

**AYN RAND VS. ETHICS OF CARE:  
CAPITALIST ECONOMICS AND WOMEN ON WELFARE**

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## ABSTRACT

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The objective of this thesis is to examine how the political ideology of capitalism that heavily permeates today's culture and is so prominent within the popular novel *Atlas Shrugged* constructs our values in such a way as to marginalize women. I examine the ways in which freedom, independence, morality, and equality are thought about within liberalism and relate them to Ayn Rand's novel *Atlas Shrugged* to demonstrate how people who do not fit these values are considered less than citizens.

I juxtapose this with a focus on how freedom, independence, morality and equality are constructed within a feminist ethics of care so as to more wholly include women within the realm of citizenship. I use this discussion to provide an alternative to the constructions of values that happen within capitalist political ideology and demonstrate ways in which these values can be envisioned without being marginalizing. I relate this to a discussion of women on welfare and how their testimonies provide a call to recognize the untruths and inequities of liberalism. These testimonies argue for a different societal construction of women on welfare that subverts the mainstream perception and aligns with a feminist ethics of care. I also investigate ways in which liberalism is currently prominent in mainstream ideology to emphasize the present effects that this is having on women and women on welfare.

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the most popular books in America is *Atlas Shrugged* by Ayn Rand. When I read it, I was sucked into that world. For those 1,100 pages, Dagny Taggart and John Galt felt more real to me than my friends, their dilemmas trumping my own. I kept questioning myself and my world and wondering how it could be better, more like the world of Ayn Rand where people are genuine and honest and confident and those people always win. But nothing ever lived up. Something was wrong with the world in which I lived.

Or something was wrong with the book. And the deeper I looked into that, the more I saw the dark side to *Atlas Shrugged*. The character of Dagny Taggart, vice president of Taggart Railroads and a powerful woman, was at first alluring. But reading passage after passage in which she is demeaned and subservient to her male colleagues made me feel uneasy. There was something about Ayn Rand's work that made her philosophy seem incompatible with truly valuing and including women and their experiences.

I wanted to write this so I could explore what that was and how deep it went. In peeling back the layers, I found that there's not only an exclusion of women in Ayn Rand's work, but in liberal ideology as a whole. Liberal ideology, as I understand it in this project, is the ideological underpinning of the American capitalist system. When I refer to ideology, I use Terry Eagleton's understanding that "ideology is a matter of 'discourse' rather than 'language'. It concerns the actual uses of language between particular human subjects for the production of specific effects."<sup>1</sup> I look at the discourses of freedom, independence, morality, and equality and how these words are used in certain contexts to have particular meanings, focusing on what effect

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<sup>1</sup> Terry Eagleton. *Ideology: An Introduction*. (New York, Verso, 1991), 9.

they have on the way we think and structure society. In discussing liberal ideology, I recognize the long and complex history of liberal thought. I am focusing specifically on the aspects of classical liberal ideology that puts emphasis on individualism and Ayn Rand's beliefs that "the individual's own life and survival are the sole criteria of value [and] egoism is thus the only basis to ethics."<sup>2</sup> I use other proponents of liberal thought as it justifies laissez-faire economic policy—Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek—to demonstrate how these beliefs exist in the core of liberal ideology and have contributed to mainstream perspectives of our value system. I examine what it means when liberal ideology advocates that "the individual is free when left uncoerced or unrestrained" by questioning what type of freedom is being offered.<sup>3</sup> The discourse that surrounds ideas of being free, independent, moral, equal, and citizens are influenced by liberal ideology in ways that exclude certain life experiences from being valuable.

In contrasting liberal ideology with a feminist ethics of care, I base my framework in the ideas of Nancy Fraser's *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the "Postsocialist" Condition*, Virginia Held's *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global*, Iris Marion Young's *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, *Feminist Ethics and Social Policy* edited by Patrice DiQuinzio and Iris Marion Young, and *Women and Welfare: Theory and Practice in the United States and Europe* edited by Nancy Hirschmann and Ulrike Liebert.<sup>4</sup> Using these texts, I formulate care as a moral theory and a practice that provides an alternative to liberal individualism. Care entails recognizing people's inability to be entirely self-sufficient and

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<sup>2</sup> Andrew Vincent. *Modern Political Ideologies*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 33.

<sup>3</sup> Vincent, *Modern Political Ideologies*, 37.

<sup>4</sup> Nancy Fraser. *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the "Postsocialist" Condition*. (New York: Routledge, 1997); Virginia Held. *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Iris Marion Young. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1990); Patrice DiQuinzio and Iris Marion Young. *Feminist Ethics and Social Policy*. (Bloomington, IN., Indiana University Press, 1997); Nancy Hirschmann and Ulrike Liebert, eds. *Women and Welfare: Theory and Practice in the United States and Europe*. (New Jersey, Rutgers University Press, 2001).

valuing their need for care from others, communities, society as well as those who provide the care. An ethics of care, in my conception, is focused on incorporating compassion into our moral framework so as to make space for all people's experiences and needs. Envisioning freedom, independence, morality, and equality through an ethics of care requires realistically examining the barriers, internal and external, that exist for people. Focus is placed on building caring communities that value the support of one another as opposed to emphasizing competition and individualism. Care is also about listening to the needs of people without stigmatizing them. The actual practice of care includes the work involved with taking care of children, the elderly, a person who is differently abled, or a person who is ill. Ethics of care can be incorporated into the way people think about values like freedom, independence, morality and equality, and also through interactions between people who need care and are caregivers. The cultural devaluation of care affects larger societal interactions that provide care as well as the practice done by people who are caregivers. I view the ethics of care and incorporating compassion into our lives as a radical value system with the possibility to transform the oppressions of an ideologically liberal capitalist system.

The methodological approach I took was based in context analysis. I used the texts, *Freedom to Choose* and *Capitalism and Freedom* by Milton Friedman, along with Friedrich Hayek's *Road to Serfdom* and *The Fatal Conceit* to examine how these economists advocate for liberal ideology and its role in capitalism. Pairing this with an analysis of Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged*, I explore the ways these liberalist ideologies are communicated through this text and weave themselves into the bedrock of the American cultural mindset.

I break liberal ideology down into its four core values—freedom, independence, morality, equality—and discuss how they are constructed throughout liberal ideology and the capitalist

economic system. I use this to argue that these values are constructed in conservative economic discourse in such a way that causes marginalization of women and people who are impoverished. The free market is set up as the only way for people to have freedom, limiting it to the economic and political realms. Independence is prioritized to an extreme while dependency is stigmatized. The tenets of morality are market values such as individualism and competition while solidarity and altruism are constructed as immoral. Equality is understood as the removal of tangible, legislative barriers to individuals receiving opportunities with little acknowledgment of institutionalized oppressions such as racism, sexism, homophobia, etc. that prevent people from having the same type of barriers. Synthesizing these values allows for an understanding of citizenship within liberal ideology that prioritizes wealthy white men while excluding women, people of color, and people who are impoverished.

I pair this with a discussion of the feminist ethics of care and how constructing freedom, independence, morality, and equality through this lens can incorporate care into the cultural mindset, allowing for a society that values all people as citizens. I use care as a framework in which one understands the importance of taking care of people and of people who care for others. This is a practical and moral framework in which care is valued and there is recognition and compassion for those who, at any point in their lives, need care or do carework.

It is possible to envision positive and negative liberty in such a way that they work together to understand the real barriers preventing different communities from having freedom. Instead of being stigmatized, dependence can be recognized as a natural reality so that people get the support they need and are able to participate fully within all aspects of life. Compassion, sensitivity, and empathy are emotions that are considered valuable and encouraged within all facets of life, celebrating carework, communities, and solidarity. Equality can be envisioned in

such a way that institutionalized oppressions are acknowledged and work dismantling injustice considers racism, sexism, homophobia, etc. as root causes of inequality. I use the voices of women on welfare to contradict the proponents of liberal ideology and advocate for an ethics of care that acknowledges their needs, experiences, and value as citizens. They use their experiences to refute the exploitative narratives in popular culture about welfare such as “the welfare queen” and demand their right to citizenship.

An important aspect to this paper is the fundamental concept of social justice. When I refer to systems of oppression or institutionalized privilege, I am describing the ways that racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and other oppressive institutions and discourses have become embedded into the basic cultural fabric and affect every aspect of our lives. Our society is set up in such a way that people with advantaged identities, such as being white, moving through life more easily because the systemic and cultural mindsets favor whiteness. Being white allows a person to have unearned, undeserved benefits that constitute privilege. These privileges come at the expense of people without advantaged identities. People of color do not have white privilege and must face the oppression of racism every day. These oppressions and privileges affect a person’s attitudes, opportunities, and experiences in fundamental ways that are crucial to understanding inequalities in our society. Intersectionality refers to the way that all of a person’s identities combine causing them to have a different experience than someone without those identities. As a white, lesbian, upper middle-class, cisgender, able-bodied woman, I have a specific set of privileges that affect the way I move through life and affect how I experience what oppression I may receive as a result of my targeted identities. Peggy McIntosh’s important piece on white privilege illuminates this point:

I think whites are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege, as males are taught

not to recognize male privilege. So I have begun in an untutored way to ask what it is like to have white privilege. I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to remain oblivious.<sup>5</sup>

It is my belief that liberal ideology and capitalist economics collude to make these privileges invisible for those who have them and deny the oppressions that result. Having a basic understanding of privilege and oppression is important to thinking about the ways that freedom, independence, morality, and equality, constructed through liberal thought, obscure the inequities that exist within a capitalist system.

Writing about this is important to me because these inequities and inequalities are obscured and perpetuate oppression. I argue that an examination of liberal ideology is necessary to dismantle the racism, sexism, etc. within American society. I have come across people who hold on to liberal thought and support capitalist economics with an intensity that has always struck me as curious. When I read *Atlas Shrugged*, I came across that vehemence again. It felt as if the passion was supposed to guard against my questions. Why is it so difficult to question the capitalist system and so threatening to disagree? Having these questions after I read Ayn Rand’s magnum opus started me on this journey. I felt as if the book had fully enveloped me into a lie from which I could not find the way out. This project has been my attempt to find that way out. It has led me to a place of questioning everything I had previously understood about values, morals, ethics, what is important, and who is not.

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<sup>5</sup> Peggy McIntosh. “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack.” (Wellesley, MA., Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, 1988).

I want to expose the way I believe people are being excluded from the full benefits of citizenship and to ask why. My main objective is to encourage more questions. Where does the idea of “the welfare queen” come from? It certainly is not reflective of the experiences of women on welfare and how they speak about their lives. So who began perpetuating that idea and why? Who benefits from it? Ayn Rand values the sanctity of the individual. But what kind of individual? Certainly not the poor black women who are struggling to raise their children under the oppressive gaze of the racist, sexist welfare system.

My purpose is to question how racist, sexist hierarchies are perpetuated within our society and examine to what extent liberal ideology and capitalism contribute to these hierarchies. I have chosen to do this by looking at the discourse around freedom, independence, morality, and equality and demonstrate how the construction of these concepts sets up some as more worthy of citizenship than others. I include the voices of women on welfare to provide their direct subversion of the falsities that narratives within mainstream culture tell in constructing them as “welfare queens” or “welfare chiselers.” I offer a perspective of a feminist ethics of care to envision a different way of constructing value systems so as to incorporate care into society and have a better framework for appreciating experiences of carework such as child care, elder care, etc. Through this, I hope to encourage deeper thought into the narratives that *Atlas Shrugged* and other advocates of liberal ideology are telling and reflection on their consequences.

## **CHAPTER ONE: THE EFFECTS OF LIBERALISM AND *ATLAS SHRUGGED*'S INFLUENCE ON DISCOURSE**

Capitalism is an economic organization of a society based on private ownership and the exchange of goods and services. To people living in the United States, this economic order appears as a neutral set of economic arrangements. It operates as a way of life, taken for granted as fixed and unalterable. Yet capitalism requires ideologies to win consent of the people. Its proponents produce constructions of ideal values—freedom, independence, morality, and justice. These ideas do not work equally for the interests of all citizens. People working multiple shifts, having difficulty in caring for their children or their elders, or lacking health care do not profit from their labor. The liberal ideology masks this inequity. Although liberalism has many strains and widely varying ideas within it, I use classical liberalism here to understand the emphasis on individualism in the thinking of authors I examine in this paper, such as Milton Friedman, Friedrich Hayek, and Ayn Rand. Liberalism in this thesis refers to the political ideology that underlies the economic system of capitalism.

The ways that freedom, independence, morality, and justice are constructed through liberalism ignore the experiences of carework done most often by women. These values are created to exclude care from the natural experience of life under capitalism. There is little place for care in a capitalist ideology so these experiences are devalued and those who perform them are relegated to the sidelines. This results in marginalizing many aspects of women's lives because society constructs women as the ones who perform most of the carework. In this thesis, I argue that four dominant capitalist values--freedom, independence, morality, and justice—comprise a vision of the ideal citizen that does not include women, and particularly women on welfare. Examining how these ideas are constructed demonstrates how capitalism is

ideologically buttressed in ways that justify the exploitation of women and neglect of the poor. In this chapter I will first consider the ways freedom, independence, morality, and equality are constructed within liberalism, use Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* to examine how these ideas are reinforced through a popular work, and then demonstrate how these constructions contribute to an understanding of citizenship that excludes women and the poor. My analysis will track the four core values across multiple representatives of the argument for free-market capitalism.

## **FREEDOM**

In liberal ideology, freedom is constructed so that only those who are deemed 'responsible' are worthy of freedom, which limits women and the poor's possibilities for being considered deserving. Milton Friedman, an economist at the University of Chicago, wrote extensively about the connection between economic freedom and political freedom: "economic freedom is an indispensable means toward the achievement of political freedom,"<sup>6</sup> and "a society which is socialist cannot also be democratic, in the sense of guaranteeing individual freedom."<sup>7</sup> This is a type of freedom that only considers certain aspects of life, having to do solely with the 'public' sphere. Friedman's freedom, the freedom of liberalism, is the freedom of exchange in economic affairs combined with political freedom defined as "the absence of coercion of a man by his fellow men."<sup>8</sup> He discusses freedom as unregulated prices, freedom to purchase, freedom to own property, freedom of speech and religion, and freedom from violence by other citizens as the central liberties that must be preserved. The role of the government is to ensure political freedom and not encroach upon the free market so that economic freedom can be preserved.

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<sup>6</sup> Milton Friedman. *Capitalism and Freedom*. (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1962), 8.

<sup>7</sup> Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, 8.

<sup>8</sup> Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, 15.

Friedman does recognize that there are aspects in which people are not free but only in the context of the economy. He writes, “As consumers, we are not even free to choose how to spend the part of our income that is left after taxes...we are not free to buy cyclamates or laetrile... we are not free to buy an automobile without seat belts.”<sup>9</sup> This is the denial of freedom that Friedman laments. It is a freedom entirely centered on what someone can buy and absorbed wholly by the economic market. People’s rights and needs outside of the market are erased and not considered part of freedom. Political and economic freedoms pertaining exclusively to the public sphere are only considered within liberal ideology, denying the existence of freedom as a value within the private realm.

Friedrich Hayek, a British economist, specifies how freedom is a value absorbed completely by the market. He discusses the benefits of the unrestricted market as coordinating the voluntary economic actions of many people. Unregulated prices allow producers and consumers to coordinate their activities so that people are able to collaborate voluntarily. Because the market can manage this coordination, people can engage in voluntary economic action and this is what allows them to be free. Being free is being able to buy or sell whatever you want, based on property laws. Hayek writes, “Only abstract rules of property—i.e., the rules of law—guarantee freedom.”<sup>10</sup> Because people can own property, they can be free and that is the extent of their freedom. Understanding freedom as based exclusively on property laws refuses to incorporate experiences which are not focused on the market and denies them legitimacy. The ‘private’ world of relationships and care is wholly ignored. The ability of a woman to withhold sexual consent or the right of a mother to stay at home to raise her child is

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<sup>9</sup> Milton Friedman and Rose Friedman. *Free to Choose: A Personal Statement*. (New York, Harcourt, 1979), 57.

<sup>10</sup> Friedrich Hayek. *The Fatal Conceit: The Errors of Socialism*. (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1988), 35.

not included in this construction of freedom. These aspects of life outside of the capitalist environment are not worthy of being considered part of human freedoms.

What is left by this understanding of freedom as property laws is that being free in the market sphere is having no restrictions on producing or consuming. Friedman and Hayek both strongly oppose the government attempting to place restrictions on their lives or their ability to purchase cars without seat belts. Paternalism is extremely unfavorable when directed at the market and those engaging in the economic arena, but, according to Friedman, only because these individuals are ‘responsible’ enough to handle that freedom:

Freedom is a tenable objective only for responsible individuals. We do not believe in freedom for madmen or children. We must somehow draw a line between responsible individuals and others, yet doing so introduces a fundamental ambiguity into our ultimate objective of freedom. We cannot categorically reject paternalism for those whom we consider as not responsible.<sup>11</sup>

Friedman gives the power to determine who is not responsible and the duty to “protect” them to the government. He does acknowledge the “ambiguity” that exists within determining who is or is not responsible, but sanctions it anyway. Far from being limited to “madmen or children,” many people are constructed as ‘irresponsible’ and are targets of governmental paternalism.

Those who are largely protected from this paternalism are the ones who are considered responsible by being successful in the market arena. The free market is not unbiased. It is not as accessible to some as it is to others and it is constructed to favor certain people, to automatically consider them responsible, and to see them as deserving of capitalisms’ freedoms. Many factors

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<sup>11</sup> Friedman, *Free to Choose*, 24.

have contributed to who is able to be successful and be considered 'responsible' that are not under the control of those who are considered 'irresponsible.' For an example, white men are usually considered automatically 'responsible' because of their racial privilege and because they are not typically expected to handle the same responsibilities that women are of maintaining a home and family. This frees them up considerably to devote time and energy to advancing their career and becoming successful in the capitalist economic system. Being monetarily successful, a factor greatly aided by privileges surrounding race, gender, etc., is also an indicator of responsibility in the capitalist sphere. Class privilege further contributes to the construction of white, wealthy men as responsible members of the capitalist world deserving of freedoms. They are seen as the most deserving of the freedom liberalism acknowledges.

Women, particularly women of color who do not have the racial privilege that white women do, are much more likely to be considered 'irresponsible.' Freedom in liberalism is focused solely on the political and economic spheres that do not always account for the full experience of women's lives or the carework they do. Women have not always been considered even a part of the market or the public sphere. The carework that women have been expected to do has made it difficult for them to be as wholly involved in market activities as men. Because they are expected to assume caretaking duties in addition to their participation in the market environment, many women have less time and energy to devote to their jobs. Carework and home maintenance are not acknowledged as valuable work in the capitalist environment and it is difficult for women to balance both caretaking and their employment so they may perform as well as someone who does not have those additional expectations. In constructing freedom as limited to the political and economic spheres, the experiences of those outside of the market environment, such as women in caretaking roles, are silenced. They are constructed as

irresponsible if they are unable to compete in the economic world as well as someone else with less commitments would be. They are denied freedom in the areas that are ignored by the capitalist economic system, because these realms of life are constructed to have no value, be unimportant, or be solely the individual's concern. The aspects that are invisible to capitalism are aspects of life that have typically been considered part of a 'woman's role.' This sets up an environment of capitalism that ignores the work that women have been expected to do, placing them on an uneven footing when competing in the market, and more at risk to be determined 'irresponsible' and unworthy of freedoms both in the public and private spheres.

Because of these difficulties in competing in the market, poor women are particularly at risk to be considered irresponsible, which furthers the difficulties in being monetarily successful. Friedman writes, "It is important to preserve freedom only for those who practice self denial, for otherwise freedom degenerates into license and irresponsibility."<sup>12</sup> Because women, due to systemic racism, sexism, classism, etc., within the market sphere as well as the invisibility and devaluation of carework in the capitalist ideology, have not been as successful as a white man might be, they are considered to "degenerate into license" and be irresponsible and not worthy of the economic and political freedoms. Freedoms for women in the home, in the work place, to do carework, or be safe from sexual violence are not even considered freedoms through liberalism. This is used to construct women as irresponsible and undeserving of freedom. This individualistic and market focused approach to freedom combined with the exclusive construction of responsibility serve to prevent women and the poor from having equal access to and protection of their freedoms.

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<sup>12</sup> Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, 18.

## INDEPENDENCE

Independence and dependence are another set of values that are constructed through liberalism so as to grant privilege to white, male voices while erasing many other experiences from the mainstream understanding of what is ‘normal’ or appropriate. Independence is highly valued in the market arena. Milton Friedman advocates for a, “Personal Independence Day –that day in the year when we stop working to pay the expenses of government...and start working to pay for the items we severally and individually choose...”<sup>13</sup> The independence of the individual consumer and producer from the influence of the government is an important aspect of liberalism. This contributes to a high regard for the individual, who makes autonomous choices and enters into voluntary transactions with other individuals within the free market. In classical liberalism, “there could not be any collective or institutional responsibility, since only individuals can be responsible for themselves. The only good is individual good.”<sup>14</sup> This does not take into account the fallibility of humans and the necessity for dependency in the case of childhood, illness, disability, aging and other universal conditions that can sometimes make it difficult for a person to be the autonomous individual that has responsibility over themselves. Interdependence is recognized within capitalist ideology but it is limited to the dependence of participants in the market to obtain and sell goods to others. Friedman declares:

Interdependence is a pervasive characteristic of the modern world: in the economic sphere proper, between one set of prices and another, between one industry and another, between one country and another; in the broader society, between economic activity and

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<sup>13</sup> Friedman, *Free to Choose*, 56.

<sup>14</sup> Vincent, *Modern Political Ideologies*, 32.

cultural, social, and charitable activities; in the organization of society, between economic arrangements and political arrangements, between economic freedom and political freedom.<sup>15</sup>

This vision of interdependence assumes groups of completely autonomous individuals working together to achieve common goals. This does not account for the level of support that each individual needs to be able to project an image of independence and the extensive personal networks that exist in reality which people often rely on to survive.

There are punishments for not living up to this myth of independence. If people are unable to appear independent to the extent that the system requires of them, they are considered irresponsible. Recalling what Friedman said about freedom for “madmen or children,” the dangerous link between dependency and irresponsibility is apparent.<sup>16</sup> Children, an identity which all people hold at some point, are not considered deserving of freedom because of their dependency on others to help guide them through the process of growing into self-sufficiency. Because they are dependent, they are automatically also deemed irresponsible, which justifies their loss of freedoms. Dependency is not only devalued; it is also punished. This is similarly true of “madmen.” The stigma that exists in today’s American culture around mental illness and disability is partly rooted in shaming people’s inability to live up to the expectation of being completely autonomous. There is little room in the capitalist system for those who cannot fully achieve the independent, individual ideal.

The ideal is unattainable. The independent individual is very often built on those who are considered dependent or are less valued in the capitalist ideology. This is demonstrated by the

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<sup>15</sup> Friedman, *Free to Choose*, 43.

<sup>16</sup> Friedman, *Free to Choose*, 24.

family model consisting of a man who earns money in the capitalist environment and a woman who works by maintaining the household, cooking meals, and providing childcare. The man depends on the woman to help construct his life in such a way that he does not have to spend the bulk of his time worrying about food, cleaning, taking care of the children and countless other tasks that must be handled daily. He can devote his energy and labor to participating in the market, advancing his career, and seeming like an independent individual. The work that typically women have been expected to do in the household for their family does not have a value in the free market so they do not earn wages. This is work that has just somehow been done for the majority of men who work in the capitalist environment and because of this, is negated as necessary labor. Women who have jobs in the capitalist world, particularly single women with children, must figure out how to do this housework and carework as well as present themselves as independent individuals in their job. Many women struggle with these contradictory tasks because there is little support or understanding within this capitalist system. With the unrealistic expectation of independence and the association of dependence with weakness and irresponsibility, the experiences of caregivers are excluded from the mainstream understanding of what is valuable.

## **MORALITY**

The erasure of dependency and care work is furthered through liberalism's construction of a morality that normalizes competition and individualism. Friedrich Hayek explicitly lays out his vision of this morality in his book, *The Fatal Conceit: the Errors of Socialism*. In his view, there is a distinction between the altruism and solidarity that seems instinctively moral to most and the morality of the "extended order" or capitalism. The morality underlying capitalism

comes about evolutionarily, Hayek argues, so that coordination of the free market can be achieved and allow expansion and “civilization.” He writes:

Mankind achieved civilisation by developing and learning to follow rules...that often forbade him to do what his instincts demanded, and no longer depended on a common perception of events. These rules, in effect constituting a new and different morality and to which I would indeed prefer to confine the term ‘morality’, suppress or restrain the ‘natural morality’, i.e., those instincts that welded together the small group and secured cooperation.<sup>17</sup>

Hayek argues that the human instincts of altruism and solidarity must be ignored to achieve the morality of what he calls “the extended order.” He says that “for those now living within the extended order gain from not treating one another as neighbours...”<sup>18</sup> Solidarity and altruism are constructed so that they are not part of morality.

What is moral, in Hayek’s view, is what is learned from participating in the capitalism system: individualism and competition. This prevents the possibility of attaching value to caring for a loved one, for children, for someone who has a disability, someone who is ill, or someone who is elderly. Andrew Vincent, author of *Modern Political Ideologies*, writes, “[Individualism] is the metaphysical and ontological core of liberal thought and the basis of moral, political, economic, and cultural existence... The individual is the touchstone of morality and truth.”<sup>19</sup> This emphasis on individualism is the basis for why solidarity has no currency within a liberal morality. If the “touchstone of morality and truth” is the individual, the collective is not given

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<sup>17</sup> Hayek, *The Fatal Conceit*, 12.

<sup>18</sup> Hayek, *The Fatal Conceit*, 13.

<sup>19</sup> Vincent, *Modern Political Ideologies*, 32.

value.<sup>20</sup> Carework is not considered moral by the capitalism system and is relegated to the private sector. Not only does this marginalize carework, it also heightens the distinction between the ‘public’ world of the market and the ‘private’ world of the family. Hayek states that “if we were to apply the unmodified, uncurbed, rules of the micro-cosmos (i.e. of the small band or troop, or of, say, our families) to the macro-cosmos (our wider civilization), as our instincts and sentimental yearnings often make us wish to do, we would destroy it.”<sup>21</sup> Hayek’s assertion adds to the reality that if people who deal heavily with the “rules of the micro-cosmos” enter into the capitalist workforce, they must cut that part of themselves and their lives off and assume a “macro-cosmos” persona to be successful or they will damage the entire system. This understanding of morality helps to maintain a system of exploitation through encouraging competition and individualism. It is so fundamental to this system’s function that introducing solidarity and altruism into it could do serious harm to how it operates in our society. It is important for solidarity to be ignored so that this capitalist economic system can survive.

In the same way that trying to apply the rules of the micro to the macro destroys the macro, Hayek goes on to say that applying the macro to the micro also destroys the families. This sets up two realms of life that cannot influence each other, fragmenting a person’s experience and forcing them to “learn to live in two sorts of world at once.”<sup>22</sup> The home sphere of a person’s life is ignored and avoided by the market world. When someone needs to provide carework for their child, family member, or friend, it is not acknowledged as a valuable act or otherwise provided for within the market arena. Those who provide this care, for example, women raising children, can often find it difficult to manage these two realms of the macro and

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<sup>20</sup> Vincent, *Modern Political Ideologies*, 32.

<sup>21</sup> Hayek, *The Fatal Conceit*, 18.

<sup>22</sup> Hayek, *The Fatal Conceit*, 18.

micro cosmos because instincts such as altruism and solidarity, important in carework, are so distanced from the rules of the macro order. The separation of morality from altruism in the private sphere prevents caregivers from being recognized and upholds the competition and egoism of the public sphere as the only possible understanding of morality.

Capitalism denies the moral qualities of innate altruism and solidarity and the private sphere so that the rules of the capitalistic world can be set up as the new morality, the new altruism. Hayek writes, “The morals of the market do lead us to benefit others, not by our intending to do so, but by making us act in a manner which, nonetheless, will have just that effect.”<sup>23</sup> This aspect of liberalism negates qualms about disregarding solidarity and altruism by reassuring that upholding competition and egoism will allow for true altruism and true benefit to others to be realized. Asking people to go against their instinctual feelings of morality and to contribute to benefiting others without ‘our intending to do so’ allows the exploitation and disregard for the compassionate aspects of life such as carework to be deemed not only necessary but ‘beneficial.’ This morality justifies the exploitation of others through its derision of altruism and solidarity and by excluding the private sphere from being a realm of legitimate morality.

## **EQUALITY**

By understanding morality in this way, liberalism justifies the creation and maintenance of people to be exploited, providing the foundation for capitalism. Liberalism constructs equality in such a way that it justifies exploitation by preventing equity, encouraging discrimination, and constructing justice so as to sanction this treatment. Discrimination is seen very individualistically. Friedman quotes and agrees with the economist Adam Smith who writes that

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<sup>23</sup> Hayek, *The Fatal Conceit*, 81.

one of the roles of the government is, “Protecting, as far as possible, every member of the society from the injustice or oppression of every other member of it.”<sup>24</sup> This addresses the singular discriminations that could occur between individual people without accounting for the history and background of structural and institutional oppressions such as racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia. The economists who write in support of liberalism and a capitalist economic system do not address these structural oppressions at all and attempt to deny them by situating discrimination solely in an individual context. On the subject of equality and discrimination and “minority groups”, Friedman writes that “instead of recognizing the existence of the market has protected them from the attitudes of their fellow countrymen, they mistakenly attribute the residual discrimination to the market.”<sup>25</sup> By referring to the deeply embedded structural oppressions that exist in the government, in the market, in every aspect of American society and culture as “residual discrimination,” he trivializes the oppressions that exist and casts blame and doubt on those who suffer from and fight against these oppressions. This deflects the criticism of the capitalist system that perpetuates these oppressions. It neutralizes criticism by associating it with a handful of misguided individuals. Friedman further waves away criticism by saying “the farther fields always look greener—so we blame the existing system.”<sup>26</sup> He reduces legitimate criticism against the institutional oppressions in our society to the personal feeling communicated by this overused idiom. Equality and oppression are individualized, deflecting attention away from criticism of the capitalist system as a whole and placing blame on the individual instead.

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<sup>24</sup> Friedman, *Free to Choose*, 20.

<sup>25</sup> Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, 21.

<sup>26</sup> Friedman, *Free to Choose*, 14.

Friedman continues his understanding of equality by delineating a breakdown of what he sees as the three types. He writes of equality before God, equality of opportunity, and equality of outcome. Equality before God is “personal equality,” or the right of a person to serve their own desires.<sup>27</sup> Equality of opportunity is, “No arbitrary obstacles should prevent people from achieving those positions for which their talents fit them.”<sup>28</sup> Not every person is born with identical abilities but each should be able to have the opportunities to which their skills match. Equality of outcome is achieving fairness. Friedman supports the first two concepts and is very critical of the third. He asks, “If what people get is to be determined by ‘fairness,’ who is to decide what is ‘fair?’”<sup>29</sup> Friedman’s notion of fairness is one that is very focused on distribution, as in who gets what kind of material goods. In the capitalist system, justice is solely limited to distribution.<sup>30</sup> Justice of recognition, an understanding of justice that strives for each identity, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, etc., to all be accorded the same level of respect throughout society, is not acknowledged at all. Focusing solely on the distribution of material goods will not result in true justice for all and distribution without recognition will be skewed by its absence. Distributive justice must be paired with justice of recognition to work against the embedded oppressions that exist within American society. All of Friedman's understandings of equality are limited to the individual and do not accurately account for the depth of institutionalized injustice and inequality in society.

Friedman denounces equality of outcome and fairness. He also actively celebrates unfairness, declaring “It is important to recognize how much we benefit from the very unfairness

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<sup>27</sup> Friedman, *Free to Choose*, 120.

<sup>28</sup> Friedman, *Free to Choose*, 123.

<sup>29</sup> Friedman, *Free to Choose*, 125-126.

<sup>30</sup> Iris Marion Young. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1990).

we deplore.”<sup>31</sup> Friedman makes no acknowledgement of the structural oppressions that people live under or the unearned privileges that others get by having advantaged identities such as white, male, straight, cisgender, Christian, upper class, able-bodied. It is important to recognize how much this unfairness only benefits some people with certain privileges. These privileges come at the expense of those suffering from oppressions. The way that equality is constructed ignores these aspects of injustice and oppression and obscures them. Friedman goes on to say that “a free society” with a capitalist system, “does not prevent some people from achieving positions of privilege, but so long as freedom is maintained, it prevents those positions of privilege from becoming institutionalized.”<sup>32</sup> This continues to ignore oppressions and the reality of institutionalized privileges due to the structural racism, sexism, etc., that are deeply embedded into each aspect of society. By understanding equality, discrimination, and justice in an individualized way that overlooks institutionalized privilege, many aspects of inequality and injustice in the capitalist system can be ignored or be made to seem as if they are the fault of the person suffering from the oppressions.

### ***ATLAS SHRUGGED***

Examining Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* allows for understanding how Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek's constructions of freedom, independence, morality, and equality have taken root within mainstream culture. Rand reinforces these constructions in her widely popular novel, *Atlas Shrugged*. This book, which was number nine on a list of Americans' favorite books in a 2008 poll, has been able to reach many audiences and become absorbed into the bedrock of the

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<sup>31</sup> Friedman, *Free to Choose*, 128.

<sup>32</sup> Friedman, *Free to Choose*, 139.

American cultural repertoire of books, ideas, and philosophies.<sup>33</sup> I will look at how Rand's constructions of freedom, independence, morality, and equality in *Atlas Shrugged* have furthered the ideology of liberalism, greatly contributed to its widespread acceptance, and strengthened its imperviousness to criticism.

Freedom in *Atlas Shrugged* is limited similarly to the construction Friedman and Hayek provide. Rand writes through the voice of the character John Galt saying, “What did we ask in return? Nothing but freedom. We required that you leave us free to function—free to think and to work as we choose—free to take our own risks and to bear our own losses—free to earn our own profits and to make our own fortunes...”<sup>34</sup> Rand’s freedom is to work and to make money. Freedom is focused solely on the individual’s ability to perform in the public sphere, the capitalist market environment. Freedom within the ‘private’ sphere of the home is negated. There is no conception of freedom within the environment of relationships between people and their partners, raising children, providing care to loved ones who are unable to assume the high level of independence that is required to function in the market arena. Rand continues by saying that “every man is free to rise as far as he’s able or willing, but it’s only the degree to which he thinks that determines the degree to which he’ll rise.”<sup>35</sup> Rand uses gendered language, which highlights the exclusion of women from the world to which this construction of freedom applies. Additionally, as she develops this capitalist construction of freedom, she places total responsibility on the individual and makes no mention of structural challenges that prevent each individual from being as ‘free’ as every other. In this definition of freedom, blame can easily be placed on an individual for not succeeding. This furthers the invisibility of institutionalized

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<sup>33</sup> Brittani Hamm. "Poll: Bible is America's favorite book." *USA Today*. 22 Apr. 2008. Web. 19 Mar 2013.

<sup>34</sup> Ayn Rand. *Atlas Shrugged*. (New York, Plume, 1999),1065.

<sup>35</sup> Ayn Rand. *Atlas Shrugged*,1064.

barriers that prevent some from succeeding to the same degree as others, such as a woman who has the sole responsibility for child care in her family who must manage her paid work as well as carework without any acknowledgement from the capitalist environment of her increased workload. Rand's freedom is individualistic, limited to the public sphere, and does not make space for people with experiences outside of the capitalist sphere.

*Atlas Shrugged* demands independence. Complete autonomy is expected of someone to be successful because to succeed "...your work is the purpose of your life, and you must speed past any killer who assumes the right to stop you, that any value you might find outside your work, any other loyalty or love, can be only travelers you choose to share your journey and must be travelers going on their own power in the same direction."<sup>36</sup> Rand invokes an individualistic understanding of 'share' by using it to mean simply being on the same path as one another as opposed to being caring and supportive of one another along the way. The assumption Rand makes that all loyalties or loves outside of one's work can always have the ability to go on their own power does not reflect the impossibility of people being completely independent and self sufficient at all times. Young children typically cannot go on their own power in the same direction nor can all people who have a disability or people who are elderly and need care. It is similarly unrealistic to assume that everyone can always choose the people with whom they share their lives. She presents this type of independence as possible because it is built on society's idea of what the typical male individual can accomplish because women and carework have not typically been considered part of the public, capitalist sphere at all. By recommending that work is the purpose of life and all else is secondary and must fall in line with that work, Rand cuts off many other life experiences from being as worthy or successful as the one that is

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<sup>36</sup> Ayn Rand. *Atlas Shrugged*, 1020.

devoted to the capitalist sphere. This especially ignores life experiences that many women have had or have been expected to have because of the historical push for women to stay out of the public work environment and engage in carework. Rand laments that anti-capitalist sentiments “declare that the rational man must sacrifice himself to the irrational, the independent man to parasites, the honest man to the dishonest, the man of justice to the unjust, the productive man to thieving loafers...”<sup>37</sup> Dependency is not just simply erased<sup>37</sup> from capitalist sentiments, but is actively degraded in Rand’s work and that of liberal ideology by its association to parasites.

Rand develops this strongly negative association with dependency through her depiction of morality in *Atlas Shrugged*. Because “a morality that holds need as a claim, holds emptiness—non-existence—as its standard of value; it rewards an absence, a defect: weakness, inability, incompetence, suffering, disease, disaster, the lack, the fault, the flaw—the zero.”<sup>38</sup> Need is incompetence, the fault, the flaw. There is very little understanding or acceptance in the capitalist system of being in need or being dependent. A morality that recognizes need is considered a defect leading to the lack of recognition for carework and denial of it having any semblance of morality. Going further, it is deemed a lack of morality. On Rand’s philosophy, Andrew Vincent writes:

Rand enshrined this idea in a doctrine entitled ‘the virtue of selfishness’. The individual’s own life and survival are the sole criteria of value. Egoism is thus the only basis to ethics. A rational life is purely self-interested. *Altruism is moral cannibalism*. [Emphasis added]

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<sup>37</sup> Ayn Rand. *Atlas Shrugged*, 1032.

<sup>38</sup> Ayn Rand. *Atlas Shrugged*, 1032.

Capitalism is the only type of arrangement which maximizes the possibility of such a life.<sup>39</sup>

A capitalist economic system is structured so that altruism has the lowest possibility for being valued. This total disavowal of altruism characterizes Rand's philosophy and the ideological underpinnings of capitalism.

Disregarding altruism cultivates a disregard for the welfare of people who are not monetarily successful. Rand asserts "'Public welfare' is the welfare of those who do not earn it; those who do, are entitled to no welfare."<sup>40</sup> Because of how freedom, independence, and equality are structured, each person is considered as free as the next and expected to be just as independent. Each individual is personally to blame for their successes and failures. This makes it possible to construct a morality in which the welfare system is considered to be giving something to people who do not earn it. The capitalist system constructs itself so that some people are less free and less equal and then is able to shift the blame onto them when they are not as privileged as others.

Rand's construction of justice further develops a hierarchy of who is valuable or not. Rand writes, "Justice is... that every man must be judged for what he is and treated accordingly, that just as you do not pay a higher price for a rusty chunk of scrap than for a piece of shining metal, so you do not value a rotter above a hero..."<sup>41</sup> This type of sentiment contributes to the heavy inequality that persists within society. Because of racist, sexist, homophobic, ableist, classist, transphobic, and other institutionalized oppressions, society has a preset framework for judging who a person is and treating them accordingly. Those who are determined to be "a rusty

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<sup>39</sup> Vincent, *Modern Political Ideologies*, 33.

<sup>40</sup> Ayn Rand. *Atlas Shrugged*, 1050.

<sup>41</sup> Ayn Rand. *Atlas Shrugged*, 1019.

chunk of scrap” are deemed so because of circumstances over which they had no or little control. If one is immediately judged “a rotter” by their society, their ability to be as successful as one who is deemed “a hero” is clearly different. Even the mindset that there are those who are “rotters” or “heroes” at all is detrimental and contributes to the ideological framework that supports capitalism’s ability to justify privileging some and oppressing others. There can be very little equality in a society in which these types of distinctions are made and justify denying some their right to food, shelter, happiness, or life. The individualism, so pervasive in liberalism, allows this to be framed in such a way that institutionalized oppression is overlooked and all blame falls upon the individual. It is acceptable to label a person as a “rotter” and care nothing about the situation they must live with because it is thought that they brought it upon themselves. In line with Friedman and Hayek, Rand also ignores structural privilege, oppression, and the validity of justice of recognition. This perpetuates inequality and injustice while legitimizing claims that it does not exist.

## **CITIZENSHIP: CONCLUSION**

The ways in which freedom, independence, morality, and equality are constructed throughout Friedman, Hayek, and Rand’s work and how these constructions contribute to capitalism plays a large role in the construction of citizenship in American society and who is considered more or less worthy of it. Freedom, as exclusively related to the market arena and only given to those who are deemed “responsible” by a working, focused, and male-dominated society, allows those who are “irresponsible” and not working to be deemed less free and less deserving of citizenship. By heavily privileging independence as a criterion for participating in the market arena, the capitalist system excludes children, those with disabilities, the elderly, and those, mainly women, who give care to people who are unable to be entirely independent from

participating fully in the market arena. Under the family structure of a man as the wage earner and a woman as caregiver, the man is able to be constructed as the independent, working citizen while the woman creates the environment that makes this possible for him. She gets no recognition within capitalism and is not deserving of capitalistic freedoms including citizenship. Morality in liberalism actively discourages people from altruism and solidarity, which not only erases carework but also causes derides it. People who can ignore altruism and solidarity and participate in the individualistic, competitive morality of capitalism can participate more successfully in the capitalist sphere and can become citizens with full freedoms. Those who cannot lose their status as citizens and lose the freedoms that come with citizenship.

Because of the construction of equality and discrimination within capitalist morality, people can believe that each individual has the opportunity to be as successful as the next person. Looking at equality in such an individualistic manner purposefully ignores the systemic oppression that targets specific identities and causes them to be automatically seen as less than citizens because of their skin color, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, ability status, income, etc. Justice in liberalism only exists between each individual and this makes it difficult to articulate a solution or place blame for injustices that are continuously enacted upon entire groups of people who hold certain targeted identities. This allows institutions like the welfare system to construct its recipients as “irresponsible” individuals who have simply not been able to make it in an environment where they had every opportunity to succeed as the next person. Because they are labeled as “irresponsible,” this justifies unlimited intrusion by the state into their lives and the complete removal of their freedoms and their claims to citizenship. The constructions of freedom, independence, morality, and equality in liberalism are enacted in a specific way so as to privilege the individual, independent, working person. Not only are people

who need care and their caregivers not recognized or valued within this ideology, they are less deserving of freedom and citizenship.

## **CHAPTER TWO: REFRAMING DISCOURSE WITH A FEMINIST ETHICS OF CARE AND THE VOICES OF WOMEN ON WELFARE**

In contrast to the ideologies within liberalism, the constructions of freedom, independence, morality, and equality within a feminist ethic of care contribute to lessening the marginalization of people, particularly women. This perspective demonstrates an alternative way of constructing these values so as to include the experience of caretaking and the valuation of caregivers. A feminist ethics of care allows for the imagining of a citizenship that is not based on being a wage-earner. For example, “An ethic of care might see bringing up children and fostering trust between members of the society as the most important concerns of all. Other arrangements might then be evaluated in terms of how well or badly they contribute to the flourishing of children and the health of social relation.”<sup>42</sup> By adopting a framework in which child-raising and having healthy relationships are some of the highest priorities, the constructions of values and ideologies become person-focused, concerned with people’s well-being and therefore, with carework. Understanding an alternative construction of prominent values allows for moving away from the construction of freedom and equality as entirely individualistic, valuing independence at the expense of all else, and advocating the negation of solidarity as a moral principle. Women on welfare have been calling attention to the problematic constructions of these values that exist currently. Their testimonies call for a greater valuation of care work, a positive acknowledgement of dependency, and a revitalization of solidarity and altruism as moral

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<sup>42</sup> Rosemarie Tong. *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction*. (Boulder, CO., Westview Press, 2009). Ch. 5, Maternal Ethics, Virginia Held, para. 5.

qualities. Examining the constructions of freedom, independence, morality, and equality through a feminist ethics of care alongside the words of women on welfare who are welfare activists demonstrate how ideologies of liberalism are constructed so as to erase their citizenship and construct them as less than the wage-earning middle class white man to rationalize their exploitation. Using these alternative constructions provides a place to begin rethinking important values so as to counteract women's marginalization under capitalist political ideology.

Examining the realities of women on welfare demonstrates this marginalization. From the Equal Rights Advocates' statistics about women on welfare, 80% of all welfare recipients are women and according to USAtoday's article, "Record number in government anti-poverty programs," more than 4.4 million people in the United States are on welfare as of 2010.<sup>43</sup> In 1996, the Personal Responsibility and Work Reconciliation Act implemented the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families which caused the cutting of about \$55 billion dollars to welfare programs over the following six years.<sup>44</sup> It also implemented work requirements, causing single parent women to work 30 hours a week to qualify for welfare.<sup>45</sup> The Equal Rights Advocates' research has found, "the average job available to them paid at or near minimum wage and tended to be in the lowest-wage occupations. These occupations, which traditionally employ women, are domestic workers, childcare workers, waitresses and cashiers."<sup>46</sup> Minimum wage is not enough money to support a woman and her family and low-wage jobs do not provide health insurance, the ability to take time off for being sick (for the woman or her children), or unemployment

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<sup>43</sup> "Welfare." *Equal Rights Advocates: Equal Rights and Economic Opportunities for Women and Girls*. Equal Rights Advocates. 2013. Web. 30 March 2013; Richard Wolf. "Record number in government anti-poverty programs." *USAtoday*. 30 September 2010. Web. 30 March 2013.

<sup>44</sup> "Summary of 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act." National Association of Social Workers. 1996. Web. 30 March 2013.

<sup>45</sup> "Summary of 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act." National Association of Social Workers.

<sup>46</sup> "Welfare." *Equal Rights Advocates*. Equal Rights Advocates.

protection. This makes it very difficult for women to provide care for their children or for themselves when they need it. Many other regulations and intrusions into the lives of women on welfare, such as inquiring about their sexual partners, are justified by the cultural devaluation of welfare recipients as society considers them less deserving of citizenship. The deep cuts and added work stipulations to welfare programs have seriously limited women on welfare's ability to provide care to their children and have furthered their marginalization. Liberal construction of freedom, independence, morality, and equality is a large factor in why lawmakers believe these changes are beneficial. Yet, they have contributed greatly to the continuing exploitation of women on welfare and the devaluation of care. Envisioning these values through an ethics of care allows for care to become an important aspect of society, counteracting the marginalization of caregivers and women on welfare.

## **FREEDOM**

Freedom as envisioned by mainstream capitalism today consists of negative and positive liberty. Negative liberty consists of the elimination of barriers to one's action so that there is nothing preventing someone from exercising their rights or achieving their wants. Positive liberty "focuses on what might be called internal barriers: fears, addictions, compulsions, which are at odds with [one's] true self."<sup>47</sup> This understanding of liberty can account for when one's true wants are sometimes at odds with momentary impulses. It "involves the strong possibility that others may know my true will better than I."<sup>48</sup> This idea of positive liberty contributes to the state's devaluation and disregard for women on welfare. The state becomes the entity that knows

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<sup>47</sup> Nancy Hirschmann. "A Question of Freedom, A Question of Rights?: Women and Welfare." *Women and Welfare: Theory and Practice in the United States and Europe*. Eds. Nancy Hirschmann and Ulrike Liebert. (New Jersey, Rutgers University Press, 2001), 86.

<sup>48</sup>Hirschmann. "A Question of Freedom, A Question of Rights?," 86-87.

what women really need and what legislation to create so that they are truly free. Damaging representations of women on welfare such as the “welfare queen” are used to help construct these women as irresponsible in the ideology of mainstream society and justify restricting or removing their freedoms. Because poor women are labeled as “irresponsible,” the government can justify telling these women what is in their best interests. The combination of the construction of freedom as individualistic and negative liberty’s tenet that there are no external barriers to women on welfare achieving monetary success allows them to be individually blamed. This vision of negative liberty also perpetuates the racism and sexism that plagues today’s society by ignoring the institutional barriers that prevent women and people of color from achieving the same level of success as white men. As “the individuals at heart of this negative liberty vision of rights were for the most part propertied white men...its definitions... left out white women and people of color but also dependent on their subservience.”<sup>49</sup> The state has an interest in continuing this vision of negative liberty so that it can use racism and sexism to create a class hierarchy. The state’s commitment to this positive liberty is added on this so that “in practice, welfare often seems more about institutionalizing social control over women than liberating them from economic destitution or empowering them to be economically independent.”<sup>50</sup> The worst aspects of positive and negative liberty are combined so as to justify and continue the welfare system’s paternalism of those who are “irresponsible.”

To counteract paternalism in the welfare system, positive and negative liberty must be reframed and enacted differently so as to cultivate legitimate freedom for every individual.

Nancy J. Hirschmann in her essay “A Question of Freedom, A Questions of Rights?: Women and Welfare” writes, “The Right has particularly appropriated the internal dimensions of liberty,

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<sup>49</sup> Hirschmann. “A Question of Freedom, A Question of Rights?,” 101.

<sup>50</sup> Hirschmann. “A Question of Freedom, A Question of Rights?,” 84.

namely desire, will, and identity, leaving feminists to focus on the external factors, namely restraints and resources and this bifurcation has had some negative effects;” this is what must be envisioned differently.<sup>51</sup> Because feminists have had only external barriers and negative liberty to advocate for, it has been difficult to make progress in changing the ways positive liberty is abused. With the myth that each person in America has equal opportunities despite their identities or location, it is easy for mainstream thought to understand women on welfare as not working hard enough and needing government intervention to get on the path to “success.” This is where damaging strands of positive liberty are used to monitor or change welfare recipients’ behavior as “‘being on welfare’ (in U.S. parlance) involves strict and intrusive scrutiny by the state over women’s sexuality and mothering, as well as their participation in wage labor.”<sup>52</sup>

Hirschmann argues for how positive liberty can be used so as to understand the inequities that prevent people from achieving similar levels of success in capitalist society and to reframe rights through a framework of care. This understanding could be used to no longer stigmatize rights to welfare and instead legitimize welfare practices under a system that valued care. A conception of positive liberty that understood societal inequities could understand the conflict between one’s true and momentary desires as well as the navigation between internal and external barriers. Using positive liberty in this way would allow for the acknowledgement of institutional structures that lead to oppressions for women on welfare and restrict their freedom. Negative liberty must also take these oppressions into account. External barriers include the lack of recognition and respect for certain identities that exists due to racism, sexism, classism, etc. and are what can prevent a black woman on welfare from being able to have access to the same opportunities as a middle class, white man or woman.

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<sup>51</sup> Hirschmann. “A Question of Freedom, A Question of Rights?,” 85.

<sup>52</sup> Hirschmann. “A Question of Freedom, A Question of Rights?,” 85.

The humiliation and degradation that women on welfare currently suffer from at the hands of the state comes from its use of positive liberty and paternalism that Milton Friedman says is warranted for those who are “irresponsible.” Hirschmann states:

In a society that pays women a bare subsistence subsidy for raising children, that requires them to reveal the most intimate aspects of their personal and sexual lives, and demands that they enter the labor force even at the cost of foregoing education, that considers them cheats if they try to rise above subsistence poverty by working on the side, the self conceptions of recipients are likely to be affected, manifested by shame, powerlessness, victimization, anger, or some combination of these.<sup>53</sup>

A feminist ethics of care perspective on liberty and freedom could be equipped to address these internalized feelings as a result of racism, sexism, classism, etc. A reframed vision of positive liberty would not be used to assert that the government knows what is best for women on welfare to further perpetuate their exploitation. Instead, the feelings of shame, powerlessness, victimization, and anger would be recognized as barriers that are just as formidable as the external barriers covered by negative liberty. The recognition of women on welfare as important, valuable, responsible citizens deserving of every freedom and liberty is what an understanding of freedom grounded in an ethic of care can create. However, using a system of positive liberty and negative liberty that incorporates care must not be used to limit women to care roles exclusively. The objective of an ethics of care is not to force women to assume certain roles. It is to make space for them and legitimize their experiences in mainstream society instead of demanding that to have freedom, women must conform to a racist patriarchal ideology that does not recognize different experiences.

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<sup>53</sup> Hirschmann. “A Question of Freedom, A Question of Rights?,” 88.

## INDEPENDENCE

The extreme stigma placed on dependence and the impossible expectation of independence that characterizes liberalism severely affects women on welfare in highly negative ways. Dependency is seen as a grievous, individual flaw. Nancy Fraser communicates it accurately:

With the capitalist economic dependency already abolished by definition, and with legal and political dependency now abolished by law, postindustrial society appears to some conservatives and liberals to have eliminated every social-structural basis of dependency. Whatever dependency remains, therefore, can be interpreted as the fault of individuals.<sup>54</sup>

“Capitalist economic dependency” exists through the interactions between producers and consumers, employers and employees, and the myriad of ways that people must cooperate with one another to create products and obtain goods. However, as Fraser mentions, this dependency is not recognized within the social understanding of what dependency looks like. Because of the extreme pressure for independence, these types of economic interactions are not even acknowledged as being a place of dependency and are instead thought of as cooperation or interdependence, terms without the stigma that dependency has. The “legal and political dependency” that Fraser refers to is the level of formal equality that has been achieved in recent years. With the abolishment of slavery and the increased amount of legal rights for people of color, women, and other marginalized populations, legal and political inequalities are no longer apparent. Therefore, the claim to dependency created by the law or political systems no longer has much weight in mainstream society.

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<sup>54</sup> Nancy Fraser. *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the “Postsocialist” Condition*. (New York: Routledge, 1997), 136.

The combination of these occurrences allows people to believe the myth of everyone having the same ability to be independent. If someone becomes dependent on the welfare system, they have only themselves to blame as the “logic of workfare rests on the premise that problems of poor are the product of their own choices and individual weakness and failures—not as structural or produced by societal forces.”<sup>55</sup> The very definition of dependence has transformed into a weapon to be used against “irresponsible” people that cannot fulfill the expectations of capitalist ideology. As Hirschmann’s quote above mentions, the welfare system employs tactics that end up creating further dependency of recipients on the system to maintain a population that can be easily exploited. By forcing women to work at typically low wage jobs with hard conditions at the expense of getting an education that would allow them to expand their career opportunities, the state ensures the dependence of these women. The welfare system serves to create a population that finds it very difficult to escape exploitation and uses capitalist ideology to justify this exploitation to the mainstream cultural consciousness by blaming it on the welfare recipients as individuals.

Welfare programs are not designed to acknowledge the difficulty of managing a career and carework and provide the aid that women need to be successful in this balancing act. Instead, they are systems that reinforce these women's dependency on welfare and the government so that those who depend on their labor to be ‘independent’ can continue to do so. Mary Triece, a professor at the University of Akron, writes in an article about black women on welfare entitled “Credible Workers and Deserving Mothers: Crafting the “Mother Tongue” in Welfare Rights Activism, 1967-1972” that Senator Russell Long “would not stop fighting welfare until he found

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<sup>55</sup>Martha Albertson Fineman. “Dependencies.” *Women and Welfare: Theory and Practice in the United States and Europe*. Eds. Nancy Hirschmann and Ulrike Liebert. (New Jersey, Rutgers University Press, 2001), 34.

someone to iron his shirts.”<sup>56</sup> This statement from someone in a position of political power demonstrates part of the damaging attitude that contributes to this mindset. There is an inordinate valuation of independence while the inevitable dependencies that exist for most everyone are ignored and those who fulfill these dependencies are scorned, devalued, and relegated to a lower position on the social hierarchy.

It is not reasonable for dependency to be so heavily stigmatized. A feminist ethics of care is needed to rethink dependency and the multitude of ways that natural dependency exists and should be valued within American society. Eva Feder Kittay introduces her concept of a doulia in her articles “Taking Dependency Seriously” and “From Welfare to a Public Ethic of Care.” A doulia is someone who is responsible for taking care of a caretaker. The concept of a doulia is beneficial in addressing both of the inevitable and derivative dependencies that Martha Albertson Fineman discusses in “Dependencies.” Inevitable dependencies are experiences that all people have and as the name would suggest, are inevitable. Experiences such as being a child, being ill, or being elderly are conditions that a majority of people live through. Fineman categorizes these dependencies “as a biological category.”<sup>57</sup> Derivative dependency characterizes how caretakers of others who have an inevitable dependency also become dependent in certain aspects and “while not universal or inevitable, is gendered.”<sup>58</sup> Women are typically expected to be the ones to take care of children and family members who are ill or elderly. This causes many women to be unequal in their ability to assume the level of independence that liberalism requires for success. Women on welfare who have children must be full time caretakers as well as participants in the workforce. This creates an unreasonable burden on them that does not allow

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<sup>56</sup> Mary E. Triece. “Credible Workers and Deserving Mothers: Crafting the “Mother Tongue” in Welfare Rights Activism, 1967–1972.” *Communication Studies*. Vol. 63, Iss. 1, 2010, 7.

<sup>57</sup> Fineman, “Dependencies,” 28.

<sup>58</sup> Fineman, “Dependencies,” 28 -29.

for progressing the capitalist success ladder as every spare moment is devoted to managing these two full time commitments.

The idea of a doula becomes helpful in thinking about one way to provide care to women caretakers who are themselves dependent. However, this should not be understood as sanctioning only women as having responsibility for caretaking. It is a way to alleviate the dependencies of all caretakers:

Supporting dependency work means relieving the dependency worker of some of the costs and burdens of responsibility for the care of dependents. The argument from a public conception of doulia is that fairness demands that business or government...carry some of the costs of dependency work so that dependents within our society can be properly cared for without exploiting dependency workers.<sup>59</sup>

A government or business that paid for the services of a doulia for a caretaker demonstrates a valuation and prioritization of carework that is unheard of in a society that sees dependency as the ultimate weakness and shame. Because care providers receive very little to no monetary compensation for their work, the capitalist structure makes clear that these services are not what are important. Carework must be devalued because the “uncompensated work of caretakers allows us to indulge in myths of independence and autonomy” that enable capitalist society to normalize the ideology that it needs to continue. Without the stigma on dependency and the ability to blame the individual for her own lot, it would be harder to justify the paternalism and exploitation from which women on welfare suffer. There is nothing shameful or negative about dependency. It “should not be a reason to be deprived of choice and respect, and much of the

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<sup>59</sup> Patrice DiQuinzio and Iris Marion Young. *Feminist Ethics and Social Policy*. (Bloomington, IN., Indiana University Press, 1997), 14.

oppression many marginals experience would be lessened if a less individualistic model of rights prevailed”<sup>60</sup> The level of independency that capitalism privileges is a myth for women on welfare. Reframing dependency in ways that celebrate derivative dependency, carework, and have more compassion for people who experience inevitable dependencies is work that needs to be done to subvert the marginalization that occurs from not acknowledging the realities of carework and dependency.

## **MORALITY**

An ethics of care problematizes the idea that Friedrich Hayek puts forth of morality as a rejection of solidarity and altruism. Advocating for ignoring solidarity, altruism, and neighborly emotions serves to further inculcate people with the divisive individualism that allows for exploitation to be justified. Because “dominant moral theories tend to interpret moral problems as if they were conflicts between egoistic individual interests on one hand, and universal moral principles on the other,” morality is flipped upside down as universal moral principles are devalued and immoral while egoistic individual interests are encouraged.<sup>61</sup> This serves to construct caretakers as engaging in something necessary, such as raising children, but not something that society considers important. Because morality is understood as individualistic egoism, there is no morality associated with childrearing or caretaking for the elderly.

Care needs to be understood as an integral aspect of morality. Within capitalist ideology, caretaking is seen as a way of preparing or repairing citizens for normal activity. Once a child moves into adulthood, they no longer need a caretaker and must assume complete independence as they begin their lives as members of the market arena. When a person falls ill, they are

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<sup>60</sup> Iris Marion Young. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1990), 55.

<sup>61</sup>Virginia Held. *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006) Ch.1, Features of the Ethics of Care, para. 9.

removed from the work environment and taken care of until they are ready for reentry. An ethics of care argues for seeing caretaking as intertwined with normal activity. Instead of being required to constantly be independent and completely healthy to participate in the capitalist world, people should be understood as beings that move in and out of levels of dependency with fluctuating needs for care. Some women who are part of the work world remove themselves to be caretakers for their children. By seeing the need for care and caretaking as an integral part of normal activity, people could flow through their roles as a market participant and a caretaker with more understanding and ease, ultimately seeing people as a blend of employees, caretakers, and being in need of care simultaneously. Constructing people in this way allows for recognition of the realities of being human instead of asking people to deny their human needs as they enter the labor force.

Understanding morality as individualist egoism and the rejection of solidarity and altruist emotion further denies people the ability to be whole humans in the market sphere. Within an ethic of care conception of morality, Virginia Held explains:

Not all emotion is valued, of course, but in contrast with the dominant rationalist approaches, such emotions as sympathy, empathy, sensitivity, and responsiveness are seen as the kind of moral emotional that needs to be cultivated not only to help in the implementation of the dictates of reason but to better ascertain what morality recommends.<sup>62</sup>

Encouraging and valuing sympathy, empathy, sensitivity, responsiveness, etc. leaves room for a society to value humanity and be understanding of human conditions such as needing care. The

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<sup>62</sup> Virginia Held. *The Ethics of Care*, Ch.1, Features of the Ethics of Care, para. 3.

idea that morality is the rejection of these emotions runs counter to the natural impulses that people generally have. As Held states, incorporating these emotions as a vital and valuable part of morality allows people and society to orient itself so it is concerned with the wellbeing of people and having a whole experience of humanity and human emotion. This allows for a more holistic understanding of morality.

Reframing morality so that it includes care as a valuable aspect and celebrates caring emotions would allow for a new societal construction of welfare recipients that does not come with the heavy stigma that exists currently in American society. Incorporating care into morality encourages the compassionate treatment of others because “the ethics of care... typically appreciates the emotions and relational capabilities that enable a morally concerned person in actual interpersonal contexts to understand what would be best.”<sup>63</sup> Adopting this framework provides a morality that takes the reality of dependence and human relationships into account. Compassionate morality makes it possible to value carework such as childrearing and change mainstream perceptions so that women on welfare with children are seen as doing valuable, legitimate work if they choose to focus solely on raising their children. The dichotomy between capitalist morality that requires impartiality and a morality for caretaking that necessitates compassion causes being in the workforce and raising children to be at odds with each other. Capitalist morality has usurped the entirety of moral thought shifting caretaking outside of this realm.

When [universalistic and abstract rules of the dominant theories] consider actual relations as between a parent and child, if they say anything about them at all, they may see them as permitted and cultivated a preference that a person may have. Or they may recognize a

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<sup>63</sup> Virginia Held. *The Ethics of Care*, Ch.1, Features of the Ethics of Care, para. 5.

universal obligation for all parents to care for their children. But they do not permit actual relations ever to take priority over the requirements of impartiality.<sup>64</sup>

Compassionate caretaking becomes a “preference” with no more value attached to it than any other hobby. Because of this, women who are raising children or caring for an elderly person are not valued in society for their caretaking. They are only valuable for their participation in the work environment. Women on welfare are inherently invaluable and must enter the workforce so as to assume some level of capitalistic value. They are forced into marginalized and exploitative jobs that make it possible for wealthy people to meet capitalism’s expectations of independence. A morality based on care could value women on welfare for their caretaking and create an environment that appreciates the wholeness of the human condition.

## **EQUALITY**

Within liberalism, the construction of equality is an equality among people who are the same. People are equal when they are able to have the same things. If the goods are distributed so that all have the same, equality has been achieved. Within a system of many oppressions however, it is not enough to configure equality in such a materialistic way. Iris Marion Young’s term distributive justice encapsulates this type of equality. Under this way of creating equality, money, food, housing and such should be allocated so that all people have a more comparable amount and what they need to live humanely. This is problematic because:

The individuals are externally related to the goods they possess, and their only relation to one another that matters from the point of view of the paradigm is a comparison of the amount of goods they possess. The distributive paradigm thus implicitly assumes a social

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<sup>64</sup> Virginia Held. *The Ethics of Care*, Ch.1, Features of the Ethics of Care, para. 5.

atomism, inasmuch as there is no internal relation among persons in society relevant to considerations of justice.<sup>65</sup>

By furthering the inordinate value placed on individualism and the denial of human relationships, seeing equality and justice exclusively in this manner serves to perpetuate oppressions and isolation. “Social atomism” is one of the more important goals of liberalism as well as constructing the citizen as simply a producer or consumer of goods. A person’s only meaningful relationship is to the material items that they have or make. By attempting to broaden distributive justice to non-material concepts, such as rights or opportunities, the capitalist mode of interaction is inscribed onto moral issues and this serves to perpetuate capitalism’s cooptation of morality. The legislative body is set up as a producer of rights while people are consumers. Some individuals are more able to obtain these rights than others due to privilege and money. Using solely distributive justice to rectify oppressions ignores the systematic, institutional oppressions that prevent people from having privilege.

To work towards an equitable society, distributive justice must be paired with Nancy Fraser’s idea of justice of recognition. Justice of recognition involves the ways in which “injustice is rooted in social patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication. Examples include cultural domination... nonrecognition... and disrespect.”<sup>66</sup> This provides a conception of justice that takes into account institutional oppressions and advocates for an equal level of respect for each person and their identities as opposed to simply material goods. By only acknowledging distributive justice, a system is created in which interest groups form to advocate

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<sup>65</sup> Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, 18.

<sup>66</sup> Fraser, *Justice Interruptus*, 14.

for their constituency to receive the goods.<sup>67</sup> All interest groups are perceived with the same importance so that those arguing for justice of recognition are not given importance. Importance is given to those interest groups with money, power, and privilege. This results in groups that suffer from oppression having less of an opportunity to argue for their case and receive the goods because they are operating within a system that actively does not value them and prevents them from speaking. “This process...collapses normative claims to justice into selfish claims of desire...” which serves to undermine criticism of the system as well as give the very idea of justice less currency within the cultural mindset.<sup>68</sup> This neutralizes the claims that women on welfare have to the oppressions from which they suffer. Racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, the stigma of dependency, etc. cause many people as well as women on welfare to be in a unique position of being culturally devalued, leading to not having the same opportunities to be economically successful; “people who are subjected to both cultural injustice and economic injustice need both recognition and redistribution. They need both to claim and to deny their specificity.”<sup>69</sup> A pairing of both types of justice would allow for a realistic understanding of the situations of women on welfare and provide tools for change.

The valuation of impartiality that exists within a system based exclusively on distributive justice serves to further alienate the experiences of caretakers from being understood. Impartiality excludes justice of recognition, and constructs a dichotomy between the impartial justice of the capitalist “public” sphere and the partial justice of families, relationships, and the “private” sphere. This divide serves to keep understanding caregivers, typically women, as part of the private, partial sphere where justice and morality have no jurisdiction. Workers in the

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<sup>67</sup> Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Ch. 3.

<sup>68</sup> Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, 72.

<sup>69</sup> Fraser, *Justice Interruptus*, 16.

market arena are participating in the activities that actually matter, the public arena where justice and morality are constructed. Upholding this dichotomy continues oppression. So “the key to achieving gender equity in a postindustrial welfare state, then, is to make women’s current life-patterns the norm for everyone.”<sup>70</sup> This includes dismantling the private/public, caretaker/employee, partial/impartial divides to create an integrated world in which caretaking, emotions, and women are valued as much as the capitalist sphere. Implementing this within “a Universal Caregiver welfare state would promote gender equity by effectively dismantling gendered opposition between breadwinning and care giving.”<sup>71</sup> The impartial/partial divide is also gendered and reinforces gender expectations. Pairing justice of recognition, which is partial, with distributive justice, impartial, allows for the integration of these concepts and provides a path toward legitimate equity and justice for everyone.

## **VOICES OF WOMEN ON WELFARE**

The voices of women on welfare demonstrate how capitalist ideology’s construction of freedom, independence, morality, and equality largely contribute to the ways that they are stigmatized in society. Mary Triece writes in her article, “Credible Workers and Deserving Mothers: Crafting the “Mother Tongue” in Welfare Rights Activism, 1967-1972” and her book *Tell It Like It Is*, about how women like Johnnie Tillmon and Beulah Sanders spoke about being black women on welfare. They give testimony to how their lives and the lives of all black women on welfare have been negatively impacted by capitalist ideology and the ways that their life experiences counteract the narratives that capitalism creates about black women on welfare.

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<sup>70</sup> Fraser, *Justice Interruptus*, 61.

<sup>71</sup> Fraser, *Justice Interruptus*, 61.

These women speak against the government's use of the positive liberty to justify its paternalism. By requiring welfare recipients to find some type of work to receive welfare, the government tells women that finding work is what is in their best interest. This, however, delegitimizes a woman on welfare's freedom to raise her children without having paid employment. This is justified by the narrative that women on welfare are simply "lazy" and are unmotivated to look for work. Heidi Hartmann and Hsiao-ye Yi's article "The Rhetoric and Reality of Welfare Reform" includes a table from an IWPR (Institute for Women's Policy Research) study from 1986-1988 that demonstrates only 9% of welfare recipients are able-bodied and not working, looking for work, enrolled in school, or caring for children.<sup>72</sup> This data "suggest[s] that if all these mothers are required to work, a great deal of childcare will need to be done by others."<sup>73</sup> This has the effect of restricting the ability of women on welfare to raise their children because the government decides finding employment is what is actually in their best interest. Welfare activist George Wiley, characterized this type of action by saying the "welfare department is an extension of the big white plantation which decided what was best for a family."<sup>74</sup> This speaks directly to the effects of how positive liberty and freedom are constructed throughout capitalist ideology to sanction the restriction of freedoms for those who are deemed unworthy. Beulah Sanders demanded that "either you include us in decision making that is going to govern our lives, or... we are going to disrupt this State, this country, this capital and everything that goes on."<sup>75</sup> Sanders' voice disrupts liberalism's construction of freedom. She

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<sup>72</sup> Heidi Hartmann and Hsiao-ye Yi. "The Rhetoric and Reality of Welfare Reform." *Women and Welfare: Theory and Practice in the United States and Europe*. Eds. Nancy Hirschmann and Ulrike Liebert. (New Jersey, Rutgers University Press, 2001), 163.

<sup>73</sup> Hartmann and Yi, "The Rhetoric and Reality of Welfare Reform," 164.

<sup>74</sup> Triece. "Credible Workers and Deserving Mothers," 7.

<sup>75</sup> Triece. "Credible Workers and Deserving Mothers," 6.

speaks to her and other black women on welfare's ability and right to decide what is best for them and be full citizens in this society with full freedoms.

Women on welfare also disrupt the way that independence and dependence are constructed throughout capitalist ideology. Welfare recipients are stigmatized for not being able to support themselves and their family without money from the state, for being dependent on the government. The money that the government gives to other venues or people does not have this same connotation of dependence. Dr. Mary Triece, author of *Tell It Like It Is: Women in the National Welfare Rights Movement*, calls attention this erasure of dependency:

The folding of <autonomy> into the mythology of American equality occurs so flawlessly as to obscure the varying ways that all citizens are dependent. It's just that some forms of dependence are sanctioned and thus called by different names, for example subsidy, tax credit, and so on.<sup>76</sup>

Yet, only the dependence of welfare recipients is stigmatized. In all other contexts, it is erased. Women on welfare speak to the ways in which women who are raising children cannot be as independent as someone who does not have these responsibilities. By calling attention to the way women are expected to do significantly more work with caretaking, house maintenance, etc., these women call the myth of independence into question. Johnnie Tillmon would "just issue a proclamation that 'women's' work is real work...[she]'d start paying women a living wage for doing the work we are already doing[,] child-raising and house-keeping. And the welfare crisis would be over, just like that."<sup>77</sup> She presents how the need for welfare is predicated on the invisibility of the work that women are expected to do to maintain the house, raise children, be

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<sup>76</sup> Mary E. Triece. *Tell It Like It Is: Women in the National Welfare Rights Movement*. (Columbia, SC., The University of South Carolina Press, in-press), 54.

<sup>77</sup> Triece. "Credible Workers and Deserving Mothers," 10.

the sole caretakers, etc. Valuing this work eliminates the problem of women being unable to demonstrate the complete independence that the capitalist arena requires. Betty Niedzwiecki acknowledges the value of the services that women provide: “The government owes me because I am raising two boys that I am sure they’ll be taking into their armed services one of these days to fight their damn wars.”<sup>78</sup> The caretaking work that women do is necessary for every other aspect of society to function. However, these tasks are structured as part of the “private” sphere and are taken for granted through the way independence is constructed. Niedzwiecki and other women on welfare activists call this into question and demonstrate their resistance.

The lives and voices of women on welfare also resist the capitalist impulse to turn competitiveness and individualism into morality. They resist this by emphasizing solidarity and prioritizing their communities. Johnnie Tillmon urges that “we should have learned from this fight if we hadn’t learned before, that we have strength if we are together and organized. Alone, we have no voice, no power at all.”<sup>79</sup> In saying this, she subverts the unreasonable impetus for individualism and highlights its futility in creating change. A purpose for encouraging individualism as a part of morality is to divide and cause people to be powerless. Tillmon rejects this and advocates for solidarity. Her voice is a major source of calling into question the validity of individualism. Morality is not rejecting solidarity and Tillmon’s words and experience emphasizes the unreality of morality as competitive individualism. Jackie Pope continues to reject individualism as “to be black, a woman, and a Welfare recipient is the worst of all hells in these United States in the year 1971. The only real hope for survival for welfare mothers is to be ‘organized.’”<sup>80</sup> Women on welfare demonstrate that morality as individualism is specifically

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<sup>78</sup> Triece. “Credible Workers and Deserving Mothers,” 10.

<sup>79</sup> Triece, *Tell It Like It Is*, 73.

<sup>80</sup> Triece, *Tell It Like It Is*, 125.

counter to their survival. Black women on welfare undermine the morality of liberalism and advocate for their solidarity because they exist in an environment that does not include them and does not privilege their survival. Morality as solidarity is existence. It is the change needed to allow women on welfare, but also caretakers the space to survive.

The constructions of equality and justice are important to how the recipients of welfare are seen through capitalist ideology. Black women on welfare speak out against the racism, sexism, and classism that they suffer from within the welfare system. Inequality around the welfare system is made clear by “Senator Russell Long (D-LA) ...asserting he would not stop fighting welfare until he found someone to iron his shirts.”<sup>81</sup> This statement, clearly gendered, constructs welfare recipients as women who are not valuable citizens and are expected to do menial work for white men who are actually important and cannot waste their time with such tasks. This sentiment, not just one racist, sexist man’s interpretation of welfare, is integral to the foundation on which the welfare system is supported because “hegemonic political discourses were themselves shaped in part by economic interests that had a stake in welfare legislation that would potentially impact the availability of a pool of unskilled, cheap labor.”<sup>82</sup> Capitalist economic interests call for a population to exploit and this need creates the construction of women on welfare as disposable, irresponsible, undeserving of freedom, less than citizens. Louise Brookins retaliates in asserting that “welfare recipients are not going to scrub floors and clean kitchens at slave wages.”<sup>83</sup> She draws the comparison to slavery to call attention to the ways that its legacy and today’s racism has informed the welfare system. She also frames the comparison in resistance. Beulah Sanders also acknowledges the welfare system as “brazen

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<sup>81</sup>Triece. “Credible Workers and Deserving Mothers,” 7.

<sup>82</sup> Triece, *Tell It Like It Is*, 38.

<sup>83</sup> Triece. “Credible Workers and Deserving Mothers,” 7.

attempt to enslave the poor people of this country,” one that she recognizes and will not be silent about.<sup>84</sup> Black women on welfare see the racism, sexism, and classism that comprise the welfare system and use their voices and their experiences to name those oppressions and resist them.

## **CITIZENSHIP: CONCLUSION**

Women on welfare are not constructed as citizens because of the way the values of freedom, independence, morality, and equality, are figured in exclusionary ways that devalue their experiences. Iris Marion Young explains in *Justice and the Politics of Difference* that because the

public realm of citizenship achieves unity and universality only by defining the civil individual in opposition to the disorder of womanly nature which embraces feeling, sexuality, birth and death, the attributes that concretely distinguish persons from one another. The universal citizen is disembodied, dispassionate (male) reason.<sup>85</sup>

Counteracting this includes reworking the four values in such a way that prioritizes a feminist ethics of care. Freedom and positive liberty could be envisioned so that positive liberty does not justify mandating one’s best course of action, but instead acknowledges the institutional structures and oppressions that prevent a person from having the same opportunities as someone else. Independence should be understood as unrealistic and there should be room made for dependence to be sanctioned as healthy and valuable. The derivative dependencies of caretakers can be acknowledged and accounted for so that caretakers are not punished because of their responsibilities. For welfare recipients to be equal citizens, there must be no stigma attached to being dependent on welfare funds. Instead, welfare could be one way to recognize the vital

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<sup>84</sup> Triece. “Credible Workers and Deserving Mothers,” 7.

<sup>85</sup> Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, 110.

services that women raising children provide. An environment where solidarity and community are essential components of morality subverts the divisiveness of individualism. Valuing care as a moral action allows for a society that recognizes realities of the human experience and does not force people to fracture themselves into unhealthy public and private sections. Acknowledging inequities and the failures of a construction of justice that is individually focused allows for a realistic understanding of systemic oppressions and privileges such as racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, etc., and how these cause people to have vastly unequal possibilities for success and survival. Justice of recognition needs to be paired alongside distributive justice to develop a more caring, holistic picture of a person and citizen as opposed to viewing them simply as the wage-earner without acknowledgment of their needs or identities. Envisioning these values through a lens that incorporates a feminist ethics of care allows for the possibility of a more inclusive understanding of who is worthy, important, valuable in our society—who qualifies for citizenship. Black women on welfare speak of their exclusion from citizenship and subvert the way capitalism tries to construct them as unworthy. They demand the freedom to be mothers, to have meaningful employment, to choose between the two, to build their communities, to be citizens.

## **CHAPTER THREE: CURRENT EXAMPLES OF LIBERAL IDEOLOGY'S EFFECTS ON SOCIETY**

The marginalization that liberal ideology creates through its construction of freedom, independence, morality, and equality has practical consequences in today's world. Understanding freedom as primarily negative liberty or the removal of obstacles in the economic and political realms but justifying paternalistic positive liberty for those who are not "responsible" affects women and poor people. Those who are not "responsible" are often considered such because of the stigmatization of dependence. The expectation of complete autonomy is only manageable by some at the expense of others who are dependent, considered irresponsible, and have restricted freedoms. Liberal constructions of morality justify this by degrading the solidarity and altruism which is required in much of the carework that is performed by people who allow others to seem independent and be successful in the economic world. Because competition and individualism is determined to be the tenets of morality, carework has little possibility of being seen as important. Equality is structured in such a way so that the systemic oppressions that cause particular groups of people to be placed in positions of dependence are ignored. The myth that all people are equally free and have equal ability to be independent justifies ignoring the institutionalized oppressions that make this untrue. People who are considered "irresponsible" continue to be constructed as less deserving of freedom and citizenship because of the way morality and equality are understood through liberalism. The ways these constructions are present in today's American society are affecting people in very detrimental ways and call out for a rethinking of these ideas that include care as an important value.

Freedom is a popular word in American culture and one that resonates with many. When such a salient concept is reinscribed to espouse liberal ideology, it is easy to justify actions oriented to advancing liberal doctrine without undergoing much critical examination. President George W. Bush used the idea of freedom to generate support for the war in Iraq during a speech in 2003. He opens and closes his address with appeals to freedom: "At this hour, American and coalition forces are in the early stages of military operations to disarm Iraq, to free its people and to defend the world from grave danger... We will defend our freedom. We will bring freedom to others and we will prevail."<sup>86</sup> What type of freedom is being brought to Iraq and its people? What is "our" freedom? President Bush uses the same construction of freedom here for which Hayek and Friedman also advocate and sets that up as the freedom of America. Bringing freedom to the Iraqi people is about bringing American liberal ideology and capitalism to the country. In *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, David Harvey asks, "To what destination, then, are the Iraqi people expected to ride the horse of freedom donated to them by a force of arms?"<sup>87</sup> He concludes, "Straight into the neoliberal corral."<sup>88</sup> The idea of freedom that President Bush wanted to bring to Iraq was not free. It was loaded with stipulations and expectations that demanded conforming to the liberal ideology and capitalist practices that dominate America. The liberal understanding of freedom is individualistic and based in the capitalistic market. Bringing "freedom" to Iraq was not about aiding the country in being free to set its own course, but about demanding the implementation of liberalism within their political and economic system. Because in liberal, capitalist America, that is being free.

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<sup>86</sup> President George Bush. "Full text: George Bush's Address on the Start of War." *TheGuardian*. 19 March 2003. Web. 19 March 2013. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2003/mar/20/iraq.georgebush>>.

<sup>87</sup> David Harvey. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) 6.

<sup>88</sup> Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 6.

Freedom is about ensuring that there are no restrictions on a system that maintains a group of economic elites. Freedom is not human oriented. Instead, it is solely for the market system that maintains a wealthy majority. This income inequality does not allow all people to be free to pursue happiness or be healthy. The system supports those who are wealthy and allows for only their freedom. The Occupy Wall Street movement that began in 2011 protests this, the unequal income distribution between the wealthiest 1% and everyone else.<sup>89</sup> This tension between the 1% and 99% is partly a result of the ways liberal ideology understands freedom as no restrictions on a system that maintains an economic elite as opposed to freedom for all people to live full lives outside of the market. This construction has affected today's society in understanding freedom globally and domestically as no restrictions on liberal ideology. This marginalizes human freedoms and heightens the importance of the market.

The constructions of independence in liberal society cause other ramifications that take away from human freedoms. In her article, "Putting Children First: "Innocence" in Childhood & the Risk for Child Commercial Sexual Exploitation in the U.S.," Kate Price discusses societal attitudes towards innocence that create a huge amount of neglect for children in the United States. She writes, "With such a high prevalence of trauma and privation, children need a tremendous amount of support. Our society, however, has chosen to focus on individuals rather than ensuring the well-being and growth of children in general or bringing about change at a systemic level."<sup>90</sup> The emphasis placed on independence makes it difficult to envision a dependent population that needs and deserves structures of caring. Instead, the children are individualized, blamed, and prosecuted.

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<sup>89</sup> *OccupyWallStreet: The Revolution Continues Worldwide*. Occupy Wall Street. Web. 19 March 2013. <<http://occupywallst.org/>>

<sup>90</sup> Kate Price. "Putting Children First: 'Innocence' in Childhood & the Risk for Child Commercial Sexual Exploitation in the U.S." *Research and Action Report*. Wellesley Centers for Women. 34.1 (2012): 6.

The stigmatization of dependence does not allow support systems to be taken seriously and populations do not get the care that they need. Children are particularly at risk for exploitation and Price argues that society's conception of innocence adds to this exploitation. Rhetorically, the idea of innocence and children has cultural weight, but this does not translate to tangible services and protections for real children. Many children suffer from violence and sexual abuse. Price notes, "Among all industrialized nations, the U.S. has the worst record of child death from abuse and neglect (UNICEF, 2003), and second highest incidence of child poverty (UNICEF, 2012)."<sup>91</sup> Instead of mobilizing around support systems to change this for children, the problems are individualized. When children suffer from abuse, they are thought to lose their innocence and then "are at risk for being perceived as active participants in inviting sexual contact." Independence within liberal thought does not lend itself to creating caring systems for children but for individualizing and stigmatizing them because of their dependence. They are considered less responsible than adults and "the child is not responsible, yet is often punished and now banished from the ideal [of innocence]. The abusing adult is often absolved or hides the crime through parental authority."<sup>92</sup> The level of privilege associated with independence and the stigma attached to dependence removes authority from children and gives the more independent adults a blanket of authority and responsibility that cannot be questioned by people who are dependent. Price's article demonstrates how the stigmatization of dependence is affecting society's perception of people in negative, harmful ways. This calls for a greater valuation of care work within liberal ideology and a realistic, caring perspective on dependence that allows for true protection of people who are dependent.

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<sup>91</sup> Price, "Putting Children First," 7.

<sup>92</sup> Price, "Putting Children First," 7.

The rhetoric of morality in liberal ideology also dehumanizes those who need care and draws public focus away from caring perspectives. Morality in liberal ideology does not include solidarity and altruism. Morality is about the function of the market in competitive and individualistic ways. This is not just a theoretical idea, but shows up concretely in the ways people talk about morality every day. John Mackey, CEO of Whole Foods Market, gave a talk titled "Conscious Capitalism: Liberating the Heroic Spirit of Business" during South By South West 2013 in which he discusses the fundamentally ethical nature of business.<sup>93</sup> This rhetoric is easily absorbed and appreciated by audience members and listeners. It is largely accepted and rarely questioned that one of the fundamental aspects of ethics is capitalist business. Mackey goes on to say how businesses are fundamentally noble as well. Morality, ethics, nobility have all been co-opted by liberal thought so as to uphold market values and structures as the pinnacle of our value system.

On January 29th 2013, the President of The University of Texas at Austin, William C. Powers, gave a speech about his plan, "Smarter Systems for a Greater UT." Among the recommendations for improving the University, privatizing services such as housing, food, parking, etc., was included. Powers justifies this saying, "For any public institution, efficiency is a moral imperative."<sup>94</sup> Including efficiency as a moral mandate is adhering strictly to the morality of liberal ideology. This is the morality that Hayek advocates for in which solidarity and altruism are disavowed and market values are the only legitimate principles. Insisting that morality is a moral imperative of education, of society as a whole, is placing emphasis on supporting market functions while ignoring the needs of people.

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<sup>93</sup> John Mackey. "Conscious Capitalism: Liberating the Heroic Spirit of Business." 2013 South By South West. Austin Convention Center, Austin, TX. 10 March 2013. Lecture.

<sup>94</sup> President Bill Powers. "Smarter Systems for a Greater UT: A Report to the University Community." The University of Texas at Austin. Austin, TX. 29 Jan. 2013.

Efficiency can be important, but it is being prioritized at the expense of all other values. Snehal Shingavi, an assistant professor in the Department of English and Center for Asian American Studies at UT Austin, comments on the plan, "The sad part is that this plan will work: There will be savings, there will be efficiencies. But it will also mean real, human casualties. Education will suffer, as will the services that students are offered."<sup>95</sup> Efficiency as a moral imperative comes with costs and with human casualties. This is the effect that liberal ideology is having on the way morality is understood. Dana Cloud, an associate professor of Communication Studies at UT Austin, writes, "In his address, President Powers called "best business practices" and for-profit efficiency a "moral imperative." But there is nothing moral about it... Restoring a truly public University of Texas is our real moral imperative."<sup>96</sup> There is reason to be suspicious of a 'morality' or 'ethics' that puts efficiency above care, competition above solidarity, and the market above people because that is not morality at all. Creating a system that incorporates care into the fabric of what is valuable at the university level as well as society as a whole needs to be the fundamental aspects of morality.

Equality also must incorporate care because with such an individualistic conception of equality, issues of oppression and privilege are being ignored and exacerbated. An example of how this is currently playing out can be found in the politics of LGBTQ movements. In her book, *Irresistible Revolution: Confronting Race, Class, and the Assumptions of LGBT Politics*, Urvashi Vaid calls attention to the ways racism, homophobia, sexism, classism, etc. are affecting the mission of LGBTQ activism and perpetuating inequality. Focusing on individual barriers to equality through legal avenues such as marriage does not always address true equality for all people. Vaid cautions, "As social movements that have come before the LGBT struggle have

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<sup>95</sup> Snehal Shingavi. "Powers' contradictory vision." *The Daily Texan* [Austin, TX] 31 Jan. 2013 Web. 20 March 2013.

<sup>96</sup> Dana Cloud. "A call to fight Powers plan." *The Daily Texan* [Austin, TX] 3 Feb. 2013. Web. 20 March 2013.

clearly shown, formal equality--and even progress towards greater cultural recognition of one's humanity--can be achieved while leaving larger structural manifestations of inequality and deeper cultural prejudice intact."<sup>97</sup> A construction of equality that focuses on structural barriers and individual opportunities as opposed to deeper issues and institutionalized oppressions does not allow for true equality for all. The politics of LGBT organizations have demonstrated how this happens. Large networks such as the Human Rights Campaign or the National Gay and Lesbian Task-force are often funded by wealthy white people who do not usually suffer from racism and classism and benefit from current conceptions of equality that ignore these oppressions.

Expanding on this, Vaid writes, "Groups focused on racial justice face steep challenges in persuading a majority white donor base to move beyond its racially-limited world view, because it depends for its funding on a constituency whose privilege it is questioning. Donors often actually discourage organizations from working on racial justice issues."<sup>98</sup> Legitimate equality cannot be achieved by using a framework that understands a version of equality that only benefits people with privilege. Yet this is the construction of equality that permeates through liberal ideology. LGBTQ groups that are making anti-racism a priority struggle against the racism and classism that causes them to have less economic power. They are thought of as nothing more than another interest group that has no power. Liberal conceptions of equality do not provide for a dissection of why more white people have wealth in the LGBT movements and why their money does not often prioritize anti-racism. Simply using distributive justice to remedy inequalities does not address the cultural attitudes and embedded perceptions in every

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<sup>97</sup> Urvashi Vaid. *Irresistible Revolution: Confronting Race, Class and the Assumptions of LGBT Politics*. (New York: Magnus Books, 2012) 9.

<sup>98</sup> Vaid, *Irresistible Revolution*, 56.

aspect of society that are a part of institutionalized oppressions and create inequalities of distribution and recognition. Liberal understandings of equality are not allowing real equality within LGBTQ communities. Moving away from an individualistic construction of equality and envisioning equality for whole communities by including justice of recognition would make progress towards real equality.

Recognizing the identities that people hold and how the intersections affect each person differently allows for a more supportive, caring conception of equality and provides ways to truly address inequalities. A study done by Annemarie Vaccaro PhD & Jasmine A. Mena PhD titled “It’s Not Burnout, It’s More: Queer College Activists of Color and Mental Health” demonstrates how damaging lack of recognition can be for students struggling against the intersections of oppressions such as racism and homophobia. They found, “The need for social and emotional support was seen as especially salient for the participants as they explored their intersecting identities as queer and persons of color.”<sup>99</sup> This support is needed because of the experiences queer people of color have in living with racism and homophobia in our culture. In truly combating inequality, this must be taken into account as a large contributor. Oppressions do not allow some people to have the same experiences and opportunities that others with privileges may have. Framing understandings of equality around how people’s identities affect their lives contradicts the individualistic conception of equality in liberalism. This allows for recognizing the way oppressions contribute to inequalities and injustices. Vaccaro and Mena add, “Findings from this study suggest that counselors must assess a variety of complex and intersecting factors

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<sup>99</sup> Jasmine A. Mena and Annemarie Vaccaro. “It’s Not Burnout, It’s More: Queer College Activists of Color and Mental Health.” *Journal Of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health*. Vol. 15, Issue 4. (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2011) Findings, In Search of Social Support, para. 3.

when working with young activists of color.”<sup>100</sup> This must also be done when envisioning equality for all as well.

The ways these values are constructed in liberal capitalist society are getting under people’s skin. The popularity of Ayn Rand and the philosophy she espouses throughout *Atlas Shrugged* reaches every corner of popular culture. In 2011, Part 1 of a movie rendition of *Atlas Shrugged* brought the novel back to the front of popular consciousness and Objectivist societies from college campuses around the country made their way to the theatres. Rand’s influence on literary tradition is highlighted by Ayn Rand scholar, Jeff Rigggenbach. He writes, “What has long been evident to any serious student of popular culture in this country [is] namely the surprisingly widespread influence of Ayn Rand on American popular fiction.”<sup>101</sup> From movies and books to college organizations and business, the influence of *Atlas Shrugged* is present and demanding that we see values in the liberal tradition. Dr. Edward Younkins, a defender of Ayn Rand’s philosophy, writes:

Ayn Rand’s Objectivist ethics specifically recognizes production as the central human value. In addition, the personal virtues that she advocated have a direct bearing on work: rationality, honesty, independence, justice, integrity, productiveness, and pride. These virtues can be used as guiding forces in a business career and in the management of a business. They define the excellent manager (or other employee) and provide the principles that a corporation should adopt with respect to investors, employees, customers, vendors, and others.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Mena and Vaccaro. “It’s Not Burnout, It’s More,” Recommendations, para 1.

<sup>101</sup> Jeff Rigggenbach. “Ayn Rand’s Influence on American Popular Fiction.” *The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies*, Vol. 6, No., 2004, 94.

<sup>102</sup> Edward W. Younkins. “Objectivist Virtue Ethics In Business.” *Le Quebecois Libre*. 15 May 2012. Web. 19 March 2013. <<http://www.quebecoislibre.org/12/120515-8.html>>

This is the model that businesses are adopting and the ways that they are encouraging their employees to adopt. These values are individualistic and do not make space for carework or care workers. The capitalist environment actively encourages people and businesses to reject caring for others, stigmatize dependence, and value only the experiences of the few. It is popularly believed that this is the only system of values and economics that allows for the greatest number of people to be free and happy. But the people who are most free and happiest have certain privileges and identities that allow them to live up to the expectations of independence, productiveness, and pride. This is built on top of the oppression of others.

Incorporating feminist ethics of care into mainstream value systems allows for a greater ability to understand care, those who need it, and those who provide it. This exposes the system of exploitation and helps to create a framework for dismantling the hierarchies of privilege that allow some to be respected citizens at the expense of many others. Freedom can be used to envision positive and negative liberty in such a way as to recognize the internal and external barriers to freedom that many have because of racism, sexism, homophobia, etc. The myth of independence must be exposed. An ethic of care can be used to create a caring space for those who are dependent and celebrate them and those who take care of them as valuable citizens. Morality must be centered on care for each other and appreciating the importance of carework. Solidarity and altruism are vital components to carework and necessary for the creation of caring communities that support each other instead of compete against each other. Framing equality so the institutional oppressions that affect all dimensions of people and communities are worked against through justice of distribution and justice of recognition can truly address systemic inequalities throughout the capitalist system.

## CONCLUSION

Women on welfare speak out against how these values are envisioned through liberal thought and use their life experiences to contradict the narratives mainstream culture attaches to them. bell hooks writes, “Loving blackness as political resistance transforms our ways of looking and being, and thus creates the conditions necessary for us to move against the forces of domination and death and reclaim black life.”<sup>103</sup> Actively loving blackness, loving all communities targeted by the white, heterosexist mainstream, and incorporating care into our value system is political resistance and gives us the tools to work against the traditions of liberal thought that contribute to the exploitation and oppression of the capitalist system. Shawn Ginwright discusses his work incorporating care into communities of black youth in *Black Youth Rising: Activism & Radical Healing in Urban America*. He writes, “Care has become particularly important, given that the state, which once provided basic social services, has failed to address these issues in black communities.”<sup>104</sup> This work that he and the communities he is a part of are doing demonstrate how “care is perhaps one of the most revolutionary antidotes to urban trauma, because it ultimately facilitates healing and a passion of justice.”<sup>105</sup> Envisioning relationships with others as important, interdependent connections in which we all need each other to be successful and are committed to creating truly free, equal spaces for all is a vital step to dismantling the liberal thought that has constructed us as fragmented individuals. There is nothing immoral about care, about dependence, about admitting that there are systemic oppressions within capitalism that prevent equality for most. Valuing care and carework through

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<sup>103</sup> bell hooks. “Loving Blackness as Political Resistance.” *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. (Boston, South End Press, 1992) 20.

<sup>104</sup> Shawn A Ginwright. *Black Youth Rising: Activism & Radical Healing in Urban America*. (New York: Teachers College Press, 2010), 56.

<sup>105</sup> Ginwright, *Black Youth Rising*, 57.

a feminist ethics of care is an important step to subverting these damaging liberal narratives.

Doing this allows us to make space for the experiences of others to include everyone in a more supportive, caring environment.

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