle with expressing themselves and their ideas through words and body language, so as technology became more advanced, emojis and text recommendations came out, which filtered the choice of words and made it easier for them to express themselves. Text recommendation was a crucial part in helping people choose the right words and avoid awkwardness, while emojis made it so that no more self-expression was needed, and bothered people less.

According to American Psychological Association (APA), digital communication tools allow for more thoughtful, less pressured exchanges, reducing anxiety for introverts during conversations.

Similarly, Harvard Business Review found that technology empowers introverts to express themselves and showcase their skills in environments where they feel more comfortable, thus enhancing their ability to communicate effectively.

In a nutshell, no matter what you use technology for, it's always important to remember that nothing is perfect, and it's better that we should always remember to not develop a bad addiction to technology. At the end of the day, it's best to go touch grass after we've finished using our technologies.

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BRAIN DRAIN - A SILENT CRISIS FOR BOTH DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING NATIONS?

Teu-Khanh Phuong

The question "Why are some nations rich while others are poor" has been one of the most common questions raised by economists. According to economic theory, this mainly happens because of differences in education levels of the population, which has proven that more opportunities for schooling can potentially raise living standards in developing countries. There is no doubt that well-educated workers are scarce in developing countries, and the majority of professions such as doctors, chemists, physicians, etc. all appear to be in developed countries.

This worldwide phenomenon is referred to as "human capital flight," also known as the "brain drain".

There are many causes of brain drain ; for instance, it can result from turmoil within a specific place, the existence of favorable job opportunities elsewhere or the desire to seek a higher standard of living. On a more specific level, brain drain can occur when organizations or industries don't provide satisfactory payment to keep their workers, leading to them finding other businesses that are able to provide them with better salaries, benefits, or promotion chances.

However, on a bigger level, this is a term used to describe the act of migration of highly educated, skilled workers from "poor" countries to "rich" countries. In this case, another term popped up called "brain gain".

"Brain gain" is the complete opposite of "brain drain." While we all know from the above definition that brain drain is a massive loss of experienced workers in a region due to a large amount of people immigrating. According to the Assembly of European Regions (AER), "brain gain is when a country benefits as a consequence of immigration of a highly qualified person." Countries such as the United States or Canada attract a pool of skilled and talented people from multiple backgrounds and professions owing to their attractive career choices or a diverse living environment. But why does the brain drain matter?

While it's undeniable that brain drain brings talented people into a growing and innovative atmosphere, promotes globalization and improves the productivity level for the economy, it also poses detrimental harm.

At first glance, one might only think of the negative aspects of brain drain in developing countries, such as severe economic impacts or loss in human resources. However, studies have demonstrated that this is an existing problem in both types of countries.

First and foremost, developing countries can't progress with the rising issue of brain drain. As shown in the figure from the World Bank, the top three reasons why people move to other countries are because of career prospects, social injustice, and compensation. Losing highly skilled workers is damaging to developed nations since they are valuable factors in determining the world economy. Seriously mentioned, developing countries continue to lack urgent technological improvements, as well as providing fewer benefits to their working people.

Consequently, a country is on the verge of developing slower once it has lost its pool of diverse workers. While developed countries end up having too many workers with limited jobs on the market. Take the United States as a clear example. For a long time, it remained a place where skilled and talented immigrants turned to to pursue their so-called "American Dream" and this has shown patterns of continuing to rise throughout 2020. Therefore, competition for a single job is more widespread than ever before. As a result of brain drain in other developing countries, the US faces many problems in providing enough suitable jobs or adequate living for its citizens and immigrants, causing a decline in average pay and an increase in the unemployment rate.

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BRAIN DRAIN - A SILENT CRISIS FOR BOTH DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING NATIONS?

Teu-Khanh Phuong

Evidently, homelessness has been a severe crisis in the US. "HUD reports that on a single night in 2023, roughly 653,100 people in the U.S. experienced homelessness." Although there are other factors contributing to homelessness, it can partly be caused by brain drain. Since both scenarios that happened in developed and developing nations lead to a more devastating economy, it can be concluded that brain drain affects all nations worldwide.

Secondly, developing slower for developing countries also means they have to deal with economic loss. Not only will those countries face an alarming reduction in stock of human capital, but the remaining citizens residing there will be affected. With a lack of growth and innovation from the skilled workers who left, there won't be any remarkable changes and efforts to cooperate or trade globally, which gives rise to a country being largely ignored and isolated. Thus, the slower the development of a country, the poorer they will be.

As a result, the motivation for people to move from rural areas to bigger cities grows higher and higher. Developed countries already have an advantage in technological advancement and investment from the government. Whereas in developing countries or rural areas, there's a lack of private investment and capital and no markets for both consumers and employees.

Because there's little prospect for growth in rural areas, a lack of public investment and support has appeared. According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "55% of the world's population lives in urban areas, a proportion that is expected to increase to 68% by 2050," highlighting a huge gap between rural and urban areas.

Purely in terms of economics, governments will be more likely to invest in cities to be more efficient, as they believe investing in rural areas requires more funds for little return.

Just like any long-term problem, brain drain doesn't show its impact straight away; instead, its further economic impacts take time to take effect. It is the government's and private firms' job to implement stricter measures to reduce the problem of brain drain by providing a more beneficial atmosphere. Therefore, addressing and minimizing brain drain requires a concerted effort from governments, private sectors, organizations, and institutions to create more developed residential areas.

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MODERN LOSS OF BIODIVERSITY

Sharvanth S.

Biodiversity is one of the key factors that has sustained life ever since its inception.

Before we delve deep into the factors leading to the loss of biodiversity, we must know what biodiversity actually is. "Biodiversity" is an abbreviation for "Biological Diversity" or "Biotic Diversity". Biotic beings refer to all aspects of living beings, and those beings living together in harmony is what we call Biodiversity. Biodiversity plays a vital role in the substance of the ecosystem.

However, this important aspect of nature is being undermined and exploited in various ways. Various sources and statistics showcase the decline of biodiversity in nature and the adverse effects it results in.

Over the past 5 decades, humans have been exploiting natural resources to their fullest, with an increase in human consumption and usage of minerals, fossil fuels and other energy resources. This rapid increase in growth, development and urbanization has led to the increase in the consumption of limited natural resources, which took millions of years to be formed.

The total volume of workable minerals is an insignificant fraction - only one percent of the Earth's crust. The geological processes of mineral formation are so slow that the rates of replenishment are infinitely small in comparison to the present rates of consumption. This calls for better conservation plans to preserve Earth's minerals and its nature.

A WWF report in 2020 has showcased an increasing decline in the population of different species of mammals, fish, birds.

The report has estimated an increasing decline of different types of species to 68% between 1970 and 2016.

This report attributes this loss of biodiversity due to different factors such as mineral exploitation, land and water exploitation, and so on.

The five major threats to biodiversity are: Land and sea use change, pollution, over-exploitation, climate change, invasive species and disease.

Let us understand each one of them with an example and its factors.

Land and Sea Use Change

Increase in the use of agricultural land is responsible for about 80% of the global deforestation, which has changed the habitats of several indigenous species living in particular regions, which has led to the decline in their population. Destruction of an ecosystem's plant, soil, hydrologic and nutrient resources has also led to habitat loss.

Pollution

Pollution occurs through various factors. Pollution makes the environment unsustainable for survival. Addition of harmful substances due to humans has contributed to the decline in biodiversity.

In the LPR 2020, five major threats were categorized which are used to assert the decline in biodiversity.

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MODERN LOSS OF BIODIVERSITY

Sharvanth S.

Climate Change

A factor known to all, climate change is leading to adverse effects in the rise of sea levels and change in land habitats, forcing various animals to move and shift to different regions.

Invasive Species and Disease

Invasive species are those species that are in their non-native territory and which can multiply rapidly and compete with other organisms for food, spaces and other resources. They also spread diseases to other animals and mammals which may prove to be fatal and might evolve into a pandemic.

All of these factors are influenced due to the increased growth in human population, increasing consumption and reduced resource efficiency.

There are various other factors, but these are the primary concerns to loss of biodiversity.

The loss of biodiversity is not just an environmental issue—it is a crisis that affects every aspect of life on Earth, including human survival. The balance of ecosystems, built over millions of years, is being undone by human activity in just a few short decades. Now, more than ever, it is crucial that we prioritize conservation efforts, adopt sustainable practices, and rethink our relationship with nature.

The future of biodiversity, and ultimately the future of humanity, depends on the actions we take today.

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VAPING IN DHAKA: CLOUDS, CONTROVERSIES, AND COOLNESS

Shaira Anjuman

Vaping has arrived in Dhaka like a monsoon storm, transforming the city's perception of nicotine consumption. Once a niche trend, it's now as common as rickshaws on Mirpur Road, sparking debates and raising questions about health and lifestyle.

Imagine a sleek device heating a blend of nicotine, propylene glycol, vegetable glycerin, and flavoring agents into a vapor. It's more than just smoking rebranded; it offers fewer carcinogens and bigger clouds for social media. In a city where tradition meets trend, vaping has found its place among those looking for a modern twist on an old habit.

Cloud of Safety

Advocates claim vaping is a safer alternative to conventional smoking. According to Public Health England, vaping emits fewer harmful chemicals than traditional cigarettes, sparing lungs from the tar and carcinogens typically associated with smoking. For Dhakaiyas struggling with the city's poor air quality, vaping offers a flavored escape—although concerns about the chemicals involved persist.

Flavor Frenzy

From tangy lychee to rich chocolate, the flavors of vapes rival the spice markets of Old Dhaka. These flavors transform routine nicotine consumption into an aromatic experience, offering an alternative for those tired of the bitter taste of traditional cigarettes.

Nicotine Nirvana

Nicotine remains a powerful draw, and vapes deliver it with modern flair —discreetly, without the lingering smell of smoke. Studies from the National Academies of Sciences emphasize that while vaping avoids some harmful chemicals, nicotine addiction remains a significant risk. In Dhaka, where technology and tradition intersect, vapes have become a staple for nicotine seekers.

Style and Substance

Vapes are more than functional devices; they are fashion statements. Compact, colorful, and ubiquitous in Dhaka's urban centers, they fit seamlessly into modern life. Whether slipped into a pocket or flaunted at a café, they represent a blend of style and substance, embodying the city's dynamic cultural shift.

Yet, beneath the surface, concerns remain about the long-term effects.

Research from Johns Hopkins Medicine warns of potential respiratory issues linked to inhaling chemicals in e-cigarette vapor, particularly in a city where respiratory ailments are already common.

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VAPING IN DHAKA: CLOUDS, CONTROVERSIES, AND COOLNESS

Shaira Anjuman

Health Risks and Regulations

As vaping gains popularity, policymakers are struggling to keep pace. Regulations have yet to fully address the public health risks posed by vaping, and gaps in consumer protection leave Dhaka's youth vulnerable. According to the CDC, while vaping exposes users to fewer harmful chemicals than traditional smoking, it can still lead to nicotine addiction, cardiovascular issues, and respiratory problems.

The World Health Organization (WHO) also highlights the potential risks of long-term exposure to substances like propylene glycol and flavoring agents.

The Cultural Shift

Vaping has reshaped Dhaka's nicotine landscape, merging modernity with tradition. From the bustling alleys of Puran Dhaka to the sleek towers of Gulshan, vapes have become a common sight. However, as the city navigates the allure of fruity flavors and slick devices, informed choices and robust regulations are essential to protect public health.

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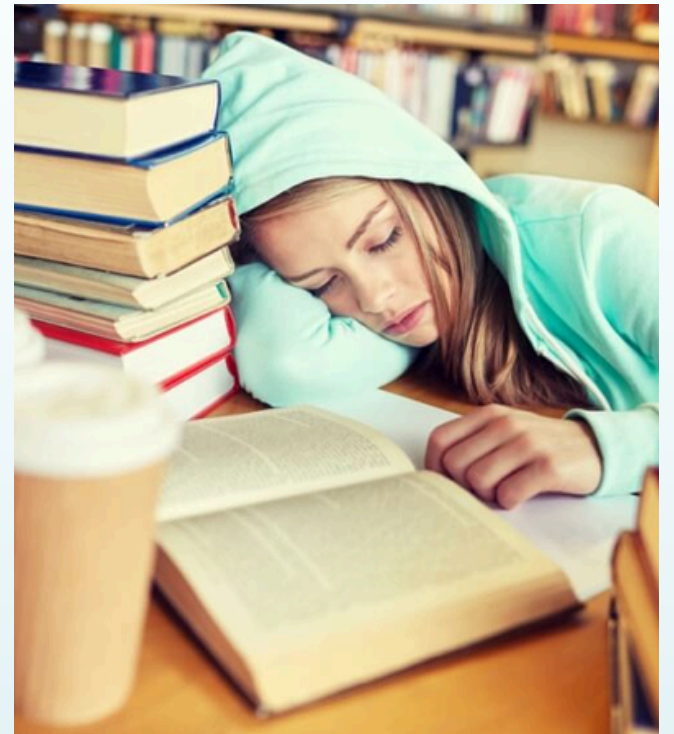# THE ART OF PROCRASTINATION - JUSTIFIED OR LAZY?

Sarah Fathi

Cambridge Dictionary Definition: To keep delaying something that must be done, often because it is unpleasant or boring

Procrastination is something that we have all come across and faced at various points in our lives. Whether in our personal or work environments, the dreaded feeling of deadlines has either prompted us to get to finishing those assignments or leaving them till the very last minute despite knowing full well the consequences of our actions. So even though we deliberately put ourselves in this position that leads to high stress and the feeling of burn out- why do we do it to ourselves?

Where Procrastination Comes From

Procrastination stems from stories we tell ourselves. In avoidance of doing a task, we fabricate false mental narratives such as "I'm too tired today" or "I'll start tomorrow…" to create a valid excuse. The decision to delay the inevitable stress for a brief period is tempting, however constant studies have shown that stress levels are significantly higher when procrastination is at play. According to a study from 2014 these false narratives we repeat to ourselves are often connected to poor self discipline and prominent levels of anxiety. Other main causes include:

Perfectionism: We can avoid assignments that feel overwhelming due to fears of making mistakes. The pressure to achieve perfection in our work in turn causes lacking in performance and simply avoidance in doing the task altogether.

Boredom: A common factor that links to procrastination is just simply not being bothered to do the task. When a task is perceived as unpleasant or dull, we tend to easily put it off until much later, turning towards something more enjoyable.

Low self-esteem: Lacking belief in having the capability to successfully complete tasks causes us to feel demotivated and develop low self efficacy. This then affects how we approach our tasks and challenges as they can then they can be perceived as meaningless.

But is it justifiable?

Procrastination has a well renowned tie to being labelled as laziness but is it really? With multiple studies displaying procrastination as being connected to many mental health conditions, we can confidently acknowledge that procrastination is not a mental health condition in itself but often a manifestation of conditions like OCD, depression, and ADHD according to the American Psychological association. With deeper psychological issues being the cause for procrastination among many people, the complexity in how we approach procrastination remains different to everyone.
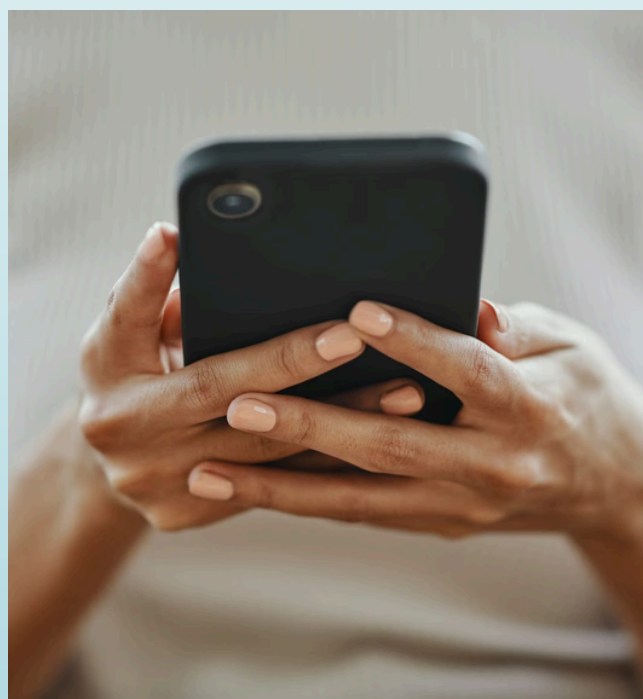
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THE ART OF PROCRASTINATION - JUSTIFIED OR LAZY?

Sarah Fathi

It is important to acknowledge that procrastination does not indicate you are inadequate nor is it a sign that you are lazy and unintelligent. Underlying and external factors may be the causes to leaving off work till the last minute and it is important to figure out the root cause and to take mental health breaks from time to time to preserve motivation, specifically the quality of motivation, not the amount. Here are some tips below:

Develop a cost and benefit analysis. By clearly outlining the rewards and benefits in achieving your task, you can identify how it outweighs the costs in doing so.

Spend time away from objects that will encourage you to put off your assignments, the main one being your phone! Distraction is a big deterrent from tasks.

When rewarding yourself, try and avoid giving yourself short-term breaks to do something you enjoy after completing a quarter of the task and focus on long-term rewards. This approach can help enhance your self-regulation and improve self-discipline.

Conclusion

Procrastination is perfectly understandable, everyone deals with it at countless times in their lives, however prolonged procrastination can be considered harmful and does require external help in terms of dealing with it.

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BEYOND BOUNDARIES: HOW GEOGRAPHY SHAPES SOCIAL DIVIDES AND INEQUALITY

Ruhi Misra

Introduction

Inequality in geography refers to the idea that different people experience different standards of living, whether economically, with differing wealth and income, or politically through differing rights and freedoms, as well as being explored through differing provisions of health and education (RGS, 2023). This inequality can be considered geographical as it can be mapped - whether by exploring how climate can generate disparities or even internal inequality within a country due to proximity away from the capital city.

Ultimately, it is geographic location and population characteristics (including the compositions of race, ethnicity, gender and the associated perceptions) that influences access to resources like education, healthcare, as well as employment, and absence of these can perpetuate inequality.

However, it is important to consider an intersectional approach when classifying inequality, and how each of these factors do not operate in isolation but instead simultaneously to shape a holistic picture of it.

The Historical Routes of Geographical Inequality: Mapped and Unmapped

Historical events, such as colonialism, industrialisation and migration patterns have left profound and lasting impacts on geographic inequality.

One exacerbator of inequality was redlining, a discriminatory practice in the United States where banks and federal agencies denied mortgages and other financial services to residents of neighbourhoods with high percentage composition of people of colour.

The term originated from literal red lines being drawn on maps by the government and financial institutions to segregate and mark different areas to deem them too risky for investment, which was often based directly on racial demographics. The practice began in the 1930s (Environment & Health Data Portal, 2021), established by the Home Owners Loan Corporation following the Great Depression, a time of high unemployment where people were unable to afford their mortgage payments. Essentially, redlining was considered a 'saviour' practise in order to keep people in their homes, but instead was ostracising and building upon the racist and outdated ideologies of colonialism, deeming coloured populations as inferior and less eligible to necessary resources.

Although the practice was abolished in 1968, it's a mentality that many Americans uphold to date, with over 65% of the population (Mitchell, 2019) reporting that it has become increasingly common for people to express racism, as well as the recent necessity for the Black Lives Matter Movement.

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Another similar instance shaped by historical Geographic inequality and upholding European Colonialist ideologies was apartheid in South Africa, a regime supported by the National Party and introduced in 1948 (South African History Online, 2022), which enforced racial segregation and migration that separated Black and White racial communities.

Consequently, even though the regime called for equal development, the white communities benefited from increased economic opportunities, and better service provision, due to increased investment into infrastructure for modern transportation, schools and hospitals, whereas Black racial communities like Saweto were extremely underdeveloped, lacking basic services like running water and electricity, in addition to not being in close Geographical proximity to economic hubs. This disparity could be seen mapped throughout South Africa between the two racial communities, continuing to impose racial hierarchies through concentration of wealth and ownership of land among White settlements, and displacing indigenous populations.

The Urban-Rural Divide; An Internal Ooutlook

Additionally, living in urban or rural areas is a major contributor to geographic inequality, dividing regions internally within a country.

The concepts of 'Urban Pull' and 'Rural Push' in migration theory indeed help to explain the inequalities between urban and rural areas, referring to the factors that determine immigration (into) Urban areas, such as improved healthcare provision, higher wages, and higher quality of education, significantly for women and girls due to less social compulsion and freedom to utilise advanced technology there as they please. In contrast, factors that explain immigration (out of) rural areas, such as inadequate job opportunity, agricultural challenges, and poor infrastructure.

However, what it fails to elucidate is the North-South divide, a metaphorical line that dissects the North and South East of England and London (despite there being urban areas prevalent in both) horizontally, and renders the two halves different socially, economically and culturally.

The stark inequality prevalent in the North in comparison to its absence in the south was a result of a plethora of factors, including the decline in the mining industry of the North after 1980, better education and economic opportunity, as well as increased public investment in the

South, with transport spending in London being 2 times greater per person than in the north of England, as depicted by data from 2018-19; £903 was spent in the capital per capita, whereas the in the north this was merely £376 (TFL, 2019).

These factors, essentially, led to the migration of higher skilled workers from the north to south.

However, Stereotypes also play a role in exacerbating this social divide. As such, cultural narratives as well as media often convey the North as far less prosperous, which can impact investment and also self-perception, ultimately impacting local initiatives and economic opportunities by influencing policy discussions and even regional development strategies throughout the UK.

The North-South Divide, as illustrated on a map, divided by Government office regions. The divide is generated by the Severn Wash Line, a horizontal line drawn from the River Severn estuary. The Northern zones above the Wash Line are denoted in pink; the southern zones below the Wash Line in blue.

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This stereotype-fueled phenomenon occurs in a cyclical fashion, hindering development of industries, specifically of the quaternary sector (heavily prevalent in London and the South), in the North and leading to disparities in gross weekly income, which was £160 lower than in London (ONS, 2021).

Economic Opportunities and Employment; The Correlation Between Geography and Economic Growth

Geography and economic growth are directly correlated.

For one, location can determine the availability of natural resources, such as crude oil, abundant in countries such as Nigeria. These countries have a significant advantage in terms of economic growth,

with Nigeria making $60 billion USD last year from oil exports alone (Statista, 2023) as the abundance of these resources can stimulate investment and increase employment opportunities.

Conversely, countries with limited natural resources and relevant infrastructure to export them, or even resources that have been exploited through history may struggle with generating economic growth, and have to rely on tourism and primary sector work like agriculture to build their economy.

Their success is also determined by their geography, considering the prevalence of natural features like coral reefs that attract tourists and a favourable climate for growing crops, as well as the geopolitical relations between countries. Take Belgium exploiting Congo in the colonial period, for example. Belgium did this for resources such as rubber, ivory and minerals, and their economy greatly benefitted but these benefits were indeed not shared with the local population, leaving Congo in the indefinitely impoverished state it is in today.

The Role of Environment and Climate in Creating Change

It is undeniable that climate can also create economic disparities. Extreme weather events, for example hurricanes, and droughts can lead to significant losses in infrastructure and capital, destabilising a country's economy. This is even more pertinent in multihazard environments such as the Philippines, which can experience consecutive natural hazards, due to conditions like being surrounded by waters over 27 degrees warm and its location in the Pacific Ring of Fire, in close succession (like the 1990 Luzon earthquake and the eruption of Mount Pinatubo in 1991) or even simultaneously.This damages vital industries in the primary sector such as the aquaculture (fishing) industry that the country is so reliant on, providing jobs for over 2 million people (Statista, 2021).

On the contrary, some climates such as the Mediterranean climate can be deemed more favourable in improving quality and quantity of life, with the abundant sunlight contributing to production of serotonin (the feel good hormone), as well as stimulating vitamin D production through its ultraviolet properties. This climate is found in coastal areas and so the temperature is regulated by the sea, preventing it from being excessively hot and harbouring shrub land growth, including a number of aromatic plants like olives, and mints in a long annual growing season of over 6 months (Permaculture Planting, 2024) that allows for 2 or more harvests a year, leading to an excellent crop yield and increased profit.

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Climate change itself also has disproportionate effects on different populations.

Countries like the Maldives make such minuscule contributions to global emissions, yet they are at the face of extreme climate change, enduring existential threats such as sea level rise causing the island to become uninhabitable by 2050 (MV+, 2023) , as well as increasing the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events like tropical storms that damage not only coastal communities and infrastructure, but also essential ecosystems such as mangrove forests, that serve as a habitat for aquatic organisms and sequester carbon to mitigate against climate change in the first place.

The Demographic Influence; Gender, Race and Associated Perceptions

Furthermore, there is also demographic influence in inflaming inequality.

On average, across developing nations worldwide, male-headed households have 13% more asset wealth and 303% more land for agriculture.

There can even be internal disparities within countries, for example in Senegal, where although female-headed households along the Senegal River do have higher wealth and greater access to land, male-headed households along the coast and in the capital Dakar are much wealthier (Fisher and Naidoo, 2016). Even more shockingly, this disparity still occurs

even when both counterparts have the same occupation, as women earn 16% less than men on average (Haan, 2024). However, it is not only gender that manifests the pay gap, but also race, and so here it is crucial to take an intersectional approach when considering how demographics shape inequality. Women of colour are in fact some of the lowest-paid workers in rural areas, with rural Black and Hispanic women making just 56 cents for every dollar that rural white men make. The same environment, the same occupation, but different life prospects, all due to sexist stereotypes cultivated by employers.

Stereotypes of 'women being more responsible maternally than corporately', when in fact many women work arduously to fund a positive lifestyle for their children, as well as this commonly-utilised claim failing to recognise freedom of choice in that many women may choose not to have children or uptake traditional evangelical household roles; in fact a rapidly increasing 8% of men are presently employed in part-time work in order to complete unpaid household duties, subverting this stereotype altogether.

Conclusion

To conclude, a plethora of factors help to shape inequality, crucially through the intersection of physical and human geography. For one, there can be disparities in climate that make some climates less favourable than others in terms of quality of life, however this disparity in quality of life (I.E. through consecutive extreme weather events like tropical storms) can be further exacerbated by the human-driven greenhouse gas effect.

Similarly, differing geographical location can lead to the abundance of resources in one region yet absence in another, however inequality is dependent on a country's ability to export these resources and primarily whether or not these resources have been exploited from one in history.

Ultimately, it all boils down to the realisation that the existence of humans is naturally occurring, it is the systems we create and perpetuate that generate inequality.

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A NATION UNITED IN CRISIS: BANGLADESH'S REMARKABLE RESPONSE TO THE FLOOD DISASTER

Oraina Ali

As torrential rains submerged vast regions of Bangladesh in mid-2024, the nation faced one of its worst flood crises in years. Streets turned into rivers, homes were swallowed by water, and thousands were displaced overnight. Yet, amidst the devastation, a beacon of hope shone brightly. The response to this disaster was nothing short of extraordinary, not just in the scale of relief efforts, but in the collective determination of the Bangladeshi people to rise above the waters.

At the heart of this inspiring response were Bangladesh's youth. In particular, the students of Dhaka University turned the iconic Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) into a buzzing hub of relief efforts. Within just a few days, these young leaders raised an astounding BDT 5.23 crore [500k USD], rallying the nation to stand united in the face of adversity.

It wasn't just the size of the funds raised that left people in awe, it was the sheer speed and creativity with which the youth mobilized to act.

But behind the numbers lie stories of grit, innovation, and heart. Stories that show how, in the face of a disaster of this magnitude, the youth of Bangladesh didn't just rise to the occasion, they soared.

The relief efforts were nothing short of heroic. From dawn till dusk, TSC became a whirlwind of activity. Fifty trucks piled high with food, clothes, and medical supplies were assembled through community donations, with hundreds of volunteers working round the clock. They packed essential goods with precision, knowing every hour mattered for the families waiting in the flood-ravaged regions.

One moment, in particular, captured the spirit of this extraordinary effort: a sixth-grader named Izaz arrived at TSC hand-in-hand with his father, determined to help. Together, they loaded trucks, their small acts of service rippling across the community. Stories like Izaz's echoed through the relief center, each one a testament to the unshakeable solidarity of the Bangladeshi people.

The innovation didn't stop at the collection center. The youth embraced technology and creativity in unexpected ways. Gaming enthusiasts turned into charity streamers, hosting live gaming sessions where viewers donated in real-time. SEO experts sold backlinks, while others tapped into their tutoring skills, organizing masterclasses on everything from SAT prep to essay writing, each initiative funneling funds toward relief efforts.

One standout example came from the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, which raised an incredible BDT 1.42 crore [129k USD] in just one day.

This was not just a story of giving; it was a story of how resourcefulness and collaboration can make miracles happen in times of crisis.

This flood relief effort was more than just a response to a natural disaster. It was a blueprint for how Bangladesh's youth, equipped with passion and ingenuity, can lead in the face of unimaginable challenges. In their hands, the country not only weathered the storm but set a new benchmark for what's possible when a nation comes together.

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IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON EQUATORIAL, GRASSLAND, & SAVANNA CLIMATES

Moon Tran

Equatorial Climate

Equatorial climate refers to a climate zone characterized by high temperature and humidity throughout the year with distinct wet and dry seasons. They are rainforests that are located in the equatorial climate region. Their climates are hot and wet all year round, and this is what creates the humid climate. The average monthly temperature is about 26-28 degress celsius. The temperatures are constant all year round and the temperature range is usually only a few degrees. They have hot climates with little seasonal variation.

How does climate change affect the equatorial climate?

Higher average temperatures: Many scientific researchers should expect increasingly intense heat waves every summer as a result of this seemingly little but significant increase in the global average temperature.

Longer-lasting droughts: Warmer temperatures accelerate the pace at which water vapor escapes the atmosphere, resulting in droughts that are more severe and widespread. It is reducing the amount of drinking water available, withering crops, and increasing the risk of bug infestations in forests.

More wildfires: In addition to making wildfire seasons more destructive, this drier and hotter weather also increases the risk of wildfires, which can spread quickly and burn for longer periods of time, endangering millions more lives and homes.

Stronger storms: Additionally, warmer air retains more moisture, which increases the strength, wetness, and ability of tropical cyclones to intensify quickly.

According to the most recent IPCC assessment, scientists discovered that the risk of floods would rise with each degree Celsius of global warming due to an approximate 7% increase in daily rainfall during heavy precipitation events.

Grassland Climate

Grasslands are typically made up of very level, open patches of grass. In high latitudes, they are frequently found between subtropical deserts and temperate woods. While the dry and wet seasons in grassland climates are always warm, the average weather in these regions often consists of chilly winters and warm summers with occasional rain.

Typically, every year the grasses return to their roots, with the soil and sod shielding the roots and tender young buds from harsh winter weather or dry circumstances.

How does climate change affect grassland climate?

As more greenhouse gasses get trapped in the earth's atmosphere, climate change impacts grasslands in different ways:

Because of decreased precipitation, it reduces biomass production and soil respiration, negatively affecting carbon cycling in the ecosystem.

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They now have higher summer temperatures, which increases the rates of evaporation and reduces summer rain. This then decreases soil moisture.

Increasing temperature and the CO2 levels leads to increased vegetation cover, height, flower production, and soil respiration in grassland communities (These changes in climate conditions can also affect the resistance and stability of grassland ecosystems).

All of this contributes to a growing frequency and severity of droughts, and the cycle continues.

A different subdivision identifies the following types of savanna: tree savanna, which has dispersed trees and shrubs; shrub savanna, which has scattered shrubs; and grass savanna, which typically lacks trees and shrubs. There have also been proposals for other classifications.

How does climate change affect the savanna climate?

It increases dry seasons, more frequent fire events, and defaunation due to anthropogenic pressure. This leads to diodiversity loss and a decline in carbon storage.

Climate change causes changes in rainfall patterns because of the sun.

Climate change also affects soil respiration, which is a key carbon flux with the habitat structure.

Climate change influences the timing of phenological events in savanna plant species, affecting species interactions and reproductive success.

Savanna Climate

Tropical zones 8° to 20° from the equator are where savannas grow. All seasons are warm to hot, however there are a few months of rainy seasons—roughly October to March in the Southern Hemisphere and April to September in the Northern Hemisphere—every year.
Three categories—dry, wet, and thornbush—can be applied to savannas based on how long the dry season lasts. The dry season normally lasts three to five months in wet savannas, five to seven months in dry savannas, and even longer in thornbush savannas.

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STRENGTHENING THE RESILIENCE OF CHINESE SMES WITH GOVERNMENT SUPPORT DURING COVID-19

Tran Minh Khang

The sudden emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has sent shockwaves to a wide range of economies worldwide, in which Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) could be considered to suffer the most. In China, where SMEs drive over 60% of GDP and 70% of technological innovation, the pandemic also left serious attacks on these sectors evidenced by the fact that operating income in the first quarter of 2020 of these SMEs dropped by 52.944 billion yuan compared to the same period the previous year.

As the whole world struggles with the aftermath, the question remains: how can China, with its own endeavors and commitment, rebuild and fortify the backbone of its economy?

Chinese SMEs have been confronted with severe difficulties during the pandemic. Firstly, worldwide economic crises, accompanied with the increased tension of global trade, puts more pressure on these economies. Besides, the interruption in diverse chains of industry detrimentally affected the import, export situations in China as well as cross-border investment. Money flow management was of paramount importance due to the sharp reduction in orders, disrupted supply chains and blocked sales channels. Now, a plethora of SMEs find themselves lacking a robust risk mechanism, leading to low loan approval rates and insufficient financing. Despite all of this, these businesses might not receive governmental subsidies due to complex administrative procedures.

In order to support these SMEs during the pandemic, the Chinese government adopted various measures. Specifically, the authorities launched a lower interest rate, extended loan terms and reduced fees of financial services. Also, these enterprises received the privilege of enjoying a lowered tax burden while they were allowed to extend tax return deadlines and optimize tax payment services. In addition, SMEs also saw their operating costs lower via financial allowance from the government and public service enhancement while the government also sharpened their focus on subsidizing tasks such as job retention, re-employment, and vocational training sessions.

However, despite the great efforts made by Chinese government, it could still be argued that more favourable policies should be adopted to help these SMEs recover from temporary obstacles. Firstly, the government could promote further finance-supporting packages for these businesses, which includes tax cuts, fee reduction and financial subsidies and establishment of a comprehensive disaster management system. Also, the affected enterprises could be given with "green channels" for reconstruction loans and lower interest rates. Besides, the government could also launch a robust insurance payout mechanism and provide prompt solutions for pandemic-related business interruptions. More importantly, SMEs should be granted with more production and employment opportunities via sustaining demand and creating a favorable macroeconomic environment through expanded domestic demand and improved livelihoods.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted Chinese SMEs, presenting both challenges and opportunities. The Chinese government adopted feasible measures to support these SMEs and they will continue to improve going policy for the sector's resilience and recovery of these enterprises.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIALISATION IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Lucie Kealey

Agents of Socialisation:

Socialisation can be defined as 'the process of training people or animals to behave in a way that others in the group think is suitable'; the 'people' being young children, and the 'group' being us as members of the current youth.

When assessing socialisation, two main categories arise; there is primary, which is closely linked to the subsequent category: secondary. Primary socialisation entails 'the period early on in a person's life during which they initially learn and build themselves through experiences and interactions around them.' Progressing through childhood, secondary socialisation can be understood as 'when a child learns the values, beliefs and attitudes of their culture through those outside of the family.' With these definitions in mind, it is important to evaluate the importance of all methods of socialisation amongst the current youth, focusing specifically on how it aids their behavioural development into the further stages of their childhood.

Primary Socialisation:

This period is most commonly associated with a child's familial relationships. Throughout this short window of time, it is, by nature, the parents' responsibility to not only nurture their children, but ensure they are teaching them discipline which will in turn shape their behaviour.

It is therefore pivotal that parents educate their children on the correct and respectable ways to act whilst they are still in the early stages of their childhood development. This can be done through several means; a parent may punish their child accordingly when they misbehave, encourage them to utilise manners, promote socialisation with other individuals their age, etc.

How does primary socialisation influence a person's adolescence?

Breaking news: murder, manslaughter, theft, fraud. From a sociological perspective, acts of misconduct such as murder, theft and fraud accumulate as a result of the socialisation that an individual has experienced during their time of youth.

The occurrence of this negative behaviour can be explained by sociologist Émile Durkheim, who states that learning at a 'young age creates a collective conscience with society and results in a social consensus of 'right' and 'wrong' behaviours'.

Palpably, if a parent has surrounded their child amid violent acts of behaviour, whether this be anecdotal or, with the exponential rise of globalisation, through means of the digital world, they are more likely to adopt this deviant persona. Take the James Bulger case for example; this was a case where two young children were frequently exposed to violent movies and subsequently picked up the behaviour displayed digitally, murdering an innocent two-year-old boy.

It could be argued therefore that the most important time of development is during an individual's initial upbringing; this period of youth is where they learn the behaviour that shapes their future morality.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIALISATION IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Lucie Kealey

Secondary Socialisation:

Unlike primary socialisation, which is measured by time, and consequently reaches an end when the child is introduced to wider means of human interaction, secondary socialisation is a lifelong process. As such, secondary socialisation can be experienced through a variety of ways, for example, in the workplace, peer relationships, education, the media, religion etc.

Throughout the initial period of secondary socialisation, an individual takes the norms and values which they have learnt through primary socialisation, and the young child then applies this current understanding of morality and appropriate behavioural means to their future interactions.

Most notably amongst young children, peer relationships, the modern-day media, and education. These tend to be the key agents of socialisation and this is where children meet other like-minded individuals from the younger generation and can socialise with them. Thus, if a child socialised with others during their late infancy in such a way which is deviant or rebellious, this may be reflected in the subculture they form once in education.

Although there are two separate periods of socialisation within a young persons' childhood, both primary and secondary socialisation are codependent on each other. As listed within this article, a young child's secondary socialisation is heavily influenced by the behaviour that they learnt and prioritised during their early childhood: that which was taught to them through primary socialisation.

Conclusion:

After analysing both primary and secondary means of socialisation, one can begin to understand that this process is pivotal for the moral and mental development of young children.

It is not only the period where they learn the correct way in which to behave, but also the period of childhood where they form important bonds with their peers, family, and teachers; these are all principal relationships which further affect a child's character development.
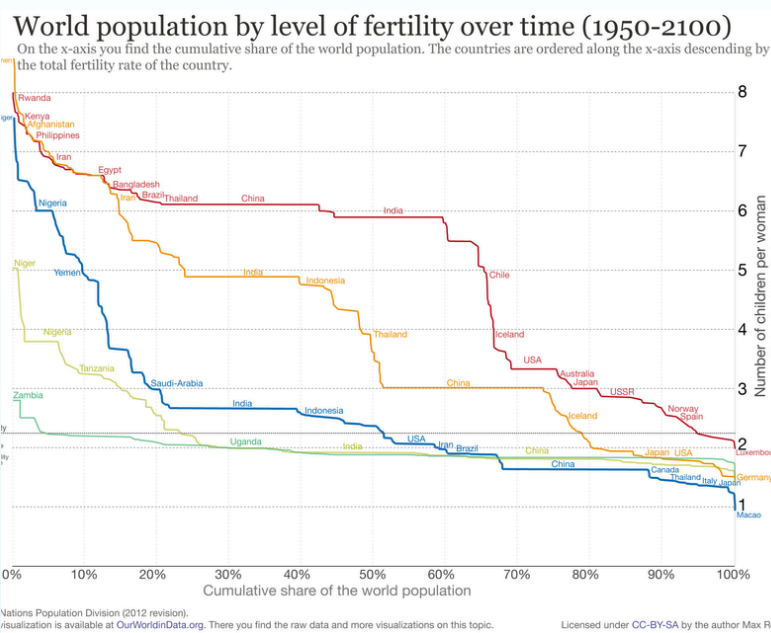
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EXAMINING THE CORRELATION BETWEEN WORK CULTURE AND FERTILITY RATES

Ingrid Tang

World population by level of fertility over time (1950-2100)
On the x-axis you find the cumulative share of the world population. The countries are ordered along the x-axis descending by the total fertility rate of the country.

Fertility rates have been declining across many regions of the world, but, why is this? As defined by the United Nations' "World Fertility Report 2019," fertility (or the fertility rate) indicates the average number of children born per woman over her lifetime. This rate is greatly fluctuating for many reasons, but work culture is a significant part of that. Work culture refers to the values, beliefs, practices, and behaviors that define how work is done in a particular organization, sector, or society (Schein, E. H. 2004, "Organizational Culture and Leadership.")

We can take a closer look at the varying work cultures across continents and countries to see that one of the reasons for the population oscillations that are talked about every day are actually rooted in how we work.

Europe

Europe, as of the time of writing, has some of the world's lowest fertility rates. For example, Italy's fertility rate is now 1.3 children per woman in 2024, which is far below the replacement level of 2.1. According to a study by the Italian Institute of Statistics (ISTAT), job insecurity and economic instability, made worse by long work hours, have prevented young people in Italy from starting families. Likewise, Spain now has a fertility rate of 1.4, partly because of similar labor market pressures and high unemployment among the youth, though it is important to note that change has been enacted in which the rate has had an increase of around 0.72 from 2023.

Conversely, more family-friendly Northern European nations like Sweden and Denmark have had less dramatic drops in fertility. Sweden has enacted strong family assistance measures, including 480 days of paid maternity leave and heavily subsidized nursery, while having a relatively higher fertility rate of 1.8. A Swedish National Institute for Public Health study found that these laws directly promote family development by allowing parents to maintain a healthy work-life balance without abandoning either.

Asia

Southeast Asian countries, such as South Korea and Japan, have, as well, some of the lowest fertility rates in the world, some even lower than those of Europe. Japan's birth rate has remained relatively stable around 1.3, in part because of the country's demanding work cultures, which prioritize long hours and lifetime job aspirations. More than half of young adults in a 2018 study by Japan's Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare said they were delaying or not getting married and having children because they were worried about not being able to reconcile work and family life. In fact, in Japan, the term karoshi has been coined, meaning, literally, "death by overworking," with many deaths being attributed to strict work culture leading to strokes and heart attacks.

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EXAMINING THE CORRELATION BETWEEN WORK CULTURE AND FERTILITY RATES

Ingrid Tang

South Korea's fertility rate is expected to reach a record low of 0.68 children per woman in 2024—a fall that is even more severe than Japan's.

Numerous studies (including one from the Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs) have identified the conventional hierarchical work culture in South Korea, where working overtime is accepted as the norm, as a deterrent to family formation. Although the government has launched programs to shorten workdays and promote family development, cultural and economic considerations have rendered these measures less successful. In a personal example, my South Korean friends, on average, see their working fathers only on weekends due to their late hours.

Similarly, China's fertility rate has been rapidly approaching 1.0, one of the lowest in the world. Decades of the one-child policy (from 1980 to 2016) deeply influenced family planning decisions, and even though the government has shifted to allowing two and three children, many couples in urban China continue to choose smaller families due to economic constraints/severe inflation and demanding work environments. According to a 2021 study by Peking University, urban couples often cite high housing costs, expensive education, and intense work cultures, particularly in major cities like Beijing and Shanghai, as primary reasons for delaying or forgoing

having more children, with the housing market in China increasing dramatically, then completely tanking due to a series of defaults of indebted developers.

India, however, presents a contrasting example to the fertility decline seen in many parts of Asia. India's fertility rate has just recently dropped to roughly 2.0 in 2023, hanging around the replacement level, likely due to the country's fast economic development and urbanization. Compared to the 5.9 children per woman in the 1950s, there has been a notable decline.

However, India's population continues to grow rapidly, largely due to the sheer size of its population and the uneven decline across states.

In states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, the fertility rate remains well above 3, mostly because of cultural preferences for larger families and more rural work structures that allow greater flexibility for child-rearing. Although women's participation in the formal workforce has increased in urban centers, much of India's workforce is still informal, meaning work-life balance isn't as strained as in countries with rigid work environments, allowing families to have more children.

EXAMINING THE CORRELATION BETWEEN WORK CULTURE AND FERTILITY RATES

Ingrid Tang

Africa:

Many African countries have high fertility rates; in countries like Niger (6.4) and Chad (5.2), the typical woman has more than five children. This is mostly due to the informal nature of labor in both rural and urban settings, which makes it possible to integrate family responsibilities more flexibly. Larger families are further encouraged in rural and informal economies, where children are viewed as a source of labor and future security, according to research by the African Development Bank.

On the other hand, fertility rates are starting to decline as urbanization increases throughout Africa. In Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, urban women have a fertility rate of 4.5, compared to rural women, whose rate is around 5.9. This is partly due to changing work environments in cities, where formal employment and rising living costs lead women to delay or limit childbearing.

North America:

In the United States, the fertility rate has steadily declined to 1.8 children per woman in 2024. U.S. work culture, which is characterized by very limited parental leave and a lack of affordable childcare (mostly due to the very well-known expensive health-care system).

According to a Pew Research Center study, 50% of American adults see the difficulty of balancing work and raising children as a major reason for not having more children.

We should understand the nuances of how we work and how we go about in the workplace with its influences, as, in our news, we are confronted with this growing issue. By knowing the nuances of such problems, we can form fair perspectives to approach change and improvement.

Conclusion

Across the globe, fertility rates are closely linked to work culture, with significant variations depending on societal norms, family policies, and economic conditions. While some regions maintain high fertility rates due to flexible work arrangements or informal economies, others experience sharp declines as rigid work environments and economic pressures discourage family growth.

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HOMO SAPIENS: THE UNRECOGNIZED INVASIVE SPECIES

Gayathri Vinod

What do Homo sapiens have in common with wild hogs, the Asian carp, and the brown tree snake? That's right, we are an invasive species just like them!

According to the US Department of Agriculture's National Invasive Species Information Centre, an invasive species is "a species that is non-native or alien to the ecosystem under consideration and whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm, or harm to human health." And guess who actively causes destruction to biodiversity, has annihilated hundreds of species, unnaturally spread all over the world and are also causing harm to human health worldwide? That's right! It's us.

According to a UN report, at least 680 vertebrate species have been driven to extinction since the 16th century,

and more than 9% of all domesticated breeds of mammals used for food and agriculture had become extinct by 2016, with at least 1,000 more breeds still threatened. We are eroding the very foundations of our world.

Now the question arises: why, and better yet, how did we get this moniker? Humanity's incessant need to develop bigger, more complex, and more energy-consuming toys has led to our present situation. Our industrial revolution, nuclear wars, power stations, agriculture, and animal husbandry have all had a direct hand in ruining perfectly healthy ecosystems and accelerating climate change acutely. While we have made strides in terms of policy making, such as the development of the UN SDGs and the Paris Agreement globally or Colombia's 2015 mandatory green building code nationally, the truth is that most countries are not on track to meet their goals to cut down emissions and combat climate change. To adhere to the Paris Agreement, which aims to keep this century's global temperature rise below the 2°C threshold above pre-industrial levels, greenhouse gas emissions must peak before 2025 and decline by 43% by 2030, according to the UNFCC.

Otherwise, we risk unleashing far more severe climate change impacts than those we are currently dealing with, including severe droughts, heatwaves, and rainfall.

These are the hard facts staring bleakly at us, but that doesn't mean everything is already lost. After all, humanity's trademark, the last thing left in Pandora's jar, hope, is still present to guide our actions. So, what can we do?

Many believe that without complex technology and huge capital investment, no change can be made to our current situation.

But others believe that nature always has a way of solving its issues and striking a balance. It is nature and only nature that can give us a fighting chance to survive.

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HOMO SAPIENS: THE UNRECOGNIZED INVASIVE SPECIES

Gayathri Vinod

Most researchers and academics believe that while we will overshoot the 2 degrees Celsius global average limit, it is possible to bring it back down to 1.5 degrees or lower if we start acting now. Along with much stricter policy implementation to control environmental degradation, nature-based solutions could be the way to solve our problems while simultaneously not creating newer, worse problems. A great example of this is biomimicry, which takes inspiration from nature's evolutionary solutions and applies them to human engineering, as defined by YouMatter. Biomimicry has already been used to provide sustainable solutions to climate change problems such as developing carbonate rocks from CO_2 emissions by mimicking how corals naturally grow using CO_2 dissolved in water and creating perennial crops which consume lower resources using the principles behind prairie grasslands.

Climate finance is also important in any conversation about climate change.

Climate finance is the umbrella term for financial resources for climate change mitigation or adaptation. Currently, it is not the lack of ideas that prevents us from solving climate change, but the lack of access to funds for their development. Funds should reach the right people at the right time for any meaningful change to be created.

It is often said that the youth are the 'future of tomorrow,' so let them lead today, learn from yesterday, and grow into the future we actually want to live in.

To achieve this, more forums with adequate reach and resources should be created to involve young people in the discussion of climate change. This can be done through pitching competitions such as the Global Climate Change Challenge or Stockholm Junior Water Prize or through youth ambassador programs.

Finally, sustainability needs to stop being treated as a buzzword to throw around like glitter to bedazzle corporate proposals and pretty speeches and should be treated like it is meant to be—as the way to sustain our life on this planet, as the only path that guarantees our survival.

We need to step up and get a move on if we want to stop our economies and our societies from crumbling just like the glaciers most of us consider a far-off myth. It is true that human beings are an invasive species ruining the bio-systems that sustain our world, but we are also the species that is working together to curb the effects of the actions of our predecessors. Right now, we are racing against time and the consequences of our own folly, so we need to run forward, faster, together.

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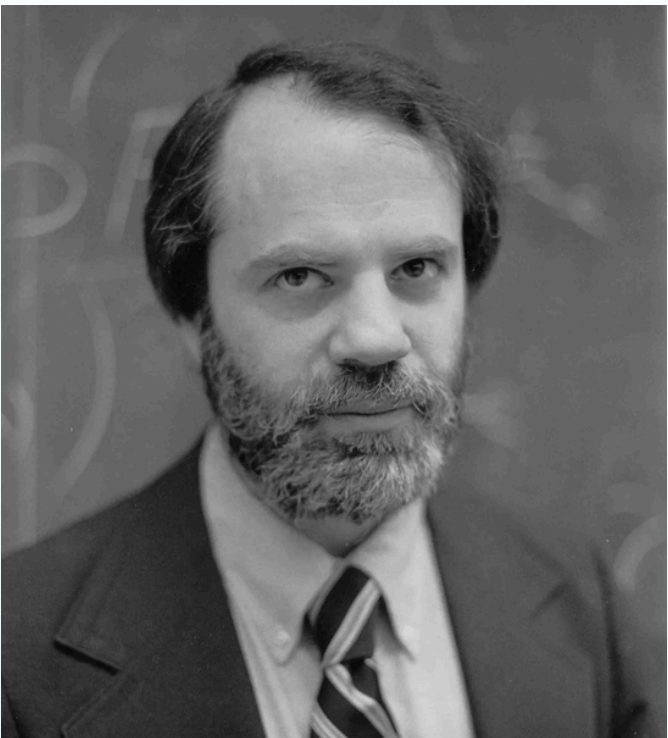
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THE FLAWS OF DESCRIPTIVISM

Ethan Sell

Kripke's Naming and Necessity had a profound impact on modal metaphysics and the philosophy of language. In it, he outlines a critique of descriptivism and an alternative proposal of rigid designators.

Descriptivism, in short, posits that proper names refer to individuals via a cluster of associated descriptions (i.e. 'Julius Caesar' refers to the man assassinated on March 15th, 44 BC and and the man who led the Roman armies in the Gallic Wars, and so on).

While it seems like a plausible way of explaining how we can talk about the same person in different contexts with no ambiguity, Kripke presents a damning critique of the theory. His critique sent shockwaves into the sphere of analytic philosophy, and left a lasting impact. Not only was it instrumental in changing the way that names are thought of, but also influenced the very core of how we define knowledge in laying the foundations for the possibility of a posteriori necessity, challenging the previously universal belief that only a priori knowledge could be necessary.

Consider (Julius) Caesar for a moment. If, as descriptivists hold, the name Caesar is equivalent to the man assassinated on March 15th, 44 BC, and the man who led the Roman armies in the Gallic Wars, and the first dictator of Rome, and so on, they must also hold that if these properties cease to be fulfilled, Caesar ceases to be Caesar. Caesar cannot be both the man who fulfils x qualities, and the man who does not fulfil x qualities; it violates Leibniz's law. However, imagine for a moment that in an alternate world Caesar did not become dictator of Rome. Would Caesar actually cease to be Caesar? Intuitively, it seems not. Caesar would have still existed, that man would still have existed, just perhaps would have been a soldier, or an author, et cetera. This appears entirely possible: in a different possible world, people that we refer to might have had different properties and still be the same person.

However, while it is possible to imagine Caesar not being dictator of Rome, if every single thing we know about Caesar was entirely different, it would be rather difficult to imagine that that man we refer to is still Caesar.

Consider a further example. If we are having a conversation, and you mention a Mr Jones to me, I may, not knowing Mr Jones, ask you, 'Who is that Jones you talk about?'. You respond that Jones works for a law firm in London, that he is 34 years old, and that he went to school with you, and so on. However, let's say you are mistaken. Unbeknownst to you, Jones has recently moved from London to the countryside in Oxfordshire, and actually just turned 35 last week.

Perhaps you don't know him very well. However, while you might be wrong about these facts about Jones, you are still referring to him, and you still know who he is. You might not know everything about him, but it can be safely said that you are talking about the same Jones as somebody else who, speaking of the same man, says he now works remotely living in the countryside, and is 35 years old, and so on. Thus, you can be wrong about an individual's associated descriptions and still be referring to them. Again, considering Leibniz's law, descriptivism cannot not explain this. Either, when I say Jones = x qualities, and somebody else says Jones = y qualities, we are not referring to the same Jones, or one of us is referring to a non-real Jones.

It appears as though descriptivism struggles in cases like these. Kripke's idea of rigid designators provides some alternative in suggesting that proper names refer to the same object in every possible world (where that object exists). That is, the name Starmer always refers to that man, no matter his differing qualities. This is opposed to a non-rigid designator, for example, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. This refers to different people in different possible worlds.

I would strongly recommend reading Naming and Necessity. It provides better clarity and detail than I could lay out in this article, and is truly eye-opening.

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EFFACED DREAMS: EXAMINING THE SYSTEMIC ATTRITION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN AFGHANISTAN

Emmanuella Kwatia

"We teach girls shame. Close your legs. Cover yourself. We make them feel as though by being born a female, they're already guilty of something. And so, girls grow up to be women who cannot say they have desire. Who silence themselves." - Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

Introduction

Over the years, the fight for women's rights and economic freedom has been enduring and overwhelming. From the right to vote to the right to education, women continue to fight for what is inherent to them. Despite globalization and societal advancement, the rights of women remain an issue of despair with Afghan women being one of the groups affected the most. Afghanistan has been at the forefront of war and militarization in the past fifty years; experiencing governments under Soviet troops, US-led troops and militant groups such as the Taliban. In the face of these adversities, Afghan women have come a long way in fighting for their rights. With the implementation of the Elimination of Violence Against Women Law (EVAW LAW) and the stipulation of women's rights in the 2004 constitution, there seemed to be hope. However, dreams were shattered when the Taliban overthrew the ruling government in 2021. This article discusses the restrictions placed on Afghan women and the efforts of the international community to bring an end to their plight.

Contemporary Status of Afghan Women's Rights

The Taliban seized power in Kabul on the 21st of August, 2021 after they had signed a peace agreement with US troops; following their withdrawal from the country. They promised to uphold women's rights according to the Sharia Laws, but they have failed to do so, making useless the progress of women's rights which began over two decades ago. The Taliban have not only revoked the 2004 constitution but have replaced all female government officials with men, claiming that "the governance of a country needs to be done by intelligent people." They also collapsed the Ministry of Women's Affairs and substituted it with the Ministry of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice. By 2023, they had enforced harsh decrees restricting women's appearances and voices in public. A UN expert has described these oppressive laws as gender apartheid. This retrogression started the moment they took over, cautioning women to remain indoors as their soldiers "are not used to seeing women outside and have not been trained to respect women." The Taliban has now issued eighty decrees with fifty-four of them targeting women and girls. As a result, it is now known that their main aim for seizing power is to terminate women's rights.

The Influence of the Taliban Restrictions

• Ban on education
Initially, the Taliban banned girls from attending secondary school in December 2022. Nonetheless, they recently included tertiary education. This inaccessibility to education is a gross infringement on Afghan women and girls' right to education. It increases susceptibility to exploitation and early marriage.

• Ban on movement and enforcement of a strict dress code
As part of the Taliban's effort to restrict women's rights, women are forced to be fully clothed in burqa. Women are prohibited from moving in public without a male relative as a chaperone (known as the mahram). Women are only allowed to leave their houses for urgent matters and must be covered in full veils. Flouting the dress code could lead to the imprisonment of your male relative.

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Emmanuella Kwatia

- Ban on employment

Salons have been closed and all female employees including lawyers and judges have become jobless since the Taliban's rise to power. Women have also been prevented from working with NGOs and the UN. In healthcare, female doctors are not allowed to treat or collaborate with male doctors. In media, 84% of female journalists have stopped working for fear of their lives.

- Increase in forced child marriages

A child bride, Nazdana (who later fled from the country with her brother) won the right to divorce her husband under the US-led Afghanistan government. However, the Taliban, revisiting settled cases as part of their judicial reformation, ruled that the divorce did not count. More families are marrying their daughters off as a form of protection from Taliban fighters and as a way of preventing starvation. The Taliban mercilessly demand that families offer their unmarried daughters as brides. Some families agree to this to secure military protection from the Taliban.

International Response to Afghan Women's Plight

It must be said that the international community's efforts in addressing the challenges of Afghan women have been ineffective.

Nonetheless, institutions like Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation stand in solidarity with these women.

The Office of the High Commissioner for United Nations Human Rights released a communique urging the international community to provide support to Afghan women and

- Reaffirm their commitment by taking concrete actions to support and realize the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan, particularly their right to education and employment.
- Prioritize women's and girls' rights in all their engagements with the de facto authorities and demand the immediate reversal of edicts and policies that assault women's and girl's rights.
- Take proactive measures to support Afghan women to engage in decision-making processes in Afghanistan and about Afghanistan.
- Increase support to Afghanistan women so that they can resume employment, access aid and healthcare, and have an adequate standard of living.

Conclusion

Afghan women have faced gender persecution since the Taliban's rise to power in 2021. The Taliban are committed to further infringing on their human rights. This must fuel the international community to enhance its efforts in advocating for and supporting these women and apply pressure on the Taliban to restore their fundamental rights. The resilience of Afghan women should inspire global solidarity in the pursuit of gender equality for women all over the world.

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WHO WILL BE THE NEXT TORY LEADER?

Ed Green

Following Rishi Sunak's resignation after his party's historic defeat in the UK general election on 4th July 2024, a tightly contested battle to become leader of the Conservative Party, and the UK's next Leader of the Opposition, has ensued. The choices that Conservative MPs and party members will make in the upcoming months will set the direction of the party for the next few years; will they go further right to win back voters from Reform UK, or will they shift closer to the centre to target those who voted for the Liberal Democrats and Labour? It will also be a defining moment for whether the Conservatives will quickly return to government, or struggle in the opposition benches for the foreseeable future.

How does the leadership contest work?

Between the 4th-11th September, Conservative MPs voted for who they supported to be leader, to reduce the field down from 6 to 4 candidates. The 2 candidates with the lowest number of votes were eliminated. Then, from the 29th September-2nd October, the remaining candidates will speak at the Conservative Party Conference, to make their case to party members. Subsequently, from 9th-10th October, Tory MPs vote again to determine the final 2 candidates. Following this, party members (members of the public who are a part of the Conservative Party) have until the 31st October to vote for who they want to be leader, with the result being announced on the 2nd November.

Following former home secretary Dame Priti Patel's first round elimination on 4th September, and shadow work and pensions secretary Mel Stride's defeat in the second round on the 10th September, 4 candidates remain in the running to become leader:

Kemi Badenoch

After holding a number of ministerial posts under Boris Johnson, Liz Truss and Rishi Sunak, Kemi Badenoch has launched a bid to become Tory leader. Known best for her critical views on transgender rights, she has become a rising star in the Conservative Party and regularly tops polls of Tory members held on the Conservative Home website. Under her leadership, the party would likely shift further right, especially in regards to social policies. She finished 4th in the leadership contest following Johnson's resignation in 2022, and would be the first black leader of the Conservative Party if elected. In the latest round of voting, she finished second with 28 votes.

Robert Jenrick

Former immigration minister Robert Jenrick is best known for his tough stance on immigration. After resigning from his post due to believing that Sunak's plan to deport illegal immigrants to Rwanda "does not go far enough", he seems set to take the party much further right in all policy areas should he become Tory leader. He has been involved in multiple controversies since 2020, and has led calls for the UK to withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights. Jenrick finished first in the latest round of voting, with him holding 33 votes of support from his fellow Conservative MPs.

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WHO WILL BE THE NEXT TORY LEADER?

Ed Green

Tom Tugendhat

Having previously held a high-ranking position in the British Army, and now serving as shadow security minister, Tom Tugendhat has always been perceived as a centrist.

After voting 'Remain' in the 2016 Brexit referendum and supporting the legalisation of same-sex marriage in Northern Ireland in 2019, Tugendhat has historically been seen as progressive and less right-wing.

However, he has seeked to garner support from the right of the party since launching his leadership bid, with him pledging to cap the UK's net migration at 100,000 people a year and refusing to rule out leaving the European Convention on Human Rights. It is therefore likely that the party would move towards the centre in regards to social policy, but shift further right in immigration policy should he win. Tugendhat finished joint third in the second round of voting, with 21 votes.

James Cleverley

James Cleverley is the most experienced candidate on the ballot, having previously served as home secretary and foreign secretary.

He would be expected to, largely, bring the Conservative Party closer to the centre, having always been seen as being on the more 'moderate' wing of the party. His strong support of gay marriage and opposition to culture wars targeting trans people strongly indicates that he would bring Tory social policy much closer to the centre, but his commitment to bring back Sunak's Rwanda immigration policy if elected leader demonstrates how he would retain the party's right-wing stance on immigration. He finished with 21 votes in the previous round of voting, joint third with Tugendhat.

With the four candidates having now set out where they stand and what they believe, an exciting and era-defining contest is set to take place, and it is really anyone's guess who will be the new Leader of the Opposition in November.

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GREEN STEEL IS A LONG, LONG ROAD

Steel's significance is only challenged by the importance of clean energy.

David Johnson

In 1950, the world produced 189 million tons of crude steel annually, a number that skyrocketed at the turn of the millennium, resulting in 1.89 billion tons by 2022. According to the European Confederation of Iron and Steel Industries, production levels rose very strongly during the first half of 2000 in response to a dynamic demand situation, an erratic and inconsistent demand pattern that is the result of a multitude of factors, namely the product's utility and durability.

This resulted in concerning negative externalities towards the environment, with the offset of naphthalene and ammonium compounds heavily polluting the atmosphere and contributing to global warming. As such, governments and organizations have been examining the possibility of transitioning to and developing more environmentally sustainable methods of steel manufacturing.

Steel is one of the most fundamental and essential materials in the modern world, holding up buildings, bridges, highways and other modern structures that are difficult to imagine life without. But it is undeniably a dirty process, with Joe Biden pledging up to $1 billion to help finance new facilities focusing on production using hydrogen instead of processed iron ore. In traditional blast furnace steelmaking, iron ore and purified coal are combined, bonding with carbon monoxide and forming CO_2 that ends up in the atmosphere. But the usage of hydrogen rather than coal allows for less pollution and less industrial manners of production, even though the road to cleaner steel will be very long and difficult.

By 2030, Indian steel manufacturer Tata Steel aims to cut their CO2 emissions by 40%, becoming 100% carbon neutral by 2045.

''The big chunk of the growth is still going to come through the blast furnace route because in eastern India, we don't have gas yet.'' Tata Steel CEO T.V. Narendran said on an interview with Bloomberg. ''If there was gas available at a price in which it is economical and in volumes that helps us, we would have invested in gas-based DRI (Direct Reduced Iron), and hence, steelmaking would've been greener... and eventually, when hydrogen is available in plenty and cheap, then we can switch from gas to hydrogen. But the switch from coal to gas is an important switch, and that can only happen with gas is available in the east.''

They have shown strong resilience and commitment to this goal, as Tata Steel's plant in Ijmuiden, Netherlands, has become one of the most CO2-efficient steel facilities worldwide. Despite this, the company is responsible for 8% of all carbon emissions in the Netherlands, a setback they intend to fix in forthcoming years.

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INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL

EXAMINING SOCIAL MOBILITY WITHIN THE UNITED KINGDOM: A COMPREHENSIVE SUMMARY

Callum Morrissey

'Young adults from a higher professional-class background are more than 4 times more likely to be in a higher professional occupation (32%) than those from a lower working-class background'.

The above statistic is one of many that the Social Mobility Commission included in its 'State of the Nation' report which was released two weeks before this article was written. The phrase 'the sky is the limit', is an argument used by many people to highlight the abundance of opportunities accessible to everyone, equally. But unfortunately, this is simply not true. The 'lottery of birth' determines your life chances, and those chances are not equitable. How is it possible for less privileged members of society to move up the social ladder when it is already dominated by the elite? Arguably, it is luck that determines your chances of success, rather than a meritocratic society.

Social mobility is zero-sum, and therefore, the mere fact that social immobility is prevalent, is what will always make the elite successful. Between 1830-59, someone with a rare, and traditional highly positioned surname was fifty times more likely to attend either Oxford or Cambridge University compared to the general population. Six generations later, from 2010 to 2012, the likelihood of that same surname being admitted to Oxford or Cambridge was six times more likely compared to the general population. Over one hundred and fifty years later, they are still substantially more likely to succeed within life, just because of their surname and their ancestor's history.

How do we improve social mobility within the UK? How do we allow any child, anywhere in the country, to know that they will have the chance to do whatever they want, even if they are from a working-class background? We first need to know the politics of social mobility within the UK. John Rawls, a political philosopher stated in the book, 'The Theory of Justice', (1971), that one of the ways to achieve fundamental equality is to give every child an equal education.

Boris Johnson introduced the 'levelling up' scheme across the UK, to 'level-up' deprived parts of the country and to boost economic growth within town centres. At a Conservative Party Conference in October 2019, he said: 'Indeed the best way to level up and to expand opportunity is to give every kid in the country a superb education, so that is why we are levelling up education funding across the country'. I still wonder what his definition of a 'superb' education is? Was it his £52,749 a year, Etonian education, or rather the £7,690 a year education that 93% of the population have received? This is just a small step for the average citizen while the upper classes continue to enjoy extremely specialized and expensive education. Why wouldn't leading politicians and prime ministers address this dire inequality which contributes to a lack of social mobility? This abundance of social immobility is the reason why they are where they are. Why change polices and systems which ensure their own success?

To conclude, the ultimate question is, how do we improve rates of social mobility within the UK? This is a long and frustrating question to answer.

However, as Rawls states, achieving equitable school education is one way to achieve absolute equality, and subsequently, improve social mobility. But another answer to this question is to address that the elite members of society are getting richer and richer. There is only a set amount of money that accumulates within a country, and only so many high-status professions. The more individuals that can achieve these high-status professions and accolades, academically, socially or socio-economically, will do so whilst having a significant effect on social mobility rates for generations to come.

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INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL

TADEJ POGAČAR: THE GREATEST CYCLIST OF HIS GENERATION

Ben Taylor

In the world of professional cycling, few names inspire awe and admiration quite like Tadej Pogačar. The young Slovenian cyclist has taken the sport by storm, redefining what it means to be a modern champion. From his back-to-back Tour de France victories to his impressive versatility across different terrains, Pogačar has earned his place among the greats. But what makes him stand out in such a competitive field? What separates him from his peers, and why is he considered the best cyclist of this generation?

A Young Prodigy Dominating the Field

At just 25 years old, Pogačar has already amassed an impressive list of accomplishments that many cyclists spend their entire careers chasing. His breakthrough came in 2020 when he became the youngest rider to win the Tour de France in over a century. He followed this up with another victory in 2021, solidifying his reputation as a dominant force in cycling.

But it's not just the sheer number of victories that sets Pogačar apart—it's how he wins.

He has an uncanny ability to read races, make split-second decisions, and execute perfectly timed attacks. His tactical awareness is far beyond his years, and his ability to perform under pressure is unmatched.

Versatility: Master of All Terrains

What makes Pogačar truly exceptional is his versatility. While many cyclists specialize in a particular type of race or terrain, Pogačar excels in all areas.

Whether it's climbing the steepest mountains, dominating time trials, or sprinting to the finish, he's a rider without weaknesses.

In the mountains, he climbs with a fluid, almost effortless style, making it look like he's riding on flat terrain when others are suffering. On the flats, he holds his own in time trials, showcasing his ability to combine power and endurance. This rare blend of skills makes him a threat in any race, whether it's a multi-week Grand Tour or a one-day classic.

Zone 2 Training: The Secret to His Success

One of the key factors that sets Pogačar apart from his competitors is his unique approach to training, specifically his reliance on Zone 2 training. Zone 2 refers to a heart rate zone where the body is working at an aerobic pace, which is slower and more controlled compared to high-intensity training. For many athletes, spending time in this zone builds endurance without overloading the body with fatigue.

While some riders focus on high-intensity interval training to maximize performance, Pogačar's approach emphasizes long, steady efforts at a lower intensity.

This not only enhances his ability to recover quickly between races but also builds a strong aerobic base that allows him to maintain a high level of performance over long stages.

This method of training gives Pogačar an edge, particularly in multi-stage races like the Tour de France. His remarkable endurance allows him to stay consistent throughout grueling three-week races while maintaining enough energy for decisive attacks. His ability to recover faster than his rivals means that even after punishing stages, he's ready to go again while others are still feeling the effects.

INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL

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Ben Taylor

Mental Strength: The Psychology of a Champion

It's not just physical ability that makes Pogačar the best —it's his mental strength. Cycling is as much a mental game as it is a physical one, and Pogačar has the mindset of a champion. Whether he's attacking on the final climb of a mountain stage or pacing himself in a time trial, his focus never wavers.

Pogačar's ability to remain calm under pressure is a hallmark of his racing style. Even when faced with challenges, such as tactical moves from rival teams or tough weather conditions, he maintains his composure and rides with confidence. His mental toughness allows him to make intelligent decisions in real-time, a skill that has often left his rivals scrambling to keep up.

Outclassing the Competition

While there are many talented cyclists in the peloton, Pogačar stands head and shoulders above the rest. Riders like Primož Roglič, Jonas Vingegaard, and Wout van Aert have all proven themselves capable of competing at the highest level, but none have demonstrated the same consistency and all-around ability as Pogačar.

His rivals know that to beat him, they need to rely on team tactics and hope for the perfect scenario, whereas Pogačar is often able to win through sheer individual brilliance. Whether it's launching an attack from far out or sprinting for the finish, he can outpace and outthink his opponents time and time again.

The Future of Cycling

At such a young age, Pogačar's career is only just beginning, and his potential seems limitless. With a deep passion for the sport, a scientific approach to training, and an unparalleled competitive drive, he's not just the greatest cyclist of his generation—he's on his way to becoming one of the greatest of all time.

As cycling evolves, Pogačar's influence on the sport will continue to grow.

His success with Zone 2 training and his versatile racing style may inspire a new generation of cyclists to focus on endurance, recovery, and mental strength.

In a sport known for legends like Eddy Merckx and Lance Armstrong, Tadej Pogačar is carving out his place as the defining cyclist of this era. His achievements, versatility, and unique training approach make him a once-in-a-generation talent, and it's exciting to imagine what he'll accomplish in the years to come.

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AND, THE DATA TAKES ALL!
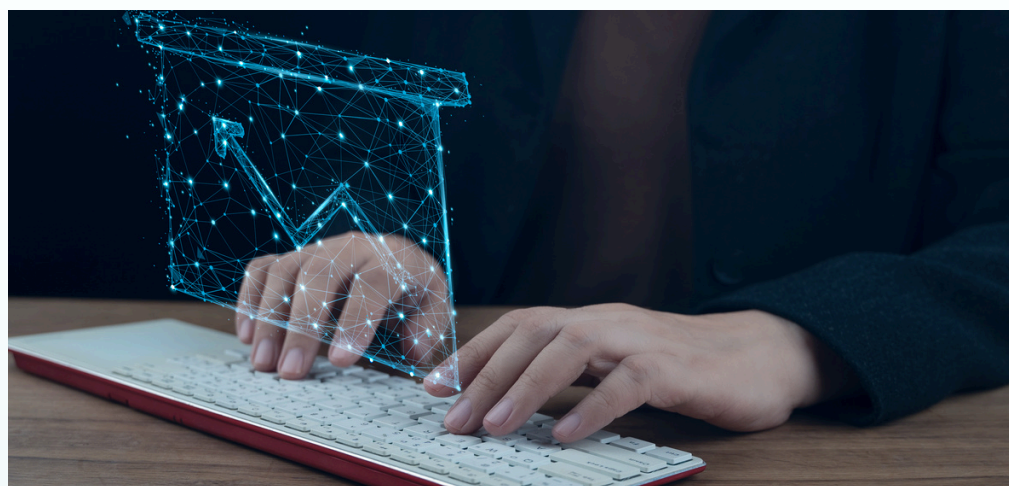
Mahathi Sathish

With the current progression of Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning Models, we are quick to believe that the sky is the limit. Often used for their capacity as predictive technologies, their implications if successful are far and wide-reaching, positively altering the world we live in. Currently, the scope for these futuristic models is quite limited and often takes a more entertaining role, such as with the prediction of the Academy Awards. Year after year, the Academy Awards are considered one of the most prestigious laurels those in film can receive. Given after scrutiny by a board of well-reputed, and established veterans of the industry, deciding who the Oscar goes to is an annual, and sacred ritual that often leaves the audience on the edge of their seats.

However, with the advent of technology, that might no longer be the case. Machine learning models and researchers who study them now believe that AI can be used to predict award show winners, ruining the element of surprise, solely based on previously published data alone.

Organisations like BigML, an institute publishing their Oscar guesses since 2018, utilise a massive collection of data records to further their cause. Their predictions for 2024 saw them putting together their largest data set yet for the public domain, with over 1500+ movies, released between the years 2000 to 2023. This collection of over 2 decades worth of data is then corroborated with around 300 different features that include everything, right from testing the film's strong synopsis and its budget, to critically understanding the audience's reception using box office performance metrics. What BigML also accounts for is how popular these films were with the rest of the awards that year, a metric they believe significantly impacts the winning predictions.

In their own words, BigML believes that a higher grade in their system's assessment is more due to "that nominee's overall profile looking quite like the old winners of that category", and is also how the artists are often ranked.

BigML, for the 2024 Oscars ended up predicting 13 of the 19 award categories the Machine Learning Model guessed upon and achieved an overall success rate of 68%. Their predictions included the win of Oppenheimer, Cillian Murphy, Emma Stone, and even Christopher Nolan finally winning that coveted Oscar after 7 breakthrough nominations.

However, unlike BigML's data-centric approach, other platforms have gone about this task in unconventional ways, such as Unanimous AI's use of Swarm AI which has seen relative success. By gathering participants together to take part in an online Swarm session and put their movie-buff skills to use, Unanimous AI tried to rank their confidence to find probabilistic wins.

Using the data available to them, they too had predicted a 92% chance of Nolan's win, Cillian Murphy taking up an Oscar and even landed up with an 80% majority of Oppenheimer sweeping gold as the Best Picture.

However, while both these platforms showcased innovative breakthroughs in predictions and had some success, neither of them managed to guess all the right wins. There remain errors embedded in both the datasets resulting in slightly skewed predictions, that do not account for the Academy's more holistic perspective. Hence, while Machine Learning models and other forms of generative AI have a strong hold on making astute assumptions, its future as a decision-making platform remains a question at large, and there is still some time left before the data takes all.

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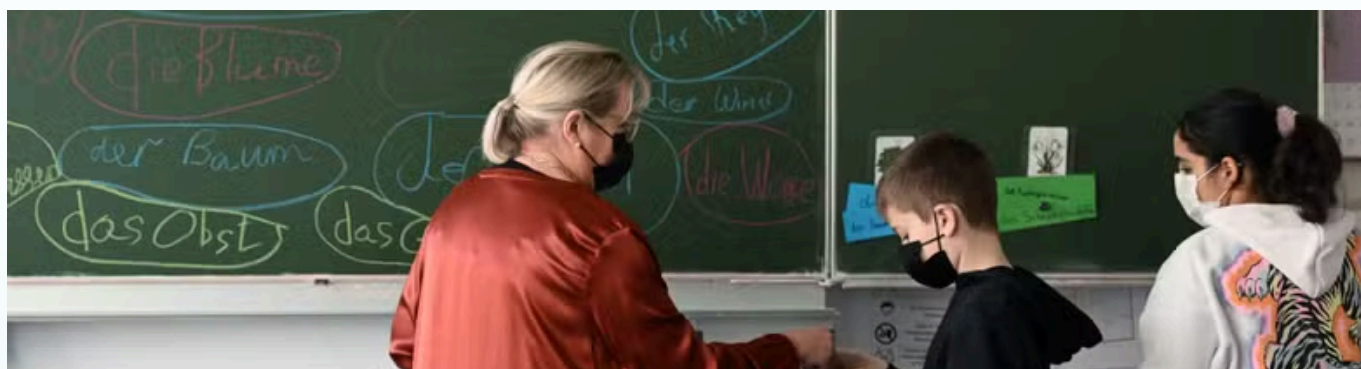
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GERMANY'S EDUCATION SYSTEM IS FALLING APART: WHY?

Manuela Buesa

German education is world-renowned for its quality and rigor, and it is most popular for having introduced to the world a focus on early childhood and a dual system. After four years of primary school, German kids are divided into two tracks: academic studies or technical careers.

However, the same essence that serves as a base for the prestige of Germany's system is leading to its demise.

The alarm regarding Germany's education quality isn't restricted to recent years. In the 2000s, the results of comparative tests in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) showed that German students were much less qualified than those in Austria, Poland, Switzerland, and many other European countries. The shock prompted reforms, but the PISA test performance in 2023 showed that scores in math, science, and reading continued flunking. This is largely due to the system's track division and rigidity.

Different tracks serve as a dividing factor, with academic secondary schooling majorly resulting in higher-paying jobs in the future. Further, the inflexible system demands that German teachers be able to teach more than one subject, meaning international professionals are often not allowed to teach in the country. This situation yielded an increase in inequality perpetuated by education and, combined with the rise in birth rates and immigration, a massive teacher shortage.

In Germany, education is a state-level decision. So, states are the ones to target or cut investment. Ideally, this would mean that states could learn from each other when specific policies worked, but this is far from reality. In fact, successful tactics are often limited to only one state. For example, in Hamburg, language tests and lessons in German were introduced to preschoolers, guaranteeing that the choice between tracks was less driven by social background. It meant increased human capital exploration, skyrocketing Hamburg's city-state schools to among the best nationwide. Nevertheless, in most of the country, children from underprivileged backgrounds, especially those who speak another language at home, reach the track divide at a considerable disadvantage. It sets them up for failure as early as ten years old, destined to lower-paying jobs that perpetuate poverty cycles.

At the same time, the people at the high level of society, who hold the power to drive change, got where they are by integrating into the academic track. When looking back, it's harder for those people to see the problems with the system they benefited from, contributing to the lack of active reaction towards the flawed structure of the education system. Moreover, any change in education only has significant long-term results. With education being a heated topic as German citizens defend it as a way to develop culture, politicians crawl away from making effective changes in their short mandates.

Worse, the highly structured education system is outdated, lacking the adaptability necessary to the rapidly changing world. German schools now face enormous teacher shortages, with states competing to lure new teachers to their schools. Instead of contributing together to train the number of necessary teachers to fill essential positions, a weird free market prevails where wealthier states get the best teachers (since they can offer higher wages and securitization).

United with the lack of effective policies, the seriousness of the shortage continues to increase along with regional inequality.

Finally, it's unmistakable that the developed world also faces problems related to essential activities such as education. The question in Germany is: how soon will effective and integrated solutions come to the main stage? For the well-being of the German society, we should hope that it's in the near future.

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A VENEZUELAN POLITICAL CRISIS

Mercy Olanrewaju

On the 8th of September, Edmundo González fled Venezuela and was granted political asylum in Spain, after landing at the Torrejón airbase in Madrid. But how did Venezuelan politics reach this point?

It was as a result of the 2024 elections in the country. The two running candidates were Nicolás Maduro, for the PSUV (United Socialist Party of Venezuela) and Edmundo González who was running as the representative for the Unitary Platform political alliance.

Maduro is currently serving as the 53rd president of Venezuela and has been in power since 2013. He was initially the minister of foreign affairs during former president Hugo Chávez's administration, and during 2012 - 2013, he was the vice president for the incumbent president. He then ran for president in 2013, and succeeded his predecessor, continuing the stronghold for his political party. His party was the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela, PSUV). The PSUV manifesto essentially follows precepts of socialism.

But despite a socialist political party being in power since 2007, Venezuela is described by many economists as a mixed economy.

Maduro's running partner, Edmundo González, had an initial career as a diplomat, having an extensive career with the Ministry of Foreign affairs of Venezuela and politics. Between 1978 and 2002 he was posted to a range of countries such as El Salvador, Belgium, The United states, Algeria and Argentina. He had varying positions such as Venezuelan Ambassador and Director General of International Policy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Between 2013 to 2015, he was the international representative for the opposition's political alliance, the Democratic unity Roundtable (UMD).

Both candidates have an extensive history in politics, and this crisis had been brewing for years. It initially began in the 2018 election, which was widely dismissed as the opposition's candidates were jailed, barred from running or forced into exile. There was a dispute on who was the legitimate president of Venezuela between 2019 and 2023. The support was divided between Maduro and Juan Guaidó (Political party - Popular Will). At the beginning of 2019, Guaidó declared himself acting president of Venezuela and swore himself into office, which challenged Maduro's presidency. Guaidó was then expelled from the country, so he instead entered Colombia on the 25th April 2023. Colombia was considering deporting him, but he was then exiled to the United States, and has been living in Miami, Florida. On the 6th of October, 2023, an arrest warrant was issued for Guaidó in Venezuela. Maduro's administration announced charges of money laundering, treason and usurping public functions. He was also accused of using the resources of the state-owned oil company, which allegedly cost the country $19 billion. Interpol was requested to issue a red notice for the arrest of Guaidó. Guaidó has denied all these charges.

This presidential crisis continued when there was an election in 2024, where there were two main candidates, Maduro and González. There were also other presidential candidates such as Luis Eduardo Martínez of the Democratic Action (AD) and José Brito of Venezuela First (PV), with many others. Venezuela's voting system is electronic, where a button is pushed for a preferred presidential candidate. It'll then print out a receipt which is put in a ballot. When the polling station closes, the counting starts. This process is accounted for by the CNE - National Electoral Council (which is one of the five branches of government of Venezuela under its 1999 constitution). The CNE has the ability to tamper with election results and there's a possibility of collusion with the president.

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After 80% of the votes were counted, it was announced that the President had 5.15m votes, with 4.44m votes for González. It was deemed that Maduro was winning, and this decision was quickly contested by the opposition. This controversy has been exacerbated by the reluctance to make the tallies public. It has been suggested by the opposition that there is evidence that González won by a comfortable margin.

As a result of the outcome of the election, González feared for his safety. This is because a warrant for his arrest was issued by Maduro's administration, charged with crimes such as incitement to sedition. It was also reported that his life was in danger, with increased threats, blackmail and coercion. This caused him to flee the country and seek political asylum in Spain, which has been granted.

The effect of the ongoing political turmoil on the Venezuelan people has been extremely detrimental.

A UN special rapporteur reported that 82% of the citizens live in poverty, with 53% living in extreme poverty, unable to buy basic foodstuffs. In recent years, the GDP has fallen by 80% in less than a decade, under the presidencies of both Chávez and Maduro. This has caused hyperinflation since 2016, with the current levels of inflation at 99.98%.

This has caused approximately 7.7 million people to leave the country in search of better living conditions and well-paid employment. The country's most valuable resource, crude oil, once discovered, made Venezuela one of the richest countries in South America, but due to corruption and mismanagement as well as US sanctions, the country was not able to profit from their natural resources as much as other countries have.

Venezuela's political and economic decline has been long in the making, with many factors and politicians contributing to its downfall in recent years.

In order to combat these consequences, a considerable effort must be made by both the citizens of Venezuela as well as their government to restore political and economic stability.
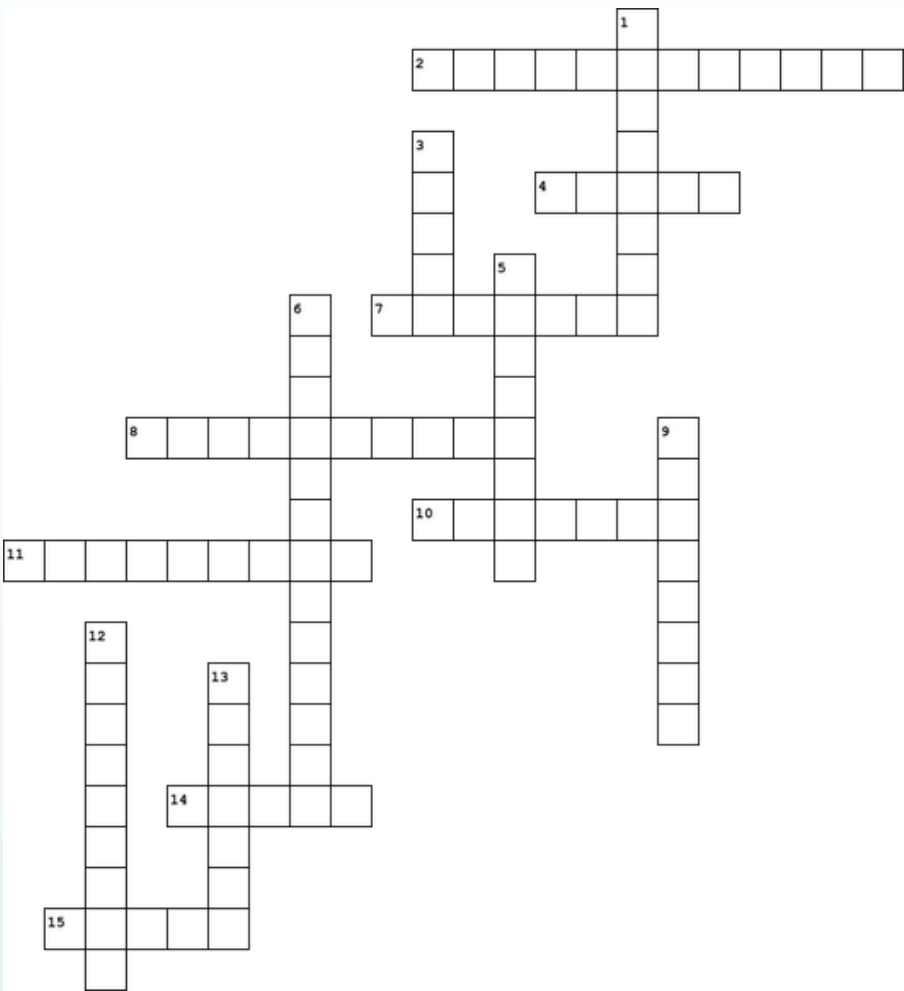
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Crossword: War and More War

Across:

2. You're required to end every sentence with over. Over.
4. What a dyslexic person might mistake left for.
7. The current party in power in Afghanistan.
8. Opposite of outer west.
10. What keeps many bridges stable.
11. A lebanese islamic military group.
14. What you might receive a code blue on.
15. Someone who may have fewer rights than a man.

Down:

1. The catalyst of too many a conflict.
3. Was originally introduced by a king whose wife was just too beautiful.
5. A ____ game. eg. Street Fighter.
6. What many young girls are subjected to in countries such as Afghanistan.
9. When you just can't get along.
12. Boom cause, often.
13. Next to Israel and Syria.

Word Search: Who's Next?

Word Bank:

centrist
election
endorse
harris
parliament
party
right
swift
tory
vance

Crypto-Quote: Winning Material

"GMPG IVDOIBB'C VHBJPZZ AJVROZB ZVVYOIX EKOGB ZOYB GMB VZW NOIIBJC VR GMPG LPGBXVJQ" -- TOXDL

Rules:

Figure out the quote from one of these articles by figuring out a simple code. In this code one letter will replace another, (it will be the same letter throughout the puzzle). Example: KLFFRFLP = SYNNONYM. Solution is found through trial and error.