

Foucault discipline and punish essay sample



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Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality*, demonstrates that the tools of disciplinarity (which emerged in the confluence of critical, historical upheavals immediately preceding the modern age, such as geometric demographic expansion, reconfiguring global financial and mercantile apparatuses, the redefinition of territorial boundaries through global exploration and the ensuing establishments of empires, the ad hoc onset of the Industrial Revolution, etc.), upon being brought into proximity to about the only things that presently we are able to bring to it, such as a proclivity towards petty moralizing, our social prejudices, our racial intolerances, the petty agendas of the bourgeoisie - empirical lifestyle enclaves, etc. etc. operate what they have been designed to do, namely the re proliferation, expansion, multiplication, amplification, production of manipulated strategies for administering populations, under the guise of it redounding to the so-called "public interest," which on the whole underwrite unconscionable amounts of paralysis, social dissatisfaction and numerous suffering.

Top of Form

Title: Perversions of females and homosexual views in the society driven by the misuse of disciplinarity as reflected in Advertising.

Disciplinarity is conceptualized by Michel Foucault at the historical context of emerging structuralism, the ideology that stresses the elements of a certain culture should not just be look in terms of their individuality but the influence of predominant systems and institutions in the society, which is, the disciplinary institutions. According to that ideology, man is dependent to

those interrelations. Examples of modern day disciplinary institutions include religious factions, prisons and asylums, schools, mass media, and the government. Its goal is to keep order and control among things and to discipline people.

The idea of Disciplinary by Michel Foucault pictures modern disciplinary institutions and its technique which involves intensifying the architecture of control while observing the prison. Disciplinary power talks about that firm, continuous, consistent, and coherent framework of control. Foucault's goal of writing *Discipline and Punish* is to show how the architecture of control he observed in the prison system works in a social setting and how power relations influence it. At the period where disciplinary is introduced, there is a movement from a public execution for people to see and fear punishment to a discourse of certainty of punishment which Foucault referred to in his work as "The Gentle Art of Punishment."

The goal of this paper is to talk about how disciplinary is constantly perverted and misused in the society especially in the light of sexuality. This will talk about how it is corrupted by racial intolerances and prejudices by the people especially of the bourgeoisie, elites of the society with respect to the wrong use of disciplinary by disciplinary institutions themselves. This will then be looked at in relation to pseudo-practices of science and technology especially of the social sciences where the use of speculations on observed phenomena is implemented instead of using inductive data gathering and processing.

Specifically, the phenomenon that will be focused on will be the influence of market institutions and mass media as disciplinary institutions and its impact on shaping of social constructs about sexuality especially of homosexuals and women through their advertising strategies. For women biases, journal articles about the use of women's bodies in order to "sell" will be looked at. For homosexuals, journal articles about how the product presented is being shaped if they are the ones being portrayed as the models of the product.

Under the power of these disciplinary institutions, people are all docile bodies. In other words, people are compliant to both the written and unwritten rules to survive and avoid of the certainty of punishment or deviance from the society as a consequence. Through this, the human body undergoes both "inspection" and "reorganization." Gradually, through that, disciplinarity, a political structure and a mechanism of power, was introduced. That modality of control made use of Art of Distributions, Control of Activity, Organization of Geneses, and Composition of Forces to shape docile bodies. Furthermore, it also makes use of panopticism as an observational and surveillance tool.

The Art of Distributions involves the Disciplinary Institutions' locus of control with the use of spaces. Modern day disciplinary institutions use that in order to gain easier control. This involves enclosure, partitioning, functional sites, and interchangeability of those sites. Enclosure is the effort to include those who are part of the disciplinary institution's control and exclude those who are not. Partitioning that enclosure again divides the group further according to function which makes it easier for them to control since the space is divided further. Functional site involves giving function to that partitioned

site. Interchangeability involves making sure that the elements of that site are interchangeable and that space is flexible.

Control of Activity involves the disciplinary institutions locus of control with the use of time. It involves setting up a timetable, a temporal elaboration of the act, correlation of body and gesture, body-object articulation, and exhaustive use. In this concept, a timetable is used to control the activities of an individual by following a timetable or a schedule of activity.

Furthermore, temporal elaboration of the act involves not only following the timetable but making it penetrate to the body of the individual to the point that it becomes a habit. In other words, the body of the person is conditioned to follow " rituals." All in all, through the use of symbols, people are being influenced.

Modern day disciplinary institutions make use of time to control individuals meticulously. Control of activity also involves conditioning the body to correlate it with gesture. Body object articulation involves conditioning the person with the instrument that it manipulates as an extension of the body's power. Lastly, exhaustive use is the economy of control that since time is put into accounts not only effectivity but also efficiency in all of the activities of people who are in their control.

Organization of Geneses takes not only time into consideration but its sequence. It talks about the significance of every part of the sequence in time. This says that there is an appropriate time to begin something and the arrangement of time matters. This made modern disciplinary institutions to

divide time into segments or durations by means of “ beginning” an an “ end.”

Composition of Forces involves homogenization of units. People are created as parts of the big machinery of societal tendencies. Composition of forces is done in 3 ways: It distinguishes the very center of the body where they could manipulate, move, and articulate the tendency they want to produce, the time of the individual unit is adjusted to the time of the majority, and commanding of forces using symbols and meanings putting people “ in the box.”

In addition, panopticism also became a tool. It is taken from the panopticon, the watch tower of the prison. Using the panopticon makes surveillance easier. Likewise, this also gives the prisoners the feeling that they are being watched. In the modern society, the concept of panopticism is not using a panopticon to see the whole area. Rather, it refers to any tool to keep watch of those in the society in any disciplinary institution to keep watch if the members of that disciplinary institution or society are functioning well. In classrooms, the elevated platform in front is used by the teachers to keep watch all of his/her students. In the post-modern era, Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) Cameras became tools of panopticism to keep watch of traffic violators and criminals in the society. In addition, the television became a panopticism tool because it is the channel where business institutions and mass media make sure that they are gaining publicity and being watched by people. Recently, online social media also became a panoptic tool because with Facebook, people are easier to find and can be accessed just by logging on through the internet.

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Power is the overarching element in Disciplinary Institutions. In a way, it is very difficult to talk about disciplinarity without talking about the idea of power. For Foucault, subjects are people who are influenced by another external force or being. Likewise, it also involves being tied up to one's identity and conscience. With this, Foucault suggests that the notion of a subject is socially constructed and not predetermined nor pre structured. Every era had a different notion on what the subject is.

In order to explain further Foucault's disciplinarity, Giorgio Agamben wrote a thesis about Michel Foucault's concept of disciplinary power as Biopower in the book the History of Sexuality. He continued analyzing Foucault's "unproven claims," as he says, and explained it and reconceptualised in and applying it in the context of the homo sacer, the sacred man. Foucault's defined power as the "multiplicity of force relations" in the society.

Biopower, on the other hand, comes from sovereign power. By sovereign, he is not referring to governance but the all-encompassing tendency of power which is derived from the human body. Biopower controls the entity of given power. It materializes by including bare life through its exclusion. By bare life, he refers to the human body's condition before disciplinary institutions acted upon it. The biopolitical body is the "qualified life" in which disciplinarity influenced.

To explain Foucault's claim, Agamben used the Roman law figure Homo Sacer or the Sacred Man. By the word "sacred," he did not mean holy. What he meant by Homo Sacer someone "not of this world." Homo Sacer are banished and excommunicated people in the state. They are the ones who can be disrespected or even killed by anyone. That person is not allowed to

attend religious rituals. Homo Sacer are people who are in the midst of both inclusion and exclusion in the society. Treating a Homo Sacer at their time is not the same as treating an outsider or a foreigner. They treat foreigners and outsiders in a way that they would treat a stranger who are unfamiliar to them. Homo Sacer are not treated as unfamiliar. They are discriminated and treated as if they were cursed men in the society. They are banished out of the society and blacklisted from all social activities especially religious rituals.

Agamben says that the logic of exception reveals the limiting tendency which decides who are included are not. This implies the view of the application to the rule where there can be an exception to the rule. In a way, it appears as a paradox with contradictory statements. But that paradox just says that people may be excluded in something yet included in some way. In using that epitome of Homo Sacer, what Agamben wants to say is that all people, are all Homo Sacer but not literally. This suggests that people are not completely included nor excluded in something. If they are excluded, they are included in some ways. If they are included, they are excluded in some aspects.

That is how he explained Foucault's idea of " inclusion in its very exclusion." Foucault is a homosexual. During his time, homosexuals are discriminated and looked down upon. As a homosexual, inherently, he is male. But even if he is a male, he does not act like what the male are " expected to." He does not act the way the society expects him to as a " male." This discrimination is shaped by social constructs and the wrong and negative use of

disciplinarity by disciplinary institutions such as social sciences, the Catholic Church, mass media, families, and academic institutions.

The the idea of disciplinarity can be further understood by applying it in the context of sexuality. Sexuality is shaped by disciplinary institutions. It is never an inherent notion or orientation among people. It is disciplinarity which outlines whether a person is classified as male or female and how he or she should act and present him/ herself in the society. Upon birth, people are bare life. Bare life is nameless, ageless, and genderless. It does not have a nationality, religion, nor social status. When disciplinary institutions like the Government intervenes through the census, his/her vital statistics, name, gender, date of birth, and nationality is recorded. That is the time where that bare life becomes a biopolitical body.

During Foucault's time, the issue of sexuality is predisposed by the notion of the "repressive hypothesis" where there is a claim that sexuality is being "repressed" and talking about is either unthinkable or even taboo. The idea of sexuality is reduced to the genital sex in which it is the alleged common notion. However, Foucault disagreed with that claim that sex is repressed. He alleged that the sexuality discourse has intensified in the 18th century because at that time, during confession priests expect them to reveal even a sexual temptation and desire.

That time was also at that time when Social Sciences intervened in the notion of sexuality. Because of the strengthening of the sexuality discourse, there has been a shift in focus from genital sex and procreation of married couples to the corruption and misinterpretation of child sexuality,

homosexuality, femininity and masculinity, etc. Gradually, sex became an object of knowledge of the Social Sciences such as Psychology and Sociology. Sex is viewed in the idea of the *scientia sexualis*, where sex is analysed at a scientific perspective particularly sociological and psychological perspective. Furthermore, sex is also looked at the context of *ars erotica*, where sex is seen as an “art” of sensual pleasure.

One disciplinary institution that amplified that discourse is the Christian Church. At the time, since priests expected people to confess their sins including their sexual desire, Foucault proved the point that the repressive hypothesis was false and in turn, it shows that the discourse of sexuality is being opened up to the world. Confession at that time is not the kind of confession in the modern time where a person will confess at a confessional box. It is a public confession where many people can hear the confession of the person. Thus since sex is being opened up, when social sciences intervened, it shaped the notion of human sexuality.

For Foucault, sexuality is not just about conjugal acts. For him, sexuality is what defines people as a way to explain them and to grasp the truth about them. By “sexuality,” Foucault means the gender orientation with respect to personality, emotions, civil status, and roles in the society. That then brings the notion of the relationship of sex with power and knowledge. Power is not just something that renders something that enables, limits, and render something relevant or irrelevant. Power, for him, is omnipresent. All of the social practices and normal order of thing is driven by power. It is present everywhere. Power is given life by knowledge and knowledge is structured by power. That relationship of power and knowledge speaks about the <https://assignbuster.com/foucault-discipline-and-punish-essay-sample/>

template that establishes shaping of subjects. That is the reason why a script is formed. Sexuality follows that script.

Foucault then began discussing his major focus points of sexual orientation: the children, the women, married couples, men, and the homosexuals, the deviants of the heterosexual established script. That script is shaped by power relations in the society especially among disciplinary institutions. The notion at that time that is corrupted by the bourgeoisie added to the scripts itself by saying that deviance in sexuality is “ hereditary” and even detrimental to their class to ensure them “ good health” and “ long life.”

Power is supposed to be exercised with its goal to foster and preserve life. However, it turns out that the use of power in sexuality has been corrupted to the point that many discourses made about it influenced by the elites of the society, the disciplinary institutions, and the norm created a script that would oppress and control people. Sexuality just became another tool of disciplinary institutions.

Based on that script, the society will begin to expect something from him/her. He/she will be molded according to that script. As a male for instance, he will be expected to act tough and courageous whose acts and gestures are identical to how the males in the society acts. In other words, by being born male, he is expected to act like a man in both speech and gesture and to dress like one. For females, they are also expected to act like women in terms of dressing and body and gesture. They are expected to act “ soft,” to wear skirts, to play with dolls as kids and not with guns and action figures.

These are formed by what disciplinary institutions imposed upon people since childhood. For instance, in most schools, kids are required to wear certain clothes, for instance polo and slacks. They are also conditioned to do the certain gestures expected of a man. Or else, either the teacher will get upset or even mad for demonstrating the wrong gesture expected of a man or that person may be laughed at by his classmates. In some cases, boys who are homosexual are even kicked out of the school.

That just proves that even as children, they are being imposed of the idea of disciplinarity. Yes, disciplinarity is a good thing because it gives people directions and it helps them get through their whereabouts in life. It makes people move up to the expectations and standards of the society. However, sometimes, disciplinarity goes wrong. While there are scripts that are formed, not all the things about that script are good for the society. The misuse of disciplinarity in the society led to discriminations, prejudices, anti-social behaviors, and totalitarianism. Some are detrimental especially to others especially when sexuality comes into play. Monique Wittig's essay "The Straight Mind" speaks about homosexuality in the realm of heterosexuality and femininity in the realm of masculinity. She described heterosexuality as a social construct while homosexuality as deviance. Perhaps, one reason of how homosexuality is deviant is because of the burden of expectations the society bears upon them through sets of unwritten rules bound in the script especially when it comes to societal roles in family, in work, in schools, in the church and other institutions.

At the first part of her essay, she said that language, as a system of signs, is a phenomenon that infiltrates the unconscious mind, manner, and exchange

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of women where human beings themselves are the signs. Accordingly, in psychoanalysis, symbols in the unconscious assume that every person is heterosexual and discriminative about the idea of being a woman. That results into having the idea of what is “ normal” and what is not in terms of sexuality. In Wittig’s essay, she described that because of that norm, people who are not heterosexual are being oppressed. This led them not to communicate and for some, just repress their homosexuality. In fact, Wittig alleged “ they prevent us from speaking unless we speak in their terms.” She further alleged that homosexuals are not being oppressed by mere exclusion but for some, violence is even produced with that abstract and allegedly scientific discourse. For women, Wittig alleged that they are being dominated by the men in the society. One way they are being dominated is through using women as a sex symbol in pornography. That reducing of women as objects of pleasure is an offense against humanity. It is a form of psychological violence of especially as the doing of men.

In Sandra Lee Bartky’s journal article entitled Foucault Femininity and Modernization of patriarchal power, she speaks of modern technologies does not control not only the body but also the mind. She argues that disciplinarity is the one that conceptualizes the idea of women’s bodies. This body is seen by a patriarchal other which means that how she thinks of her body is reflected by the expectations of men. In other words, men define women. For instance, this includes the shape of the body and the size of the breast and butt. These also include additions to the body such as body accessories, and make-up. These are women insecurities grounded on how

the men look at them. Business institutions take advantage of this as a result. Through the years, advertising used women's body became sex symbols, market institutions and mass media targeted the use of women's body as a tool for advertising. At that time, the sexuality of women is reduced to an object of pleasure.

The market institution and the mass media took for granted and used sex in order to sell their products. Even if their appearance in many advertisements is not an outright pornography, it still imposes strong and obvious subliminal messages amplified through the power of suggestion that makes even the half-naked women's bodies tempting. In other words, Even if they do not use pornography, they use strong sexual symbols of women sexuality in TV shows in order to capture audience attention. In another journal article by Amanda Zimmerman and John Dahlberg entitled " The Sexual Objectification of Women in Advertising," says that compared to the 1980s, negative reactions of females that portray female sexuality in advertising were less offended and it also have a weaker effect on buying motivation. This showed that among the female respondents in their survey, it showed that women of the 1990s have the general tendency to be more open minded and just treat the use of female sexuality as an art to sell products and not an outright real life objectification of women. This might be a result that they might be used to it because it is very prevalent in media.

However, this does not change the fact that advertising continues to alienate the meaning of women sexuality and it still arouses insecurities among them especially in their bodies. In terms of mass media, it is now a very powerful institution of the society that uses sexuality as a discourse to gain publicity.

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The Mass Media became panoptic towards people with their cameras as eyes and their antennas as tools. They also became omnipresent because of using technologies such as television, radio, and the internet. It is Mass Media who amplifies the promotional power of market institutions. This institution works together hand in hand with market institutions. Likewise, the market institution is one of the principal institutions that make the society. The utilized the Art of Distribution by segmenting the market and giving them a functional sites through the use of demographics in order to assess the needs and wants of people to know how they are going to “ position” their products towards them.

In other words, they target particular area, they analyse who are the people who are most likely to buy their product and what kind of needs and wants the people have their, what their family and cultural background is to be able to adjust the product, price, and promotion strategies and where they will advertise and sell their products. They also assess the activities of the people and their buying behaviors accordingly in order to sell their product with respect to their buying behaviour which in a way, controls human activity. For advertisements, they use the power of mass media in order to make their product known through all the people with televisions, radios, and newspapers. They also post big billboards in order for people to see their products while driving along the road. To further entice buyers, especially men, they use sex in advertising to attract customers and buy their products.

Using women sexuality as a tool in business has been a subject of many studies. A journal article entitled “ Sex in Advertising...Only on Mars and not
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on Venus” talked about male and female differences when it comes to sexual views. The journal article said that men have the general tendency of treating sex as a recreational activity while women treat sex for the relationship. Darren Dahl, Kathleen Vols, and Jaideep Segupta assessed the reaction of their control group by showing them different versions of advertisements. These include watch advertisements with female sexuality elements, plain advertisements without female sexuality elements, and advertisements without female elements but instead, used as a gift for the guy model’s partner. Findings on the test proved that because of the different priorities of male and female, they looked at advertisements differently. Presence of female sexuality elements advertisements drove the men to like the product more while women reacted the opposite. It has been part of the script in the modern era that beautiful women have “ sexy” bodies and men are macho in their 6 pack abdominal muscles and their BMW. Not belonging into what is “ in” arouses insecurity among both men and women who want to conform are the targets of advertising to impose to them subliminal messages like “ if you want to conform, buy our product.”

In other words, market institutions make money out of these people’s insecurities especially about their bodies. For homosexuals, being deviants in the heterosexual dominated society, it is different for them. Homosexual portrayal advertisements caused the heterosexuals, which is the vast majority of the population to look down on the product being presented. In fact, it is detrimental to the society even if it opens up that it is a marketing campaign for homosexuals. An example of this is when Ford Motor Company marketed its product specifically to homosexuals. Other companies like Wal-

Mart, Volvo, and Volkswagen. However, even if the intention was to open up a marketing campaign for the homosexual communities, it became a controversy. It is looked at as “offensive” to heterosexual customers especially to the homophobic people. Because of that, what companies did was evade the controversy and cling to the “mainstream audiences” in order to protect the reputation of their product and their company.

After conducting a study on 127 university and graduate school students of a university ranging from 20-60 years old, findings determined that homosexual advertisements reduce the buying motivation of people. The survey demographics was limited to those people who study at a south eastern university in the United States which adhere to the Christian religion. Therefore, the fundamentalist Christian doctrine of treating homosexuality as taboo still reflects among their views and their decisions. Being in a university, education about homosexuality is also affected.

Another journal article about homosexuality put the family as an institution of the society into consideration. In family, as the journal says, a child needs both a male and female role model. This will solidify intra-family relations like father and son relationship and mother and daughter relationship. That is the case for the traditional family. However, that is not the case for homosexual families. These are families of both homosexual “parents” who adopt a child. When these families are portrayed in advertising, it also becomes a controversy. In fact, it is even more escalated since a child who does not have both a “straight” male and a female role model is put into the picture. Even if the ad openly says that the ad is a gay ad, it is “straightened up” by the heterosexual viewers. In other

words, they apply their norm even if the advertisements are not really intended for them.

Gender really became a tool for the market institution as a disciplinary institution as a way to control buying behaviour of people. In addition, business institutions also used sexuality in order to make money out of people's insecurities. For homosexuals and their homosexual families, the case is discrimination. Even if some businesses put them into the picture, the heterosexual majority look down upon the companies who address the product for that particular group. In a way, these views show that even with market segmentation, product positioning and differentiation, Art of Distributions and Control of Activity are contingent. This presents a failure in the composition of forces because people are put in the box and disciplinary institutions like the Market Sector fail in terms of using women's body as with a negative symbol of being carnal temptresses in which their bodies became object of pleasure for men which in turn made them associate it to the product being advertised.

Foucault talked about the discourse of sexuality in a light that it reflects the personal and not just the genital aspect. This is not a fault by disciplinarity itself but the corruption in the use of disciplinary tools throughout history where sexuality is confessed, looked down upon because heterosexuality is the norm amplified by power relations in the society. This script is a result of the culmination of prejudices, gender biases of the bourgeoisie as the elites in the society. This is also shaped by the pseudo practices of science and technology through a biased generalization coined by the social sciences and societal institutions like the family, church, schools, government, market

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institutions, and mass media. This gender stratification caused the abuses of women who thrive in a patriarchal society and homosexuals who thrive in the heterosexual society. For many institutions, the public interest is being overly prioritized to the point that they neglect the human rights and the sake of those who are discriminated and even marginalized in the society.

Treating a homo sacer is not the same as treating a complete stranger. A stranger would just be treated indifferently and the openness of “ belonging” is still there. But for a homo sacer, he/she is considered part of the society even if he/she is treated without respect. However, in one way or another, it is not only the homosexuals who can be viewed as a homo sacer. All people are homo sacer because in one way or another, even if we are included, we are not included in every way. Likewise, if we are excluded, we are not excluded in every way. Since in one way or another, people are all excluded in their inclusions, one should move against the discrimination of women and homosexuals for a better society. Looking at historical accounts pointed out by Foucault in *History of Sexuality and Discipline and Punish*, the best way to tackle problems about disciplinarity is to understand it so that one can take over the “ beast” which is the disciplinary institutions. By understanding it, one can be the disciplinary institutions’ master instead of its slaves.