Two Kinds of Structural Injustice: Disentangling Unfreedom and Inequality

I. The Normative Puzzle

Our lives are profoundly affected by prevailing social structures, including cultural norms, economic institutions, infrastructures, and laws.[1] While social structures facilitate valuable forms of coordination, they are also rightly criticized as a source of serious injustice. Consider the recent death of Frentorish (Tori) Bowie, a Black American athlete who helped the U.S. team win the gold medal in the 4x100 relay in the 2016 Olympics, alongside a personal silver and bronze medal in the 100-m and 200-m races.[2] While Tori's athletic achievements were clearly exceptional, the circumstances of her death were not. She died in childbirth due to complications related to her pregnancy, the likely culprit being pre-eclampsia, a blood pressure disorder that can be fatal when inadequately treated and managed – as it often is for Black women in the U.S., who are 2.6 times more likely to die during pregnancy due to such complications than white women.[3] Recent public health research explains this disparity in structural terms, arguing that social structures in the U.S. make accessing health-promoting resources like wealth, income, safe housing, quality education, and medical care particularly difficult for Black women.[4] As Allyson Felix, a fellow relay runner on the Olympic team and a Black American who experienced similar complications during her pregnancy, wrote following Bowie's untimely death,

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[1] The term "social structure" has many usages. This paper employs the usage established by Anthony Giddens and expounded by William H. Sewell, Jr. and Sally Haslanger: social structures are rules and resources that constrain and enable what agents can do and who they can be; agency is thus always shaped by the social structures of one's context, just as social structures are always shaped by the agents whose actions create and sustain these rules and resources. Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); William H. Sewell, "A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation," *American Journal of Sociology* 98, no. 1 (1992): 1–29; Sally Haslanger, "What Is a Social Practice?," *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplements* 82 (July 2018): 231–47.

[2] Talya Minsberg, "Track Star Tori Bowie Died in Childbirth," *The New York Times*, June 13, 2023, sec. Sports, https://www.nytimes.com/2023/06/13/sports/olympics/tori-bowie-death-childbirth-pregnant.html.

[3] Donna L. Hoyert, "Maternal Mortality Rates in the United States, 2021" (National Center for Health Statistics, March 16, 2023), https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hestat/maternal-mortality/2021/maternal-mortality-rates-2021.htm.

[4] Maeve Wallace et al., "Separate and Unequal: Structural Racism and Infant Mortality in the US," *Health & Place* 45 (May 1, 2017): 140–44. See also David R. Williams and Chiquita Collins, "US Socioeconomic and Racial Differences in Health: Patterns and Explanations," *Annual Review of Sociology* 21, no. 1 (August 1995): 349–86.

"We're dealing with a Black Maternal Health crisis. Here you have three Olympic champions, and we're still at risk."[5]

But Black women are not the only people adversely affected by prevailing social structures. Consider the death of Toby Lingle, a 43-year-old white American man who was found dead inside his trailer in Williston, North Dakota in 2018 next to a note that read "I'm sorry, I can't take the anxiety and depression anymore."[6] Mental health conditions like anxiety and depression are known risk factors for suicide when inadequately treated and managed – as they often are for men in the U.S., who are about 4 times more likely to die from suicide than women.[7] Recent sociological research traces this disparity to prevailing social structures that make accessing mental health resources particularly difficult for men. For instance, cultural ideals of masculinity that prescribe self-reliance (men don't ask for directions, as the old joke goes) and emotional forbearance (men don't cry or show fear) manifest as social norms that stigmatize men who express emotional vulnerability or seek help from others for their mental health; instead, these ideals and norms encourage men to conceal and ignore sadness, fear, and other negative emotions with avoidant behaviors, such as alcohol consumption.[8] As one sociologist observes in their study of the impact of gendered norms on suicide rates, "norms of

[5] Allyson Felix, "Allyson Felix: Tori Bowie Can't Die In Vain," *Time*, June 15, 2023, https://time.com/6287392/tori-bowie-allyson-felix-black-maternal-health/. The third Olympian in question is Tianna Bartoletta, who also ran the 4x100 relay and went into labor 26 weeks into her pregnancy.
[6] Stephen Rodrick, "All-American Despair," *Rolling Stone*, May 30, 2019, https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-features/suicide-rate-america-white-men-841576/.
[7] Matthew F. Garnett and Sally C. Curtin, "Suicide Mortality in the United States, 2001–2021," Data Brief, National Center for Health Statistics (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, April 2023), https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db464.htm. See also World Health Organization, "Suicide in the World: Global Health Estimates" (World Health Organization, 2019), https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/326948.
[8] Anne Cleary, *The Gendered Landscape of Suicide: Masculinities, Emotions, and Culture* (Cham: Springer, 2019). See also Zac E. Seidler et al., "The Role of Masculinity in Men's Help-Seeking for Depression: A Systematic Review," *Clinical Psychology Review* 49 (November 2016): 106–18; Allison Milner et al., "The Influence of Masculine Norms and Occupational Factors on Mental Health: Evidence From the Baseline of the Australian Longitudinal Study on Male Health," *American Journal of Men's Health* 12, no. 4 (July 2018): 696–705; Reinhold Kilian et al., "Masculinity Norms and Occupational Role Orientations in Men Treated for Depression," *PLoS ONE* 15, no. 5 (May 26, 2020): e0233764.

traditional masculinity provided a narrow behavioural and emotional terrain to operate within, impeded knowledge of their emotional needs and acted as a barrier to accessing help."[9]

Together, the racial disparity in maternal mortality and the gender disparity in suicide mortality raise a normative puzzle about a prominent concept in contemporary political theory, namely *structural injustice:* broadly understood, when social structures produce objectionable outcomes for members of particular social groups.[10] On one hand, Tori Bowie's death is a tragic reminder of the structural disadvantages that Black Americans continue to face due to their race, a situation that many consider oppressive.[11] On the other hand, Toby Lingle's death demonstrates that even members of social groups not typically considered oppressed can be seriously harmed due to prevailing social structures. Are both cases instances of structural injustice? If so, is it the same kind of injustice in both cases, and if not, what is the relevant difference? And where does oppression, a concept frequently invoked in discussions of structural injustice, fit into all this?[12]

Of course, this is not merely a theoretical puzzle: when, why, and for whom are prevailing social structures unjust is a question of considerable political importance and disagreement. Some argue that prevailing social structures are not distinctively unjust for any particular social group, a prominent view, for instance, among conservative thinkers on issues of race following the civil rights reforms of the 1960s.[13] Meanwhile, those who maintain that prevailing social structures are oppressive

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[9] Cleary, *The Gendered Landscape of Suicide*, 174.
[10] Iris Marion Young, *Responsibility for Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). For a review of the literature that Young has generated, see Maeve McKeown, "Structural Injustice," *Philosophy Compass* 16, no. 7 (2021): 1–14. The puzzle I am interested in is different from the one that occupies David Estlund's recent paper, namely how structurally produced outcomes can be unjust, in the usual sense of warranting moral grievance, if no culpable agency is involved. David Estlund, "What's Unjust about Structural Injustice?," *Ethics* 134, no. 3 (April 1, 2024): 333–59.
[11] Kimberlé W Crenshaw, "Race, Reform, and Retrenchment: Transformation and Legitimation in Antidiscrimination Law," *Harvard Law Review* 101, no. 7 (1988): 1331–87; Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1999); Joe R. Feagin, *Systemic Racism: A Theory of Oppression* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Elizabeth Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2010).
[12] See e.g. Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, 177; Serena Parekh, "Getting to the Root of Gender Inequality: Structural Injustice and Political Responsibility," *Hypatia* 26, no. 4 (2011): 677; Catherine Lu, *Justice and Reconciliation in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 100 & 265; Tamara Jugov and Lea Ypi, "Structural Injustice, Epistemic Opacity, and the Responsibilities of the Oppressed," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 50, no. 1 (2019): 7–27.
[13] See e.g. Thomas Sowell, *Civil Rights: Rhetoric or Reality?* (New York: William Morrow, 1984).

for certain social groups tend to downplay the structurally produced harms experienced by other groups, arguing that such harms do not constitute a structural injustice.[14] To my eye, neither view is plausible: both Tori Bowie's and Toby Lingle's deaths demonstrate serious injustices in our social structures. A clearer theoretical understanding of structural injustice (and oppression) can help evaluate these competing views and elucidate the kinds of remedies required to address these problems.

This paper develops an account of structural injustice that addresses this normative puzzle and offers a more compelling view of when, why, and for whom social structures are unjust. I argue that there are two kinds of structural injustice, each grounded in a distinct moral concern. One is primarily a freedom-based concern for how social structures constrain members of a social group in ways that deprive them of the means to develop and exercise their morally important capacities. The other is primarily an equality-based concern for how social structures subordinate members of a social group to others in hierarchies of power, standing, and esteem. By disentangling these concerns for unfreedom and inequality, this account shows that our social structures contain multiple kinds of injustice that do not necessarily travel together. Some social groups experience unfreedom without being structurally subordinated to others, and indeed their unfreedom is intertwined with their dominant position over structurally subordinated groups, as I shall argue about men's situation regarding the gender disparity in suicide mortality. Furthermore, contrary to the dominant view in the literature, this account shows that there are good reasons to understand oppression as a distinct kind of structural injustice that tracks the concern for inequality rather than unfreedom, for even relatively privileged groups can experience serious forms of unfreedom due to prevailing social structures.

The paper proceeds as follows. In Section II, I provide a sharper statement of the normative puzzle: because their analyses focus on how social structures undermine the freedom of certain social

[14] See Sections II and III.

groups, leading theories of oppression have trouble defending their claim that other social groups are not oppressed in prevailing social structures. In Section III, I consider some responses to this puzzle on behalf of these theories and argue that none are successful. In light of these failures, I offer in Section IV a different and, in my view, more compelling analysis of oppression that focuses instead on how social structures undermine equality between social groups.[15] In Section V, I build on the preceding analysis to argue in favor of recognizing two distinct kinds of structural injustice, one tracking a concern for freedom and the other tracking a concern for equality. I conclude in Section VI by discussing the political implications of this account.

II. Freedom and Oppression: The Overgeneralization Problem

Leading theories of oppression hold that social structures are unjust – indeed, oppressive – when they undermine the freedom of members of particular social groups.[16] Marilyn Frye and Ann Cudd are arguably the most influential proponents of this view.[17] Oppression, according to Frye's widely cited definition, is "a network of forces and barriers which are systematically related and which conspire to the immobilization, reduction and molding of women and the lives we live."[18] She goes on to broaden this definition as applicable to any social group. These forces and barriers are social structural: as Cudd argues, "[O]ppression comes out of unjust social and political institutions. 'Institution' refers to formal and informal social structures and constraints, such as law, convention,

[15] Serene Khader has recently defended a similar view, arguing that the wrong of oppression must be grounded in inequality rather than unfreedom if it is to avoid overgeneralizing. I invite readers to engage with her arguments as well as my own on these issues. One notable difference between our views is that her account seems to overlook that structurally produced unfreedom is itself a kind of injustice, even if it does not amount to oppression. Serene J. Khader, "Why Is Oppression Wrong?," *Philosophical Studies* 181, no. 4 (April 1, 2024): 649–69.

[16] This understanding of oppression has a long cultural and political history. Consider Martin Luther King, Jr.'s observation: "We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed." See Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail," August 1963.

[17] Marilyn Frye, "Oppression," in *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory* (Trumansburg, N.Y: Crossing Press, 1983), 1–16; Ann E. Cudd, *Analyzing Oppression* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006). See also Alison M. Jaggar, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*, Philosophy and Society (Totowa, N.J: Rowman & Allanheld, 1983), 6.

[18] Frye, "Oppression," 7. Similarly, for Cudd, oppression "names a harm through which groups of persons are systematically and unfairly or unjustly constrained, burdened, or reduced by any of several forces." Cudd, *Analyzing Oppression*, 23.

norms, practices, and the like."[19] On their view, then, members of a social group are oppressed when their agency is systematically and harmfully constrained by social structures.[20] For ease of reference, I will call this the freedom view of oppression.

The freedom view does illuminate something objectionable about the situation of many social groups. Women, for example, do find their agency systematically and harmfully constrained in prevailing social structures, a problem that is apparent in social outcomes like the gendered division of domestic labor. Consider the not-so-fictional case of Larry and Lisa, a married couple who decide to have children.[21] Their baby, Lulu, finally arrives. Since babies cannot take care of themselves, Larry and Lisa – both of whom are currently working – need to figure out how to take care of Lulu. But their options are quite limited. They live in a community where decent childcare is prohibitively expensive, nor are there relatives nearby who could look after Lulu while they are at work; like many others, both moved away from their families for their education and subsequent careers. Given these factors, they decide that one of them should stop working to take care of Lulu full-time while the other continues to work to support the family financially. While neither Larry nor Lisa harbor prejudicial assumptions about gender roles, they see compelling reasons for Lisa to be the one to give up her career. For one, Larry's wage is significantly higher than Lisa's, as is typical in their community where women, on average, earn only 75% of what men make. Furthermore, Lisa's boss has voiced concerns about her promotability, worrying that as a mother Lisa will find it increasingly difficult to prioritize work over family – a concern that he did not express to her office-mate Bill when he had

[19] Cudd, *Analyzing Oppression*, 20.
[20] See also Young's description of oppression: "In the most general sense, all oppressed people suffer some inhibition of their ability to develop and exercise their capacities and express their needs, thoughts, and feelings." Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 40.
[21] The following draws from discussions of this case, due originally to Susan Moller Okin, by Ann Cudd and Sally Haslanger. Susan Moller Okin, *Justice, Gender, and the Family* (New York: Basic Books, 1989); Cudd, *Analyzing Oppression*, 148–51; Sally Haslanger, "What Is a (Social) Structural Explanation?," *Philosophical Studies* 173, no. 1 (January 2016): 122–25.

children last year. Taking all of this into account, Lisa decides to give up her career to take care of Lulu.

On the freedom view, Lisa and the countless other women who face a similar situation as hers are oppressed, for the following reason: given the constraints that they face in prevailing social structures, women like Lisa are immobilized and reduced to becoming the primary caregiver in their household and are unfree to pursue a career, at least not while also starting a family. This situation harms women as a social group in many ways, from reducing their earning potential to perpetuating the stereotype that Lisa's boss expressed, namely that women are more likely to choose family over their career and thus unsuitable for promotion. Women find their agency systematically and harmfully constrained by prevailing social structures. This analysis of how prevailing social structures oppress women seems plausible.

But this analysis runs into a problem: it overgeneralizes to social groups that Frye and Cudd maintain are not oppressed. Recall Toby Lingle's death and the gender disparity in suicide mortality. According to recent sociological research, a similar story to Larry and Lisa's explains why men like Toby die from suicide at higher rates than women.[22] The story goes like this: Toby developed depression and anxiety in early adulthood. These conditions make living his life difficult, and he wants to get better. But his options are quite limited. Toby lives in a community where mental healthcare is prohibitively expensive, especially for someone in his line of work. Nor does he live close to friends and family who might help him address his mental health; like others in his industry, the company he works for required him to move to a remote location after a recent expansion. And while he does have occasions to talk with other people in town, bringing up topics like mental health is difficult: every time he has tried to bring it up, his interlocutors get uncomfortable and try to change the topic or tell

[22] The following draws on Anne Cleary's sociological account of male suicide, specifically her case studies of particular men who attempted suicide. Cleary, *The Gendered Landscape of Suicide*, 97–133. Much of Cleary's analysis resonates with Toby's actual life history and situation – for a reporter's account, see Rodrick, "All-American Despair."

him to "man up" and deal with his problems by himself. After years of isolated emotional and mental anguish, Toby decides to take his own life.

Like Lisa, Toby finds himself systematically and harmfully constrained by prevailing social structures. Indeed, sociologist Anne Cleary observes that a common theme among men who attempt suicide is "a feeling of being trapped in an impossible situation," and that "restricted agency, lack of control over one's life, was a feature of their stories."[23] Prominent among these constraints, Cleary argues, is masculinity as a culturally defined ideal and socially reinforced set of norms, which provides men with "a *narrow* behavioural and emotional terrain to operate within, *impeded* knowledge of their emotional needs and acted as a *barrier* to accessing help [my emphasis]."[24] Given that men also face situations in which their agency is systematically and harmfully constrained, the freedom view would seem to imply that men, too, have a case for claiming that they are oppressed in prevailing social structures.

This conclusion, however, is rejected by most proponents of the freedom view.[25] Frye states explicitly, "Women are oppressed, *as women*…But men are not oppressed *as men*."[26] But it is difficult to see how the freedom view supports this position. By its own logic, any social group whose members find their agency systematically and harmfully constrained in prevailing social structures would have a valid claim to being oppressed. If proponents of the freedom view want to maintain that women are oppressed but men are not, then their analysis of oppression needs to be amended.[27]

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[23] Cleary, *The Gendered Landscape of Suicide*, 108.
[24] Cleary, 174. A similar point is made by bell hooks: "The first act of violence that patriarchy demands of males is not violence toward women. Instead patriarchy demands of all males that they engage in acts of psychic self-mutilation, that they kill off the emotional parts of themselves." bell hooks, *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love* (New York: Washington Square Press, 2005), 68.
[25] For one counterexample, see Caroline New, "Oppressed and Oppressors? The Systematic Mistreatment of Men," *Sociology* 35, no. 3 (2001): 729–48. Besides mental health, New discusses physically dangerous jobs, the military, and criminal justice as domains in which men in particular tend to experience significant harms due to structural constraints.
[26] Frye, "Oppression," 16.
[27] One might ask: rather than amending the freedom view, why not simply accept that both men and women are oppressed due to their gender in prevailing social structures? As I will explain in Section VI, how we should answer this question depends on the kind of structural injustice we want to identify using the concept of oppression. There are good reasons, I suggest, to maintain that women are oppressed but men are not given the existence of objectionable

Proponents of the freedom view do amend their analysis in response to the overgeneralization problem. Before turning to those amendments in the next section, let me address one obvious but ultimately misguided response to the problem. A tempting response to Toby's case is to argue that his situation is not an instance of *men's* oppression but of some other, legitimate form of oppression that some men face in virtue of, say, being a member of the working class or dealing with mental health conditions. If that is correct, then it would dissolve the puzzle, for proponents of the freedom view agree that there are other forms of oppression in our society besides women's oppression. On this response, Toby's agency is systematically and harmfully constrained by social structures, but those constraints do not target him *as a man*.

But this response threatens to undermine the freedom view's claims about women's oppression. While it is true that not all of the constraints that Toby faces seem to target him as a man, neither do all of the constraints faced by Lisa seem to target her as a woman. Some clearly do target her as a woman, of course, such as the gender wage gap and her boss's sexist belief that women who have children are not promotable. But some of Toby's constraints also clearly target him as a man, such as the norms and ideals of masculinity that restrict his ability to address his mental health. In a complex social world, it is hard to imagine any situation of systematic and harmful constraints that tracks only a single dimension of an individual's social position within prevailing social structures.[28] If

inequalities between them. These reasons, however, are not explained by the freedom view, hence the need for an alternative analysis of oppression.

[28] Indeed, as intersectionality theorists have argued, a single-minded focus on the structural dynamics of gender, race, or class alone risks overlooking significant injustices faced by persons whose unjust situation is constituted by multiple, intertwined features of their social position. While this fact does not undermine the normative analysis of structural injustice and oppression I am developing here, it does greatly complicate how these concepts can be applied to our complex social reality. bell hooks, *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1984); Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *The University of Chicago Legal Forum* 140 (1989): 139–67; Kimberle Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (July 1991): 1241–99. See also Sally Haslanger, "Why I Don't Believe in Patriarchy: Comments on Kate Manne's *Down Girl*," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 101, no. 1 (July 2020): 220–29.

to be oppressed in virtue of one's gender requires that one faces systematic and harmful constraints due only to one's gender, then the freedom view fails to explain why even Lisa is oppressed.

One might try to salvage this response by arguing that not all constraints are equally important in these situations. While Toby does face some constraints that target him as a man, the crux of his situation is his lack of resources and mental health conditions, not his masculinity. In contrast, the central constraints creating Lisa's situation are specific to her being a woman, namely the gender wage gap and her sexist boss. Thus, one might argue, while Lisa's situation evinces her oppression as a woman, Tom's situation does not evince his oppression as a man.

But this response controversially assumes there is a clear method of parsing the "essential" constraints from the "inessential" constraints in an oppressive situation. It is unclear what that method would be. True, Toby's situation would dramatically change if he had access to greater resources – but so would Lisa's situation if she and Larry had the resources to afford the exorbitant cost of childcare in their community. One might argue, therefore, that the central constraint in Lisa's situation is about her (and Larry's) lack of resources, not about her being a woman. Looking at the issue more broadly, how to understand the complex relationship between class and gender in prevailing social structures (not to mention other social factors like race or sexuality) is a contentious and ongoing debate in political theory.[29] Rather than controversially assuming a position in that debate, we should accept that Toby's gender is an essential dimension of his situation.

III. Rescuing the Freedom-Based Account? Special Constraints and Unequal Benefits

Proponents of the freedom view make various amendments to their analysis of oppression in response to the overgeneralization problem. These amendments pursue one of two general strategies. The first is to sharpen the notion of constraint: while many social groups face systematic and harmful

[29] For an overview, see Cinzia Arruzza, *Dangerous Liaisons: The Marriages and Divorces of Marxism and Feminism* (Pontypool: Merlin Press, 2013).

constraints in prevailing social structures, certain social groups face distinctively oppressive constraints that are different in kind from those faced by others. The second strategy is to appeal to unequal benefits: while many social groups face systematic and harmful constraints, non-oppressed social groups generally benefit from the existence of these constraints in ways that oppressed social groups do not. I argue that the first strategy is implausible and that the second strategy, while successful, points to a normative concern about social structures that is different from a worry about freedom.

To avoid the overgeneralization problem, the freedom view might try sharpening the notion of constraint in its analysis. On this amendment to the view, the constraints faced by the oppressed are distinct from the constraints faced by other groups, such that only the oppressed find their freedom genuinely undermined by prevailing social structures. What exactly might be distinctive about their constraints?

Frye offers one suggestion: the oppressed face constraints that constitute *double binds*. She writes:

> One of the most characteristic and ubiquitous features of the world as experienced by oppressed people is the double bind—situations in which options are reduced to a very few and all of them expose one to penalty, censure or deprivation. For example, it is often a requirement upon oppressed people that we smile and be cheerful. If we comply, we signal our docility and our acquiescence in our situation. We need not, then, be taken note of. We acquiesce in being made invisible, in our occupying no space. We participate in our own erasure. On the other hand, anything but the sunniest countenance exposes us to being perceived as mean, bitter, angry, or dangerous. This means, at the least, that we may be found "difficult" or unpleasant to work with, which is enough to cost one one's livelihood; at worst, being seen as mean, bitter, angry or dangerous has been known to result in rape, arrest, beating and murder.[30]

In other words, oppressed agents uniquely face choice situations that have a "damned if you do, damned if you don't" character. To be oppressed, then, is to face a set of structural constraints that work together to leave the oppressed individual with no good options.

[30] Frye, "Oppression," 2. See also Sukaina Hirji, "Oppressive Double Binds," *Ethics* 131, no. 4 (2021): 643–69.

Double binds do seem to pose a particularly objectionable affront to freedom. But they are not unique to the social groups that Frye and other proponents of the freedom view consider oppressed. Toby's situation can be reframed as a double bind: it is a social requirement of men that they not appear emotionally vulnerable; if Toby complies, he continues to suffer in silence; if he does not, he will face social penalties for violating the norms of masculinity. This framing seems plausible: recall Cleary's observation that a common theme among men who attempt suicide is "a feeling of being trapped in an impossible situation," and that "restricted agency, lack of control over one's life, was a feature of their stories."[31] Generalizing from this example, one might argue that double binds are a likely predicament for any individual whose interests and needs are at odds with what is normal or expected of their social position.

Of course, the double bind is just one specification of this strategy. There may be other ways to try to distinguish certain kinds of structural constraints as oppressive.[32] Instead of going over them, let me give a general reason to be skeptical of this general strategy: it is at odds with our best available theories of social structures and their relationship to individuals as agents. According to these theories, social structures are relatively stable background conditions on our agency comprising culturally constructed rules and materially sedimented resources that have both constraining and enabling effects on individuals, whose actions in turn serve to reproduce and perpetuate those rules and resources.[33] Against social theories that implausibly hold either agency or structure to be dominant over the other, this view holds that structure and agency are mutually constitutive: social structures are always a product of what we collectively do, and what we do is always constrained and enabled by social

[31] Cleary, *The Gendered Landscape of Suicide*, 108.
[32] Cudd argues that for a constraint to be oppressive, it must take the form of "unjustified coercion or force." Cudd, *Analyzing Oppression*, 25. The important word is "unjustified," since presumably all constraints coerce or force. Elaborating the thought, she writes, "To say that social constraints are unjust is to say that in addition to falling unequally on different groups, they are unjustifiedly unequal." Cudd, 51. But this appeal to unjustified inequality makes Cudd's view a version of the second strategy, as I discuss below.
[33] Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*; Sewell, "A Theory of Structure"; Haslanger, "What Is a Social Practice?"

structures. On this view, then, it is implausible to think that there is a special type of structural constraint that affects certain social groups but not others. All individuals face constraints due to social structures – though this is not to say that everyone is similarly affected by the constraints that they face, for clearly some fare worse in prevailing social structures than others.[34]

That last point gets to the freedom view's second general strategy for responding to the overgeneralization problem: while many or even all social groups face significant structural constraints, some social groups generally benefit from these constraints whereas oppressed groups do not. Frye sometimes suggests that this is what distinguishes women from men in prevailing social structures: she writes, "The boundary that sets apart women's sphere is maintained and promoted by men generally for the benefit of men generally, and men generally do benefit from its existence, even the man who bumps into it and complains of the inconvenience."[35] Thus, she continues, to determine whether a set of constraints are oppressive, one must ask: "Whose interests are served by its existence?"[36]

That different social groups are unequally benefited by prevailing social structures does seem important for theorizing why those social structures are oppressive or otherwise unjust. But this amendment to the freedom view raises two theoretical questions. First, granting that some social groups generally benefit from prevailing social structures, what should we say about situations where they do not? To say that members of a social group *generally* benefit, after all, is to acknowledge that there are situations where they do not benefit. As Caroline New argues, "while men are in general tremendously advantaged relative to women, there are respects in which the current gender order does

[34] The same view can be reached starting not from the Giddensian view of social structures but from a Foucauldian understanding of power as a structural force that shapes both relatively powerful and powerless agents. This force is not under any particular agents' control or command, not even the powerful; the powerful are not free to change or leave prevailing power relations as they like. See Clarissa Rile Hayward, *De-Facing Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
[35] Frye, "Oppression," 13.
[36] Frye, 14.

not meet their human needs. The costs men pay are substantial."[37] An account of structural injustice should have something to say here, even if Frye is correct that these social groups are not plausibly considered *oppressed* in light of such costs.

Second, how does the issue of unequal benefits cohere with the freedom view's core contention that oppression is about how social structures undermine *freedom*? Something does seem objectionable about how social structures unequally benefit different social groups, but it is not obvious that this amounts to a concern about freedom. The amended view would have to be that although all agents face constraints, only some agents (e.g. women) face constraints that are actually freedom-undermining given these unequal benefits. How might that view go?

Perhaps the view is that while all groups face structural constraints, only oppressed groups face constraints that are genuinely bad for them in light of their (objective) interests, and only genuinely bad constraints are freedom-undermining.[38] In this vein, Frye observes: "A set of social and economic barriers and forces separating two groups may be felt, even painfully, by members of both groups and yet may mean confinement to one and liberty and enlargement of opportunity to the other."[39] On this view, only women face constraints due to their gender that are genuinely bad for them; men, by contrast, do not.

But this view is implausible. Surely it is in men's (objective) interests to lead healthy emotional and mental lives. It is hard to see how it is good for men to be constrained in ways that leave them more vulnerable to death by suicide. Such constraints do not lead to an "enlargement of opportunity" for men. Furthermore, the claim that an agent's freedom is not undermined by beneficial constraints

[37] New, "Oppressed and Oppressors?," 737. See also Carina Fourie, "How Being Better Off Is Bad for You," in *Autonomy and Equality*, ed. Natalie Stoljar and Kristin Voigt (New York: Routledge, 2021), 169–94.
[38] Why "objective" interests? Because if interests are understood subjectively as a matter of agent's preferences, that would imply, first, that men are oppressed whenever they face constraints that don't suit their preferences, and second, that women are not oppressed so long as their constraints are compatible with their preferences. Neither implication seems plausible. For a critical discussion of the latter implication, see Serene J. Khader, *Adaptive Preferences and Women's Empowerment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), chap. 1.
[39] Frye, "Oppression," 12.

mistakenly conflates two different theoretical issues: whether an agent benefits from some set of constraints, and whether those constraints undermine their freedom. Rather than running these questions together, we should leave conceptual room for cases where an agent is made less free by constraints that nonetheless benefit them, such as a teenager's curfew.[40] Thus, even if men generally benefit from the constraints that they face, their freedom can still be undermined by those constraints.

Perhaps the view is that structural constraints only undermine an agent's freedom when they leave the agent with an *insufficient range of valuable options*. Put differently, an agent is free (or autonomous) when they enjoy a sufficient range of valuable options through which they determine the course of their life according to their own values and goals.[41] On this view, the mere fact that men face constraints that are genuinely bad for them does not yet imply anything about whether they are unfree, for they may nonetheless enjoy a sufficient range of good options. Thus, one might argue, women are oppressed because they do not enjoy a sufficient range of options in prevailing structures; men, by contrast, are not oppressed because they do.

But this view, although arguably more plausible in its understanding of freedom, also fails to avoid the overgeneralization problem. It implies that both men and women are oppressed in social structures that give neither men nor women an adequate range of options *even if* men enjoy far superior, though still deficient, options in these social structures compared to women. In fact, the same logic also leads to an *undergeneralization problem:* it implies that women are not oppressed in social structures that give them an adequate range of options *even if* those options are significantly worse than the options available to men. On this view, so long as women have an adequate range of options, the

[40] The possibility of such cases is why there are normative debates about paternalism: infringing upon a person's freedom in ways that otherwise benefit them.
[41] Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1986). For feminist perspectives on autonomy, see e.g. Susan Brison, "Relational Autonomy and Freedom of Expression," in *Relational Autonomy: Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy, Agency, and the Social Self*, ed. Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 280–300; Marina Oshana, *Personal Autonomy in Society* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

inferiority of their options compared to the options available to men would not register as evidence of women's oppression.

There may be other ways to reconcile the issue of unequal benefits with a concern for freedom. Rather than reviewing those alternatives, I suggest that the preceding difficulties are enough to consider a more straightforward explanation of why unequal benefits seem unjust, even oppressive: this issue speaks to speaks to a concern about *equality,* not freedom. There is something objectionably *unequal* about social structures that generally benefit certain social groups at others' expense. While the notion of equality needs elaboration, even this basic statement is enough to show how an equality-based view of oppression would avoid the preceding difficulties with the freedom view. That both men and women face systematic and harmful structural constraints does not imply that both groups are oppressed, for these constraints may function to generally benefit men while generally disadvantaging women. And even where both men and women have (or lack) a sufficient range of good options in existing social structures, something would be distinctively unjust for women as a group if they were structurally disadvantaged *relative* to men. If what is distinctive about the situation of the oppressed is ultimately the issue of unequal benefits, then it is worth considering an analysis of oppression that centers a concern for equality.

IV. Social Equality and Oppression

In this section, I develop an alternative analysis of oppression: the equality view. Its core contention is that social structures are unjust, indeed oppressive, when they undermine the equality of certain social groups vis-à-vis others. A concern for equality, while arguably less prominent than a concern for freedom in contemporary theoretical and political discourse, is – and was – a central concern for many critical perspectives on oppression. Radical feminists, for example, analyzed women's oppression through the concept of patriarchy: a society marked by "a division that places

men in a superior, and women in a subordinate, position."[42] A more recent example is Sally Haslanger's account of oppression, which holds that social structures are oppressive when they unjustly disadvantage members of certain social groups relative to others.[43]

Unifying these perspectives is an egalitarian concern for hierarchical relations: how some social groups enjoy significant benefits, advantages, and privileges at the expense of other, subordinated groups in prevailing social structures. Elizabeth Anderson helpfully illuminates three key dimensions in which social relations can be objectionably hierarchical.[44] First are hierarchies of *domination* where some enjoy "arbitrary, unaccountable authority" over others. Second are hierarchies of *esteem* where some are socially recognized as valuable members of society while others are subject to stigmas and stereotypes that license social "ridicule, shaming, shunning, segregation, discrimination, persecution, and even violence." Third are hierarchies of *standing* where the interests of some are "given special weight in the deliberations of others and in the normal (habitual, unconscious, often automatic) operation of social institutions" while the interests of others are "neglected or carry little weight." Together, Anderson argues, these three (typically interrelated) forms of hierarchy offer a complete typology of the objects of egalitarian critique. Her account provides a plausible basis for developing the equality view of oppression: members of a social group are oppressed, on this view, when they are subordinated to others in such hierarchical relations due to prevailing social structures.

The equality view, so developed, offers a compelling and rich analysis of oppression. Recall Larry and Lisa. On this analysis, Lisa is oppressed in prevailing social structures insofar as she is

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[42] Heidi I. Hartmann, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union," *Capital & Class* 3, no. 2 (July 1, 1979): 5.
[43] Sally Haslanger, "Oppressions: Racial and Other," in *Resisting Reality: Social Construction and Social Critique* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 311–38.
[44] Elizabeth Anderson, "Equality," in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Philosophy*, ed. David Estlund (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 42–43. Notably, Anderson suggests that these hierarchies capture what Iris Marion Young calls the five faces of oppression: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. Elizabeth S. Anderson, "What Is the Point of Equality?," *Ethics* 109, no. 2 (January 1999): 312; Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, 39–65.

subordinated to Larry in these hierarchical relations, as evinced by various features of her situation. First, she is subjected to his unaccountable authority or domination: in having to give up her career, Lisa becomes financially dependent on Larry, giving him considerable power over her if she does not do what he wants.[45] Second, she is put in a position of lesser social esteem: while Larry's career is recognized as a significant contribution to wider society and a mark of individual achievement, Lisa's role as a caregiver is not given similar recognition and may even be a source of ridicule or shame in the eyes of others.[46] Third, the situation reveals her lack of standing: her interest in maintaining a career while starting a family (and thereby avoiding the preceding forms of domination and disesteem) is clearly neglected in a community where childcare is not supported and women tend to earn less than men. Given that these forms of subordination are produced by the structural conditions in which Lisa finds herself, the equality view contends that she is oppressed in prevailing social structures. And insofar as these conditions affect not just Lisa but also tend to affect women more generally, the equality view contends that women are oppressed in prevailing social structures.

Notice that on this analysis, the reason why Lisa is oppressed is not merely that she faces systematic and harmful structural constraints. Rather, it is that these constraints lead to her *subordination* to Larry. This is a significant departure from the freedom view: it implies that members of a social group can face systematic and harmful structural constraints without therefore being oppressed, so long as those constraints do not lead to that group's subordination to others. On the equality view, the defining feature of oppression is that certain social groups are subordinated to others due to prevailing social structures.

With this in mind, we can now return to Toby. Does his situation evince his subordination to others? In some respects, yes: he is subordinated to others as a member of the working class insofar

[45] Hartmann, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism," 16–17.
[46] Silvia Federici, *Wages against Housework* (Bristol: Falling Wall Press, 1975).

as he is subjected to the unaccountable authority of his employer, and he is subordinated as a person dealing with mental health conditions in a community where mental healthcare is not supported and social isolation is not seen as a problem.[47] In an important respect, however, the answer is no: while the systematic and harmful constraints that Toby faces are due, in part, to his being a man, these constraints do not evince his subordination *as a man* insofar as they do not put him in an inferior, subordinated position to women. Indeed, many of these constraints arguably play a role in the subordination of *women* to men; for example, that men are expected to be emotionally invulnerable is part of a broader cultural outlook that proclaims that men, not women, should hold positions of power because men are supposedly less emotional and thus more rational in their decision-making.[48] The equality view thus offers a compelling explanation for why it is plausible to consider women oppressed but not men, a claim that proponents of the freedom view endorsed but inadequately explained.

Having demonstrated its plausibility and theoretical advantages, let me address an important nuance of the equality view, namely how it understands the relationship between freedom and oppression. While the equality view does not make freedom its direct object of concern, it nonetheless identifies an important sense in which structurally subordinated groups are unfree: they are subjected to the arbitrary power of others, and to be dominated in that way is to be unfree according to republican accounts of freedom.[49] This feature of the view might raise the following worry: if the so-

[47] Elizabeth Anderson et al., *Private Government: How Employers Rule Our Lives (and Why We Don't Talk about It)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019); Ruth S. Shim and Sarah Y. Vinson, eds., *Social (in)Justice and Mental Health* (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association Publishing, 2021).

[48] For supporting empirical studies, see Pam Oliver, "`What Do Girls Know Anyway?': Rationality, Gender and Social Control," *Feminism & Psychology* 1, no. 3 (October 1, 1991): 339–60; Victoria L. Brescoll, "Leading with Their Hearts? How Gender Stereotypes of Emotion Lead to Biased Evaluations of Female Leaders," *The Leadership Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (June 2016): 415–28. Tom Digby argues that this is a general pattern: "When people are divided into two genders, with members of each gender culturally programmed to display attitudes, dispositions, and behavior altogether different from—and generally opposite to—the other gender, it is probably inevitable that there are going to be advantages and disadvantages specific to each gender. If cultural expectations call for one of those genders to be dominant over the other, presumably the advantages for that gender outweigh the disadvantages, but that does not mean that the disadvantages are not substantial…As we shall see, it turns out that this cultural ideal of masculinity is also at the root of most gender-related disadvantaging of women." Tom Digby, *Love and War: How Militarism Shapes Sexuality and Romance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 52.

[49] Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

called equality view incorporates a concern for freedom in its analysis, then how is it meaningfully different from the freedom view? In the end, it seems that both views take both freedom *and* equality to be important concerns, as demonstrated by the concern for unequal benefits in the freedom view.

My response is that there is a significant difference in *how* each view analyzes the relationship between freedom, equality, and oppression. As we saw earlier, the freedom view struggles to explain how its concern for unequal benefits coheres with its contention that oppression is essentially about how social structures undermine the freedom of certain social groups. The concern for unequal benefits seems *ad hoc* alongside its deeper concern for how members of social groups are made unfree by systematic and harmful structural constraints. By contrast, the equality view offers a coherent and, to my eye, compelling explanation of how its concern for freedom (as non-domination) is rooted in a deeper concern for (relational) equality: the unfreedom of the oppressed is rooted in inegalitarian social structures that produce and reinforce hierarchical relations between social groups. As Anderson puts it, "Freedom is achieved by liberating the oppressed from subordination in a dominance hierarchy."[50] The concern for freedom is thus not an *ad hoc* feature of the equality view; rather, it is a plausible explication of the long-standing observation that equality is a precondition of freedom in a society characterized by robust social interdependence.[51]

That said, the comparison to the freedom view highlights a weakness of the equality view. Granting that men as a social group are not plausibly considered oppressed in prevailing social structures, what then should we say about situations like Toby's in which men face systematic and harmful structural constraints? While the equality view offers a compelling explanation of why Lisa's situation is different from Toby's, it does not address the concern that Toby is objectionably unfree

[50] Anderson, "Equality," 43. See also Jennifer Einspahr, "Structural Domination and Structural Freedom: A Feminist Perspective," *Feminist Review* 94, no. 1 (March 1, 2010): 1–19.
[51] See e.g. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, ed. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co, 1992).

due to the constraints that he faces in prevailing social structures. Recall New's observation: "while men are in general tremendously advantaged relative to women, there are respects in which the current gender order does not meet their human needs. The costs men pay are substantial."[52] An account of structural injustice should have something to say about how prevailing social structures seriously harm members of social groups, even if those groups are not subordinated.

V. Unfreedom, Inequality, and Structural Injustice

The preceding discussion of oppression revealed two distinct normative concerns about prevailing social structures. One concern, rooted in the value of freedom, is that members of a social group are systematically and harmfully constrained by social structures. The other concern, rooted in the value of equality, is that members of a social group are structurally subordinated to others in hierarchies of domination, esteem, or standing. While there are theoretical (and, as I shall explain, political) reasons to analyze oppression in terms of the latter concern, I argued that both concerns highlight an important kind of injustice that prevailing social structures inflict on members of certain social groups.

If that is correct, then it has significant implications for theorizing structural injustice. It implies that there are two distinct kinds of structural injustice, corresponding to each of these concerns. One kind of structural injustice, which I will call Unfreedom, occurs when social structures systematically and harmfully constrain members of a social group. The other kind of structural injustice, which I will call Inequality, occurs when social structures subordinate members of a social group to others in hierarchies of domination, esteem, or standing. Both Unfreedom and Inequality are structural injustices, for both identify a kind of objectionable outcome that is produced by social structures for members of certain social groups. They are distinct, however, insofar as these injustices

[52] New, "Oppressed and Oppressors?," 737.

do not always travel together: certain groups experience Unfreedom without experiencing Inequality in prevailing social structures, as I argued regarding Toby's situation.

This dual account of structural injustice offers a compelling view of the cases that have driven my discussion, from Tori Bowie to Larry and Lisa to Toby Lingle. For one, it creates theoretical room to recognize that a wide range of social groups, including even those that are generally advantaged by existing inequalities, can experience a kind of structural injustice, namely Unfreedom. Both Tori and Lisa find themselves systematically and harmfully constrained in prevailing social structures in virtue of their race and/or gender. This is a kind of structural injustice. But so too does Toby: he finds himself systematically and harmfully constrained in virtue of being a man. In that sense, he is also a victim of this kind of structural injustice.

To reinforce that last point, let me briefly address the meaning of harm. Following Joel Feinberg's influential account, a harm can be broadly understood as a setback to a person's interests.[53] This raises another question: what are these interests? Different views will disagree on the finer details, but a plausible answer is provided by Martha Nussbaum's list of what she calls the Central Capabilities, that is, "areas of freedom so central that their removal makes a life not worthy of human dignity."[54] Among these capabilities are Life, a precondition of which is not dying prematurely. Evidently, prevailing social structures constrained Tori and Toby in ways that failed to adequately support this capability. Importantly, Nussbaum also names Emotions: "Being able to able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger. Not having one's

[53] Joel Feinberg, *The Moral Limits of the Criminal Law* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).
[54] Martha C. Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), 31. While Nussbaum's capabilities approach is particularly helpful for my purposes, I believe any plausible account of harm will agree that the outcomes I have discussed count as harms. For an account of structural injustice that understands harms as setbacks to interests protected by human rights, see Madison Powers and Ruth Faden, *Structural Injustice: Power, Advantage, and Human Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 13–56.

emotional development blighted by fear and anxiety."[55] Toby's case suggests that this capability is inadequately supported for men in prevailing social structures, a problem that manifests in the gender disparity in suicide mortality. This constitutes a harm, and insofar as men in particular are made especially vulnerable to this harm by prevailing social structures, they suffer a kind of structural injustice. No one should be deprived of the means to develop and exercise their Central Capabilities.

At the same time, this account identifies an important difference between Toby's case and those of Tori and Lisa. Both Tori and Lisa experience Inequality: they are subjected to various forms of subordination due to their race and/or gender in prevailing social structures. These hierarchical relations are a kind of structural injustice. By contrast, Toby arguably does not experience Inequality, at least not in virtue of being a man. Although Toby experiences systematic and harmful constraints in virtue of being a man, these constraints do not subordinate him as a man to women; indeed, the masculinity-based constraints to his emotional vulnerability and expression arguably play a role in the subordination of women, e.g., as a rationale for their exclusion from positions of power. In this sense, Toby is not a victim of the kind of structural injustice that Tori and Lisa experience in virtue of their race and/or gender. Insofar as oppression is understood to track this kind of structural injustice, it follows that Toby is not oppressed.

By disentangling Unfreedom and Inequality, this account reveals that our social structures and the injustices that they produce are normatively complex. There is more than one reason why prevailing social structures are morally objectionable, and different groups may have different reasons to object to prevailing social structures. This normative complexity is obscured in existing theories of oppression given that they focus on just one of these concerns.

It is also obscured, I argue, in existing theories of structural injustice. Consider Iris Marion Young's groundbreaking account. In her widely cited definition, structural injustice is "when social

[55] Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities*, 33–34.

processes put large groups of persons under systematic threat of domination or deprivation of the means to develop and exercise their capacities, at the same time that these processes enable others to dominate or to have a wide range of opportunities for developing and exercising capacities available to them."[56] While there are other elements of Young's definition that could be clarified (What constitutes "large" groups? Which capacities?), my discussion points to one significant problem with this definition, namely that it conflates Unfreedom and Inequality. Specifically, it implies that domination (Inequality) and deprivation of the means to develop and exercise one's capacities or capabilities (Unfreedom) always travel together. They often do, as Tori's and Lisa's cases demonstrate. However, as Toby's case shows, members of certain social groups can experience objectionable deprivation without necessarily being subjected to domination. A theory of structural injustice should enable us to identify such cases; the dual account of structural injustice does so.

VI. Political Implications

Beyond identifying a wider range of injustices in prevailing social structures and clarifying their normative basis, disentangling Unfreedom and Inequality also has significant implications for how we approach and address structural injustice and oppression as political problems. Let me conclude by discussing two of those political implications.

First, this account illuminates the political stakes of adopting certain views of oppression over others. One useful purpose of theoretical analyses of political concepts is to shed valuable light on how common understandings of these concepts can lead to political problems. Consider the freedom view of oppression. If my analysis is correct, this view is susceptible to the following problem: it leaves the concept of oppression, a concept that commands considerable rhetorical force in our political culture, liable to co-optation by members of relatively privileged social groups given that they, too,

[56] Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, 52. Note that 'social processes' is equivalent to 'social structures' for Young, owing to her use of Anthony Giddens' theory of structuration in conceptualizing social structures. See Young, 59–62.

can experience Unfreedom within prevailing social structures. This is a political problem insofar as it threatens to obscure Inequality as a distinctive structural injustice faced by subordinated social groups. Michael Messner explains how this problem fragmented men's social movements that developed in the 1970s in response to feminist critiques of patriarchy:

> On one hand, an overtly anti-feminist men's rights movement developed. Men's rights organizations stressed the costs of narrow conceptions of masculinity to men and either downplayed or angrily disputed feminist claims that patriarchy benefited men at women's expense. On the other hand, a pro-feminist (sometimes called "antisexist") men's movement developed. This movement tended to emphasize the primary importance of joining with women to confront patriarchy, with the goal of doing away with men's institutionalized privileges.[57]

The dual account of structural injustice not only diagnoses the normative sources of this division but also proposes a potentially useful political middle ground: men can suffer a serious kind of structural injustice due to narrow conceptions of masculinity; however, they do not suffer the kind of structural injustice that women face given their structural subordination to men. This may seem like an obvious position, but it is rarely expressed: Frye, for instance, dismisses the worry that men can be seriously harmed by the structural constraints they face as men, suggesting that these constraints are merely an "inconvenience."[58] But surely Toby's death shows that these constraints are more than mere inconvenience.

The freedom view faces a further problem: it leads to an impoverished political vision of what it means to remedy oppression. On this view, members of a social group are less oppressed to the extent that they are less systematically and harmfully constrained than before, leading to political remedies that seek to empower members of oppressed social groups by removing structural constraints to their choices. However, as Serene Khader argues, such remedies often overlook how inequalities between social groups persist despite these remedies; indeed, some remedies arguably

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[57] Michael A. Messner, "The Limits of 'The Male Sex Role': An Analysis of the Men's Liberation and Men's Rights Movements' Discourse," *Gender & Society* 12, no. 3 (June 1, 1998): 256.
[58] Frye, "Oppression," 13.

exacerbate the burdens of "empowered" yet still subordinated social groups.[59] To see her point, consider a possible remedy to Larry and Lisa's situation: Larry receives a 50% raise to his salary, enabling them to purchase childcare in their community. While this would technically alleviate the pressure on Lisa to give up her career, it fails to address and even exacerbates one of the underlying issues of egalitarian concern in her situation, namely the gender wage gap that leaves her vulnerable to domination more generally. Nor does it address the issue that the domestic labor that Lisa is no longer compelled to perform will most likely fall on *other women*, especially migrant women who are increasingly supplying the care labor demanded by households in more affluent countries.[60] Thus, Khader argues, rather than taking "the view that social structures disempower by constraining individual agency," political remedies to oppression should take the view that social structures disempower by constraining (and enabling) "the field of available actions in ways that affect the relative position of social groups," that is, the equality view of oppression.[61]

The second political implication of this account bears on questions of responsibility and, importantly, motivation for redressing structural injustice. Recent theorizing about structural injustice predominantly focuses on the responsibility question: who bears the responsibility to remedy the injustices produced by prevailing social structures, and why?[62] This literature has shed light on the moral considerations surrounding the justification and distribution of remedial responsibility for structural injustices. One relevant consideration, some have argued, is that certain agents benefit in various ways from their privileged position in prevailing social structures; such agents arguably have distinctive reasons to remedy the unjust outcomes produced by those social structures.[63] The dual

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[59] Serene Khader, "Passive Empowerment: How Women's Agency Became Women Doing It All," *Philosophical Topics* 46, no. 2 (2018): see esp. 151-52.
[60] Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild, eds., *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy* (New York: Macmillan, 2003).
[61] Khader, "Passive Empowerment," 141.
[62] For a review, see McKeown, "Structural Injustice," 5–10.
[63] Mattias Gunnemyr, "Why the Social Connection Model Fails: Participation Is Neither Necessary nor Sufficient for Political Responsibility," *Hypatia* 35, no. 4 (2020): 567–86; Dorothea Gädeke, "Who Should Fight Domination?

account of structural injustice lends some support to that view by clarifying the sense in which members of certain social groups can be privileged by prevailing social structures even if they face systematic and harmful constraints. Indeed, the existence of such privileged positions is itself a structural injustice that needs political remedy from an egalitarian perspective.

Far less theoretical attention has been given to the motivation question: granting the moral arguments for why agents have remedial responsibility for structural injustice, what reasons might be marshalled to motivate agents to actually do the political work of changing prevailing social structures?[64] This question is particularly salient for members of relatively privileged social groups, whose very privileges pose a powerful motivational barrier to changing the social structures that privilege them – even if they understand and even agree with the moral reasons for why they ought to do so. As Jade Schiff observes, "For no matter how well-intentioned we are, how conscious of our privilege, how attentive to our implication in suffering, we are all still subject to powerful temptations to disavow those things."[65]

But if the dual account of structural injustice is correct, these privileges are not absolute. Social structures can and do fail to adequately support the needs and capacities of even privileged social groups. These inadequacies suggest a potential source of motivation for privileged agents to join and support political efforts to change prevailing social structures: such efforts are an opportunity to build different social structures that more adequately support their capabilities as well as those of others. As New argues about the situation of men, "It is in men's *conservative* interests to maintain a gender order

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Individual Responsibility and Structural Injustice," *Politics, Philosophy & Economics* 20, no. 2 (May 1, 2021): 180–201; Hochan Kim, "Structural Transformation and Reparative Obligation: Reinterpreting the Beneficiary Pays Principle," *Journal of Social Philosophy* Early View (June 2023): 1–21.

[64] Jade Larissa Schiff, *Burdens of Political Responsibility: Narrative and the Cultivation of Responsiveness* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Clarissa Rile Hayward, "Responsibility and Ignorance: On Dismantling Structural Injustice," *The Journal of Politics* 79, no. 2 (April 2017): 396–408; Ben Laurence, "The Question of the Agent of Change*," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 28, no. 4 (2020): 355–77; Nicholas Smyth, "Structural Injustice and the Emotions," *Res Publica* 27, no. 4 (November 1, 2021): 577–92.

[65] Schiff, *Burdens of Political Responsibility*, 3.

that meets some of their human needs – although sometimes in very costly ways. But it is in their *emancipatory* interests to create an order that meets their own needs better, without accompanying limitation and injury, and also meets the needs of others [emphasis in original]."[66] Her point is echoed in a wide range of critiques of prevailing social structures, from white supremacy to meritocracy to the neoliberal global economy, that argue that members of social groups who are privileged by those structures nonetheless have emancipatory interests in changing them.[67] Identifying such interests is an important task for the political theorizing of structural injustice, if only because changing social structures will be difficult without the support of members of privileged groups. This is not to suggest that identifying their emancipatory interests will necessarily mobilize privileged agents to change prevailing social structures, a feat that confronts many barriers.[68] Rather, identifying these emancipatory interests offers another and potentially more powerful source of motivation than appeals to privileged agents' moral sensibilities, namely that they too suffer serious harms due to the constraints they face in prevailing social structures.

Importantly, the social structures that produce these harms are often the same structures that lead to the subordination or oppression of other social groups. The cultural norms of masculinity that harm men, for example, also play a significant role in the subordination or oppression of women. In such cases, the emancipatory interests of privileged and oppressed groups overlap: both suffer an injustice in prevailing social structures, and addressing structural injustice for one entails addressing structural injustice for the other. Disentangling the two kinds of structural injustice thus reveals

[66] New, "Oppressed and Oppressors?," 745–46.
[67] Thomas J. Donahue-Ochoa, *Unfreedom for All: How the World's Injustices Harm You* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019); Daniel Markovits, *The Meritocracy Trap: How America's Foundational Myth Feeds Inequality, Dismantles the Middle Class, and Devours the Elite* (New York: Penguin Press, 2019); Benjamin Laing McKean, *Disorienting Neoliberalism: Global Justice and the Outer Limit of Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020); Heather C. McGhee, *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together* (New York: One World, 2021); Daniel Martinez HoSang, *A Wider Type of Freedom: How Struggles for Racial Justice Liberate Everyone* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2023).
[68] Hayward, "Responsibility and Ignorance," 401–3.

potential avenues of coalition-building against social structures that make some of us unequal to others in ways that leave all of us unfree.