Stable economies/stable gender order:
A queer analysis of the International Monetary Fund’s discourses on women and gender

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No content produced by generative AI tools has been used in the preparation of this thesis.

Georgia Peters

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Abstract

This research examines how gender, sex, sexuality, and race cohere in, and are stabilised through, the discourses of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). I argue that the IMF's imperative for economic stability depends on the coherence and stability of the binary gender order and the heterosexual matrix: a stable economy needs a stable gender order. This research is situated in the intersection between queer theory and political economy, two areas which have long remained analytically distinct and antagonistic. In bridging these fields of research, this thesis develops a vision for political economy that faces the ontological challenges of queer post-structuralism. It does this through the development of a novel analytical toolkit for queer discourse analysis in International Political Economy (IPE) and Global Economic Governance (GEG), and the curation of a unique dataset of IMF discourses about gender and women.

Interest in gender and women at the IMF has grown over time, indicated by an increase in the Fund's publications that focus on gender. This thesis interrogates 93 of the IMF's publications on gender and women, including 77 online publications and 16 online videos over the period from 2001-2023. Through my analysis, I identify three dominant subject-positions: the 'Working Woman;' 'Heterosexual Nuclear Family;' and 'Risky Sexual Subject.' These subject-positions are located on different points of a 'visibility spectrum.' The hyper-visible 'Working Woman' is an aspirational feminised economic agent, who reflects neoliberal values of productivity, efficiency and rationality and is also soft, maternal and measured. The visible 'Heterosexual Nuclear Family' represents the 'common-sense' configuration of family and home life, (re)producing heterosexist presumptions about intimacy and care in economic knowledge. The invisible 'Risky Sexual Subject' appears at the limits of what is knowable in the IMF's discourse on gender. Together, these subject-positions reveal the disciplinary, regulatory and productive character of the IMF's discourses on women and gender. The IMF's discourses depend on the (re)production of gendered, heterosexist and racialised 'common knowledge.' Simultaneously, they depend on the erasure and invisibilisation of subjects that do not conform to neoliberal standards of (re)production, productivity and efficiency.

Neither merely technocratic nor macro-critical, the IMF's discourse on gender and women (re)produces, stabilises and limits a coherent gendered, racialised and heterosexist economic subject. The IMF's turn to gender and women represents a reification of neoliberal feminist values, which naturalises neoliberal capitalism and market-based configurations of economic life, reproduces heterosexist configurations of family life, and rearticulates racialised hierarchies of under/development. These findings are significant, as they offer empirical insight into the unique ways that the IMF reproduces gender, sex, sexuality and race. Despite the messiness, inconsistencies, contradictions, and incoherence of these classificatory systems, IMF discourse presumes that they represent the 'truth' of the body. As this thesis reveals, this has the effect of marginalising queer subjects, normalising whiteness, and Othering racialised subjects.

List of Acronyms

AFC	Asian Financial Crisis
CD	Capacity Development
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
DSK	Dominique Strauss-Kahn (former managing director of the IMF)
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FLFP	Female Labor Force Participation
GAD	Gender and Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEG	Global Economic Governance
GFC	Global Financial Crisis
HIV/AIDs	Human immunodeficiency virus infection and acquired immune deficiency syndrome
IFI	International Financial Institution
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF or the Fund	The International Monetary Fund
IPE	International Political Economy (the discipline)
IR	International Relations (the discipline)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
LFP	Labor Force Participation
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, asexual and other non-normative gender identities, sexual orientations and practices
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development

SAL/P	Structural Adjustment Loan/Program
TERF	Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminist
UK	The United Kingdom
UN	The United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
US	The United States of America
VAW	Violence Against Women
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
WAD	Women and Development
WB	The World Bank
WC	Washington Consensus
WID	Women in Development
WTO	The World Trade Organisation
WWII	World War II

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I engage with the concept of care and the social arrangements through which care is organised quite often throughout this thesis. It feels, then, appropriate to open this thesis with a reflection on and acknowledgement of those whose care has sustained me throughout this three-year process.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Fictions about gender, sex, sexuality and race underpin and are (re)produced by economic knowledge production. Yet, the gendered and racialised dimensions of this knowledge goes uninterrogated because of the 'common-sense' status of the binary gender order, heterosexism and the binary of under-development and development. In political economy, some scholars have identified a presumption that 'gender' issues are secondary to and distinct from the 'serious' materiality of the economy.[1] This thesis challenges, disrupts and unravels these assumptions about the 'frivolity' of gender by exploring how the International Monetary Fund (IMF), with its imperative to maintain economic stability and growth, is underpinned by, and (re)produces, a stable binary gender order.

There has been an increasing interest in gender at the IMF, which has manifested in a proliferation of written and visual discourse on women and gender. This so-called 'gender turn' (Coburn 2019) has taken place following a period of controversy at the Fund. In 2011, Dominique Strauss-Kahn (DSK), at the time managing director of the IMF and former French politician, was accused of sexual assault by Nafissatou Diallo, a Guinean housekeeper in a New York hotel. In the period following this allegation, feminist critics pointed to the connection between the micro and macro dimensions of power between DSK and Diallo: Diallo's home country, Guinea, is a recipient of IMF funding, and DSK was the head of the IMF at the time of the assault (Montoya 2016, p. 155). Following this allegation, DSK resigned from the IMF and was replaced by the first woman to hold the position of managing director, Christine Lagarde. In 2019, the Fund appointed the second woman to hold the position, Kristalina Georgieva. By 2019, scholars noticed that the Fund had significantly pivoted to an interest in gender and, in 2022, the IMF published the 'IMF Strategy Towards Mainstreaming Gender' (PUB22_67). This 'turn' to gender has occurred comparatively late, with the IMF's sister institution, the World Bank, as well as other international development institutions

[1] For an example of this debate, see work by Judith Butler (1998), Nancy Fraser (1998), and Nicola Smith (2020). For an example of a debate concerning post-structuralism, materiality and political economy, see work by Marieke De Goede (2003) and Mark Laffey (2000, 2004). This assumption is also clear in the IMF's work, in the way certain issues are determined to be macro-critical (Independent Evaluation Office 2017, p. 8). A closer discussion of these debates will follow in upcoming chapters.

‘mainstreaming’ gender in the 1990s (Bedford 2009a, pp. xiv-xvi; Griffin 2009, p. 125). For this reason, the World Bank’s discourses on gender and women have been subject to rigorous and prolific feminist and queer analysis (see: Bedford 2005, 2007, 2009a, b; Bergeron 2003, 2009; Berik 2017; Griffin 2006, 2007a, b, 2009; Prügl 2017; Roberts & Soederberg 2012). Though the IMF and the World Bank both emerged from the post-WWII Bretton Woods system, they were established with distinct mandates and institutional context. They also have unique and separate histories of crisis, change and continuity.

The IMF was established in 1944 with a mandate to promote global macroeconomic and financial stability, and enhance cooperation between states. Following WWII, the IMF had the express purpose of providing assistance during national economic crises and to promote growth. John Maynard Keynes and his ideas (Keynes 2018 [1936]) played a significant role in the establishment of the IMF to address the concerns he had as the world attempted to recover from the Great Depression. The IMF institutionalised what Keynes thought was the “cure for recessions:” fiscal expansion (Stiglitz 2003, p. 112). Accordingly, the IMF was to provide funds to countries during economic downturn so that they were able to pursue expansionary fiscal policies, and to put pressure on countries to choose expansionary policies rather than “beggar-thy-neighbour” policies that countries were pursuing before the war (Stiglitz 2003, p. 112). Prior to the war, states were interested in protecting their aggregate demand by cutting back on imports; in turn, their problems would cause problems for other nations (Stiglitz 2003, p. 112). Following the end of the Bretton Woods system in the 1970s, the IMF’s responsibilities expanded beyond its original mandate. The IMF has acted as an international advisor, external coordinator for groups of private and public creditors, and a source of constraint on the macroeconomic policies of nation’s governments (Broome 2010, p. 40; Chorev & Babb 2009, p. 468). As I document in Chapter Two, the IMF’s role and responsibilities in the international system have been challenged over time and through crises.

The IMF has been reluctant to acknowledge the gender dimensions of its macroeconomic policies, despite ongoing feminist critique of the gendered content and

effects of the IMF's structural adjustment policies.[2] Historically, the IMF has maintained that its role did not extend to 'social' issues, like gender, but rather pertained to macro-critical, and fiscal issues (Bretton Woods Project 2017, p. 12; Independent Evaluation Office [IEO] 2017, p. 32). An issue is categorised as macro-critical by the IMF "if it affects, or has the potential to affect, domestic or external stability" (IMF 2015, p. 8). The IMF's 'gender turn' marks a change in this position that gender is not macro-critical. This has real effects and consequences for how gender, sex, sexuality and race are understood in economic knowledge, because of the IMF's position of technical expertise and authority in international development. Authority and expertise are established through its reputation as purely technical, neutral and macro-critical, and through formal avenues for providing recommendations, "policy advice and [conducting] surveillance missions" to countries (Bretton Woods Project 2017, p. 17), as well as the knowledge produced in its publicly accessible output. In this thesis, however, I argue that the Fund's 'gender turn' does not represent an emancipatory transformation, but rather a co-optation of feminist politics to discipline, normalise and naturalise femininities, masculinities and sexualities in line with neoliberal logics of productivity, efficiency, growth, privatisation and stability.

I came to an interest in economic knowledge and discourse through frustration, confusion and alienation from the study of economics, particularly with the way that the economy is spoken of in declarative, definitive and final terms. In 2019, during my undergraduate degree, I encountered an economics textbook that began with a series of unequivocal, unjustified and unqualified statements about the economy and human behaviour. It spoke of 'rational people' who act in response to incentives, argued that markets are a good way to organise the economy, and stated that the economist is as objective as the scientist. Although these principles were designed to be simple for undergraduate students, these presumptions about people, society and the economy were abrasive to me. They did not reflect my experience, impulses, goals or beliefs. Encountering feminist, decolonial and queer critiques of the foundational assumptions of 'grand theories,' including economics, gave language to my own frustrations and confusions. This thesis is a continuation of this frustration, and is rooted in the

[2] See Chapter Two: 'Feminists theorise economic restructuring and debt.'

commitments of feminist, decolonial and queer work which has informed how I understand and interpret the world. What interests me about the IMF, and global economic governance more broadly, is this *discursive constitution of economic reality*. My intuition when I read this textbook remains the same as it is now: an imperative of endless growth, productivity and efficiency to be achieved by rational, utility-maximising actors under capitalism is not as natural (nor as inevitable or urgent) as it appears.

The IMF's history is characterised by constant re-negotiation of (in)stability. This thesis confronts the Fund's emphasis on *stability* by adopting a queer approach to studying global economic governance that has *destabilisation* at its core. Given its emphasis on 'economic stability,' it is worthwhile to ask what presumptions underpin the concept in the IMF's discourses.[3] Queer theory emerged as the most appropriate avenue for my inquiry since it responded clearly to Silvia Federici's insights about the (ideological and discursive) processes of naturalisation that informed women's (material) conditions in the economy. Federici made a series of claims that inspired me deeply, early on in this project. In particular, she pointed out in *Wages Against Housework* (Federici 2020 [1975], pp. 12-3):

> The difference with housework lies in the fact that not only has it been imposed on women but also transformed into a natural attribute of our female physique and personality, an internal need, an aspiration, supposedly coming from the depth of our female character… If you don't like it, it is your problem, your failure, your guilt, and your abnormality.

The above identifies the important role that biologically essentialist myths about gender play in structuring and maintaining capitalism. She also aptly identifies the internalisation of gendered and classed relations. Capitalism, and the demarcation of women's responsibility for reproductive labour, appears so natural that behaviours, desires or relationships that deviate from this 'natural order' are felt to be a personal failure. In order to unpack the supposed 'natural' order of binary gender and

[3] Julie Mueller (2011, p. 378) is also interested in this question and argues that "stability is too often defined in terms of the interests of the advanced industrial states, often to the detriment of developing states." This is an argument that I agree with, and attempt to enrich with a queer, feminist analysis in this research.

(hetero)sexuality, the discourses in which gender, sex, sexuality and race are presented as fixed, true, innate, common-sense and as not requiring explanation, will be interrogated.

I. Research question and aims

Above, I have outlined how I came to an interest in the IMF and in the processes of meaning-making in global economic governance. In this research, I pay particular attention to the stabilisation of the binary gender order in the Fund's discourse. Guided by an interest in how gender and sexuality co-constitute neoliberal capitalism, this research addresses the following research question:

> *How does the IMF's discourse about women and gender (re)produce the stability of a binary gender order and with what effects?*

This research question has been structured around two core aims of the research. The first aim is to elucidate the written and visual discursive processes and strategies that (re)produce a particular vision of sex, sexuality and gender. I am also interested in how sex, sexuality and gender intersect with race and able-bodiedness. To answer the research question and respond to the first aim of the research, I develop a feminist queer post-structuralist method for visual and written discourse analysis (outlined in Chapter Three).

The second aim of this research pertains to the question of materiality. This aim is built into the last part of the research question, which specifically addresses the question of *what effects* these discourses have. This aim is informed by a normative commitment to destabilising the binary of 'cultural gender' and the 'material economy' (Eng & Puar 2020, p. 4). To address the question of materiality, I interrogate the ways that the IMF's discourses of gender, sex, sexuality and race bring these concepts "into being" (De Goede 2003, p. 79). My ontological and epistemological position on discourse, truth, reality and materiality are also addressed in Chapter Three.

II. Core argument(s)

This thesis argues that the IMF's discourses on gender and women, as a component of the Fund's imperative to achieve economic stability and growth, depends on the stability of the binary gender order. In other words, a stable economy needs a stable gender order. The stability and coherence of the binary gender order is articulated through three subject-positions, which are the subject of Chapters Five, Six and Seven. These subject-positions appear on different points of a 'visibility spectrum,' from invisibility to hyper-visibility, with hyper-visibility marking a subject as aspirational, and invisibility marking a subject as unthinkable, illegible and Other. I find that the subject of the 'Working Woman' is hyper-visible and is represented as one half of the visible 'Heterosexual Nuclear Family' alongside the 'caring father.' Lastly, I find that the 'Risky Sexual Subject' or the 'queer' subject is invisible in the visual discourse of the IMF. These subject-positions articulate, and are a product of, the limited goals and parameters of the IMF's feminism, which I establish in Chapter Four.

Firstly, I find that the IMF represents the subject-position of the 'Working Woman' in its visual and written discourse. The 'Working Woman' is represented as an aspirational figure. She is represented as entrepreneurial, productive, and efficient, as well as caring, maternal and level-headed. These are traits which are compatible with the IMF's neoliberal emphasis on productivity, efficiency, growth, and stability, as well as a focus on individual responsibility for 'overcoming' poverty. The 'Working Woman,' and her young counterpart, the 'Third World girl,' are also represented as untapped *potential:* future human capital and a potential economic agent. The hyper-visible 'Working Woman' (re)produces the binary gender order by articulating behavioural differences between the *homo economicus* and the *femina economica*. These differences are afforded minimal explanation and naturalise gendered differences which are themselves produced through the economic system that the IMF is implicated in maintaining. The ostensibly 'empowered' figure of the 'Working Woman' does not articulate nor endorse a transformative, feminist vision for possibilities beyond gender and the economic order as we know it. Rather, the IMF's 'feminist' rhetoric focuses on 'gender gaps,' 'gender mainstreaming,' and 'gender diversity,' which I establish in Chapter Four. These aims prioritise getting women to 'work more,' including through precarious, 'flexible' work

conditions, because “policies that empower women to work is good economics” (VID20_1).[4] As well as entrenching, naturalising and depending on the ‘common-sense’ of the binary gender order, the ‘Working Woman’ is articulated through binary logics of (under)development.

Secondly, the ‘Working Woman’ is presumed to belong to the visible ‘Heterosexual Nuclear Family,’ wherein she forms one half of a cohesive, well-functioning household whole, alongside the ‘caring father.’ I argue that the visibility of the ‘Heterosexual Nuclear Family’ depends on the stability and coherence of the binary gender order, as well as heteronormativity.[5] The IMF explicitly defines the household with reference to a man and a woman, who are in a monogamous, romantic relationship and who often have children. Monogamous heterosexuality is the presumed site for intimacy, reproduction and care, which is fundamentally related to the market economy through the (re)production of workers. Despite this important connection and interrelation between the household and the formal economy, the IMF represents care work and market work in the binary terms of burdensome/empowering. Care is positioned as a relation in which women are ‘trapped in,’ in contrast to market work, which is positioned as a liberatory space in which women can foster their ‘full potential.’ In doing so, IMF discourse treats the necessity of care and love labour as an obstacle to economic growth and stability while simultaneously presuming that it is taking place. These discourses do not subvert or challenge the binary gender order, but rather entrench and depend on the naturalness of heterosexuality for the work of care and reproduction.

Lastly, I find that the (hyper-)visibility of the above two subject-positions simultaneously produces invisible, unthinkable, illegible and aberrant subjects. The ‘Risky Sexual Subject’ emerges at the margins of the IMF’s vision of the ‘good life’ and the good economic subject. The ‘Risky Sexual Subject’ appears in the IMF’s discourses on fertility, maternal and child mortality, domestic and sexual violence, human capital, ageing and health, and HIV/AIDS. The ‘Risky Sexual Subject’ appears in the IMF’s written discourse as the sex workers, criminals, injecting drug users, (teen) mothers on

[4] For an explanation of this referencing convention, see: Chapter Three.
[5] See: Chapter Three for a definition of the ‘heterosexual matrix.’

welfare and otherwise queer subjects. These subjects are unified by their invisibility in the visual discourse produced by the IMF and are treated in written discourse as a monolithic 'problem' group, who have immoral, reckless and irresponsible sex outside of heterosexual monogamy. In the IMF's discourse, a binary of safe and risky sex demarcates boundaries around subjects who are acceptable (read: normal), and those who are unthinkable and illegible. Though the IMF does depict some gay subjects in its visual discourse, I argue that these subjects are homonormative, and (re)produce heterosexist ideals of reproduction, productivity, efficiency and utility-maximisation, further abjecting 'queer' subjects who do not conform to these ideal standards for personhood. Rather than referring to a coherent identity, 'queer' refers to heterosexual, homosexual, trans, disabled and racialised subjects who fall outside of the personhood required to fulfil the IMF's neoliberal remit of economic stability and growth.

In sum, the IMF's discourse depends on the stability and coherence of the binary gender order. It does this through representing the hyper-visible and aspirational neoliberal subject, the 'Working Woman,' who forms one half of the heterosexual household whole: the 'Heterosexual Nuclear Family.' These (hyper-)visible subject-positions simultaneously produce 'queer' subjects: the 'Risky Sexual Subject,' who engages in 'risky' sex outside of marriage, heterosexuality and reproduction. This is the sexual subject who does not hold the aspirational traits of the 'Working Woman,' the 'Heterosexual Nuclear Family' (and, indeed, the 'caring father'), but is rather unproductive, inefficient and 'drains' national resources. The IMF's mandate, of achieving economic growth and stability, is the central measure against which the acceptability and legibility of subjects is determined.

III. Structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of eight chapters. Chapter Two offers a critical review of the relevant literature for this research, starting with what I conceptualise as the 'traditional' literature on Global Economic Governance (GEG) and the IMF, followed by the feminist literature on the same, before moving to the queer literature on GEG and the IMF. This chapter establishes the existing work on GEG and the IMF and identifies the

key areas in which this thesis contributes. Chapter Three establishes the theoretical and conceptual frameworks for this thesis. I delineate the different debates and conceptualisations of 'queer' and position my own research in this terrain. I define the key concepts that are mobilised throughout the analysis undertaken in this thesis, including gender (and sex), sexuality, the heterosexual matrix and race. I articulate my post-structuralist, feminist and queer ontological and epistemological position before articulating the novel methodological tools I develop for my analysis. I outline the analytical techniques used, including analysis of *presupposition*, *predication* and *subject positioning*, as well as the visibility spectrum, which has four primary points: *hyper-visibility*, *visibility*, *absent presence* and *invisibility*. This chapter closes with a discussion of ethical considerations and a reflection on my positionality as a researcher. Throughout this chapter, I explicitly engage with my own normative commitments, which are inextricably linked to the analysis undertaken throughout the subsequent analytical chapters.

Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven are the empirical and analytical chapters of this thesis. As I have briefly outlined above, these are the chapters in which I lay out the key arguments of the thesis. Chapter Four establishes the institutional parameters of the IMF, including how the IMF's mandate produces and constrains its gender focus. I open this chapter by analysing the IMF's 2022 Gender Mainstreaming Strategy (PUB22_67), as well as the different gender focus areas articulated throughout its publications, including 'gender mainstreaming,' 'gender diversity,' and '(in)equality and gender gaps.' This chapter closes with a detailed consideration of the ways that the IMF's publications articulate a binary and heterosexist vision of gender, sex, sexuality and race. This chapter sets the scene in which the following three subject-positions emerge.

Chapter Five analyses the features of the hyper-visible subject, the 'Working Woman.' I discuss the ways she adopts the masculinist traits of the universal economic man, *homo economicus,* and is transformed into an ideal, feminised economic figure, the *femina economica.* This chapter explores the presuppositions made in the IMF's claims that 'women are smart economics' and that women are a stabilising force for the economy. Both representations depend on 'common-sense' assumptions about women as uniquely

and distinctly caring, nurturing, family-oriented, and level-headed. It presents women and girls as the solution to the same crisis-prone neoliberalism that the IMF produces. In doing so, these representations naturalise the economic system, and the IMF's role in it, and promotes a 'gender-friendly' capitalism.

Chapter Six analyses the visibility of the 'Heterosexual Nuclear Family,' wherein the 'Working Woman' and 'caring father' form two halves of a cohesive, well-functioning household whole. This chapter interrogates the explicit and implicit conceptualisations of household configuration in the IMF's discourse. I identify that the IMF's conceptualisation of the 'household' depends on the natural-ness of heterosexuality, and presumes that the monogamous, heterosexual couple is the central site for reproduction, intimacy and care. In this chapter, I interrogate the IMF's binary conceptualisation of care work as 'burdensome' and paid market work as 'empowering.' I highlight the under-valued, yet essential characteristic of care work and love labour in the IMF's discourse, highlighting contradictions in the IMF's conceptualisation of care work as simultaneously necessary, and disruptive or disempowering. This chapter analyses the way that men's increased care work in the home as well as the flexibilisation of paid work is positioned as a solution to the 'tension' of care and market work. Chapters Four, Five and Six establish the 'acceptable' and 'normal' foundations of economic and social life, concurrently delineating unthinkable, unacceptable and illegible subjects who do not conform to the IMF's neoliberal logics of utility-maximisation, productivity, efficiency and reproduction.

Chapter Seven analyses the invisible, queer 'Risky Sexual Subject' who emerges in the margins of the IMF's written discourse. Invisible in the visual discourse of the IMF, the 'Risky Sexual Subject' comprises the injecting drug users, criminals, sex workers and 'highly fertile' (teen) mothers, who engage in sex outside of heterosexuality, reproduction and monogamy. The 'Risky Sexual Subject' is the counterpoint of the aspirational 'Working Woman,' who is entrepreneurial and takes 'individual responsibility' for structural conditions of poverty. Chapter Seven firstly analyses the IMF's discourse on 'fertility,' interrogating how 'fertility' is brought into an economic matrix of economic growth and stability. I analyse the economistic logics which

maternal and child mortality are subjected to, as well as the articulation of all human potential through the rhetoric of 'human capital.' I analyse the IMF's representation of domestic and sexual violence as 'interruptions' in paid work, as well as the 'problem' of ageing and poor health. This chapter also interrogates the IMF's discourse on HIV/AIDS, before moving to an analysis of the Fund's articulation of the homonormative gay subject. This chapter concludes by arguing that the appearance of the homonormative subject does not constitute the 'visibility' of the queer subject, but further renders queerness abject by endorsing a neoliberal, heterosexist personhood of normality that LGBTQ+ people can now access.

Chapter Eight concludes this thesis by reaffirming the key findings of this research: that the IMF's discourse on gender and women depends on the stability and coherence of a binary gender order. I revisit the central research question of this thesis and outline how this question has been addressed throughout the course of this research. Chapter Eight includes a statement on the contribution that this research makes to the field. This contribution is two-fold: empirical and methodological. I also reflect on the significance of this research in the context of increasing anti-trans politics and 'post-feminist' neoliberalism. Avenues for future research are provided, before I offer final remarks.

In writing this thesis, I have been motivated by the work of queer, feminist and decolonial scholars who expose the plurality, contingency and messiness that exists under normalising, homogenising and universalising categories which are imposed on our bodies, relationships and ways of organising social and economic life. Underpinning this research is a normative belief that social and economic life *can* be and *should* be organised otherwise. As part of this process of re-imagining, it is important to interrogate how capitalism, neoliberalism and the binary gender order are made to appear natural.

Chapter Two: (In)stability in Global Economic Governance

I. Introduction

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the literature on Global Economic Governance (GEG) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), tracing the development of traditional and critical (feminist and queer) scholarship on both topics over time. For my purposes, in this review, I broadly classify approaches 'traditional' in line with Robert Cox's (1981, p. 128) classification of 'problem-solving' theories, which accept the world *as it is*. I understand the scope and parameters of these theories as limited because they (re)produce and stabilise institutions, orders and structures which produce the problems that their theorising deals with. In some cases, throughout this chapter, I include and discuss 'critical' theories alongside these problem-solving theories in order to clarify the state of the literature. Throughout this review, I attend to the ways theories of GEG and the IMF are related to (in)stability. The perception that reality, and therefore also global governance, is a stable and fixed system based on a homogenous view of human nature is explored, unravelled, and challenged through the feminist and queer approaches to GEG and the IMF interrogated in the later sections of this review. One of the insights of feminist scholarship of GEG is that gender is a category which is stabilised and destabilised through the institutions of GEG. Queer theory then extends the focus on stabilisation by drawing attention to sexuality as a component which stabilises and signifies gender. Moreover, it highlights "sex difference, heteronormativity and heteropatriarchal family formations" as taken-for-granted concepts that underpin historical, political and economic processes (Peterson 2014, p. 28). Queer theory seeks to destabilise the taken-for-granted concepts which exist at macro and micro levels, and draws attention to the ways that the global and local are fundamentally intertwined and interdependent. To reveal the ways that power operates in the mundane, queer theory seeks to make strange the objects and concepts that have achieved the status of normalcy: it seeks to elucidate "regimes of the normal" (Eng et al. 2005, p. 3), as historically specific and contingent constructions by locating, exposing and unsettling "inconsistencies, instabilities, and fluidities of social meanings and boundaries" (Peterson 2014, p. 604; Sedgwick 1993, p. 8).

It is for this reason that I focus specifically on the different treatments of (in)stability in the literature on GEG and the IMF, starting from a point of apparent stability and fixity to a more troubling, unstable and contingent view of these concepts. This chapter is organised into six sections: (1) traditional approaches to global economic governance; (2) traditional approaches to the IMF; (3) feminist approaches to global economic governance; (4) feminist approaches to the IMF; (5) queer approaches to global economic governance; and lastly, (6) queer approaches to the IMF.

II. Traditional approaches to global economic governance

I start the review of the literature interrogating the traditional approaches to global economic governance. This is a crucial starting point, because it is here where the common-sense premises of IR/IPE and GEG are stabilised and entrenched (Peterson 2014, p. 24). These concepts will be unravelled and deconstructed throughout the length of the chapter as I explore later critiques of traditional approaches.

The traditional literature on global governance emerged following a shift in study of ‘government’ to ‘governance’ (Leibfried et al. 2015; Rhodes 1997; Rosenau & Czempiel 2000). This shift comprises a novel focus on the supranational dimensions of the regulation of the economy and polity (Rai & Waylen 2008, p. 1). ‘Governance’ does not do away with an interest in the activities of governments, but it extends the scope of study to include the “many other channels through which ‘commands’ flow in the form of goals framed, directives issued, and policies pursued” (Rosenau 1995, p. 14). This shift in focus is often placed in the period from 1945 to the mid-1970s when there was a repurposing of the “command-and-control structures of wartime planning;” states nationalised industries and welfare programmes were established to offset market failures. The Bretton Woods institutions were created to provide support for national economic management (Jones & Hameiri 2022). In other words, global institutions were created to work cooperatively in the governance of nations. Studies of governance recognise the increased importance of international organisation, as well as how global institutions (and other actors) interact with states and non-state organisations (Rai &

Waylen 2008, p. 1). Governance studies are concerned with social movements as global players, including the ways that these movements interact with and protest institutions such as the IMF, World Bank, World Trade Organisation (WTO) and United Nations (UN) (Rai & Waylen 2008, p. 2). Additionally, new private international actors are encapsulated in the study of governance, these include private bond-rating agencies, tight global oligopolies in reinsurance, accounting and high-level consulting, and the "narrow group of economists who define the norms of that profession" and who accordingly possess great influence in government and in enforcing the economic orthodoxy (Murphy 2000, p. 794).

The establishment of global governance institutions was premised on a normative imperative to stabilise global politics and to quell disorder. The presence of global cooperation through international institutions is the antithesis of the preceding history "marked by war, exploitation, and a host of other noxious practices [which] are viewed as disorderly arrangements - as 'chaos' or 'entropy,' or anything but forms of order" (Rosenau 1992, p. 11). Global governance acts to "search for order in disorder, for coherence in contradiction, and for continuity in change. It is to confront processes that mask both growth and decay. It is to look for authorities that are obscure, boundaries that are in flux and systems of rule that are emergent" (Rosenau 1995, p. 13). Global governance literatures and institutions thus presume a normatively undesirable natural condition of instability, chaos and disorder. Governance as a concept refers to the multiplicity of dimensions within the international framework which co-exist and function to instil paradigms, norms and rules for the operation of states within this condition of perpetual instability.

GEG can be defined as the rules-based framework through which actors ranging from states, firms, institutionalised agencies, organised groups or individuals, resolve collective problems and promote "cross-border co-ordination and co-operation in the provision or exchange of goods, money, services and technical expertise in defined issue areas of the world economy" (Moschella & Weaver 2013, p. 4). GEG has both informal and formal mechanisms. Formal global economic governance includes international law, international governmental institutions and forums, international private boards and

international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (Moschella & Weaver 2013, p. 4). This is the dimension of governance which is backed by a formal authority through powers which can ensure compliance with policies (Rosenau 1992, p. 4). The twentieth century 'move to institutions,' marked by the formation of the League of Nations in 1919 introduced a novel form of state engagement, namely the "multipurpose, universal membership organisational" model (Ruggie 1982, p. 583). The IMF belongs to the domain of formal global economic governance. The informal dimensions of global governance refers to the "principles, norms and practices (including self-governance agreements) that comprise a general consensus among defined groups of actors about appropriate behaviour in key issues areas" (Moschella & Weaver 2013, p. 4; Rosenau 1992, p. 4). The objective of global economic governance as defined in the traditional literature includes the promotion of efficiency and effectiveness within the world economy and the correction of market failures in the production of public goods including financial stability (Moschella & Weaver 2013, p. 4).

Studies of global governance have been particularly interested in how institutions emerge, with a divergence of views on their emergence from rationalists and constructivists. The rationalist framework for studying governance holds that states cooperate through international organisations because these processes "reduce certain forms of uncertainty and alter transaction costs" (Keohane 1988, p. 386; Luo 2000, p. 148). In this view, the creation of institutions facilitates exchanges which are mutually beneficial, operating from a cost and benefit calculation of action in a given institutional context (Luo 2000, p. 148; see, for example: North 1984). This view of institutions in global governance depends on the presumption of scarcity and competition within the global order, as well as the existence of a rational actor (Keohane 1988, p. 386). The rationalist approach to studying global governance also tends to focus specifically on formal institutions, rather than the informal matrix of norms, rules and principles defined earlier, and is methodologically inclined to quantitative studies (such as game theory: see, for example: Keohane 1986, p. 15; Putnam 1988, p. 434) to make sense of state (in)action and (non-)compliance (Keohane 1988, p. 387).

Constructivist accounts differ from this rationalist theory of international relations by focusing on those informal dimensions of governance, including "the role of ideas, norms, knowledge, culture and argument in politics" (Finnemore & Sikkink 2001, p. 393; Park 2010). Richard Ashley (1986, p. 290) argues that rationalist perspectives on global governance adopt an erroneously ahistorical approach to their study of politics, which neglect the importance of ideological changes in influencing shifts in global governance. The ahistorical logic of rationalism thus fails to fully account for why states would create and engage in multilateral cooperation through formal institutions (Ruggie 1982, p. 584). Where the rationalist believes that institutions emerge as a result of choices by actors in terms of instrumental and strategic rationality, constructivism maintains that they are "often not created consciously by human beings but rather emerge slowly through a less deliberative process" (Keohane 1988, p. 389; Luo 2000, p. 152). In this way, the proliferation of global governance institutions does not reflect a rational human nature but rather colludes with global culture, which is "Western culture," with origins in "Western Christendom and Western capitalism," and manifests as highly bureaucratic, marketised and individualised ways of structuring governance (Finnemore 1996, p. 331; Weber 2001 [1930]).

For John Ruggie (1982, pp. 382-3), the post-WWII economic order could be best described by the term "embedded liberalism." A development of Karl Polanyi's (1944) argument concerning "embedded" and "disembedded" economic orders,[6] embedded liberalism was the object of "postwar institutional reconstruction," to create a framework that would achieve domestic stability without "triggering the mutually distributive external consequences that had plagued the interwar period" (Ruggie 1982, p. 393). In other words, embedded liberalism was the 'compromise' between an internationalist, market-oriented order which simultaneously allowed for states to maintain domestic social policies (Kirshner 1999, p. 317).[7] This is a vision for the international economic order which Keynes also explicitly articulated: Keynes' 'middle way' (Kirshner 1999, p. 317). Keynes' middle way articulated a "dissatisfaction with

[6] Polanyi (1944) makes this distinction to highlight that there was a bifurcation of the economy from society in the nineteenth century, which was a marked difference from the tribal, feudal and mercantile economies, which were contained by, or a function of the social (Ruggie 1982, p. 385).
[7] David Harvey (2005, p. 10) rather conceptualises this as a "class compromise between capital and labour."

unregulated capitalism," and also involved ensuring that income distribution was not excessively unequal (Kirshner 1999, pp. 318-9). Simultaneously, this view endorsed respect for market mechanisms while resisting a philosophy of economism (Kirshner 1999, pp 319-20). The middle way or embedded liberalism was an alternative to the theory of hegemonic stability, where "a stable system is one in which changes can take place if they do not threaten the vital interests of the dominant states" (Gilpin 1988, p. 592; see also: Webb & Krasner 1989, p. 183). In this theory, stability in the international system is achieved when the dominant or hegemonic power remains unchallenged (Gilpin 1988, p. 592).

The above diversity of theoretical perspectives on the global economic governance structure have a common focus on how this structure provides a stabilising function, either through a balance-of-power,[8] as an antidote to the inherent contradictions of international anarchy,[9] through institutionalising dominant norms[10] or in the concentration of material power into a class of global elites.[11] The literature which I describe as 'traditional' here is also concerned with patterns of continuity and change in global governance paradigms. James Rosenau (1995, p. 18, my emphasis) theorises that it is a "continuous process of evolution, a becoming that fluctuates between *order* and *disorder* as conditions change and emergent properties consolidate and solidify." Global governance can produce varying degrees of stabilisation and order through instilling a common understanding and expectation about "how the world economy works and legitimises the goals set by specific players and the instruments they adopt for solving economic problems" (Moschella & Weaver 2013, p. 10). The IMF is central to this architecture of global governance, in its explicit purpose, its cultural, ideological and symbolic role in the international order, and the effects that its policies and expertise produce.[12] Reflective of the co-operative and functionalist imperative of global

[8] A concept predominantly attributable to neo-realists such as Kenneth Waltz (2000, p. 28; see also: Gilpin 1981) who writes: "as nature abhors a vacuum, so international politics abhors unbalanced power."
[9] This focus on anarchy is characteristic of classic realist thought, which is often attributed to the works of Thucydides (1928 [1919]), Niccolò Machiavelli (2003 [1513]), Thomas Hobbes (1929 [1651]), E.H. Carr (2016 [1939]) and Hans Morgenthau (1951 [1948]).
[10] See above discussion of constructivist thought on global governance.
[11] Here I am referring to Marxist and Critical scholarship, which is interested in how class relations between the bourgeoisie and proletariat function in IR, *inter alia* (see, for example: Cox 1981; Wallerstein 2004).
[12] I explore this in more detail in the following section.

economic governance outlined earlier, the Fund was designed explicitly as responsible for the stabilisation of exchange rates (Newcomer 1945, p. 37). Its role was thought crucial to support the concurrent reconstruction programs of the post-war period, alongside programs such as the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration which "would be handicapped if the value of the currencies of the countries in which they are working were to fluctuate widely from one day to the next" (Newcomer 1945, p. 37). It is important to highlight here that the guiding paradigm of global economic governance was orthodox, or Keynesian, economics,[13] which sustained a belief in the pursuit of self-interest and profit by rational economic agents, whose actions were disciplined and constrained by the self-regulating market economy. This is a system that was thought to best yield long-term stability and growth in the post-war period (Moschella & Weaver 2013, p. 12). I now turn to the 'traditional' literature on the IMF, which interrogates the changes, challenges, and critiques of the Fund.

III. Traditional approaches to the IMF

This section provides an overview of the literature that I categorise as 'traditional' in its focus in the study of the IMF. I trace the scholarship on the IMF's changing roles from the end of the Bretton Woods system to the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) and Eurozone debt crisis. I also discuss mainstream critiques of the IMF that have problematised the IMF's reputation as an agent of economic stability and cooperation.

a. Change, challenges and critiques

Scholars and activists have long charted and debated the nature of change in the IMF (see: Ban & Gallagher 2015; Broome 2010; Chorev & Babb 2009; Gabor 2010; Grabel 2011; Güven 2012; Loxley 2011; Moschella 2015; Stiglitz 2003). These debates are interesting since they highlight the tension between the IMF's formal role to promote global financial stability and its role in mandating austerity policies which have arguably stalled development and fundamentally restructured the way that people live, work and learn. For instance, in Latin America, the IMF has become "irrevocably

[13] As discussed earlier in this chapter, see: Keynes' middle way (Kirshner 1999).

associated… with austerity stagnation, regressive distribution, and often popular protest" (Pastor 1989, p. 102). In the following paragraphs I provide an overview of the key changes the IMF is thought to have undergone, as well as its critiques.

Traditional approaches to studying the IMF have focused on continuity and change relative to the economic crises and crashes at the time. The instability characteristic of crisis structures this literature. The role of the IMF was rattled in the 1970s and 1980s when the United States (US) floated the exchange rate, and the Bretton Woods system came to an end (Broome 2010, p. 40; Chorev & Babb 2009, p. 468; Clegg 2012, p. 70). After its "principal reason for existence" (Chorev & Babb 2009, p. 468) was eliminated, the Fund's role was redirected in the face of the Latin American debt crisis; it acted as an international advisor, external coordinator for groups of private and public creditors, and as a source of constraint on the macroeconomic policies of nation's governments (Broome 2010, p. 40; Chorev & Babb 2009, p. 468). This crisis carved out a role for the Fund in sovereign debt renegotiations involving official creditors as well as for private creditors by designing and monitoring macroeconomic stabilisation programs (Broome 2010, pp. 40-1). The Fund's responsibilities continued to expand outside of its original mandate, when it began to assume a role in knowledge production during the former-Soviet Union's 'transition' to market-based economies (Broome 2010, p. 41). Since the collapse of the Bretton Woods system, critics have argued that IMF policies have been insensitive to the myriad domestic conditions on which it imposes its stringent and narrow view of economic development, namely the 'Washington Consensus' (Babb 2013; Ban & Blyth 2013; Barnett & Finnemore 2004; Williamson 1993; Woods 2006). The Washington Consensus (WC) is a term coined by John Williamson in 1989 to describe the economic reforms that were imposed on Latin American countries by Washington, including the US government and the international financial institutions (IFIs) based there, such as the IMF (Williamson 1993, p. 1329).[14] The key principles of the Washington Consensus include the privatisation of state enterprises, trade liberalisation, flexibilisation, and deregulation, all of which are implemented in order to promote economic growth. The WC and the specific discourses

[14] These policies were initially imposed on Latin America and then imposed more broadly on countries in the Global South, including in Africa and Asia.

and economic subjects it presumes and produces has been an important object of study for feminists, which I explore later in this chapter.

In the time between the Asian Financial Crisis (AFC) (1997-98) and the Eurozone debt crisis (2009-12), the IMF "almost became an irrelevance" (Loxley 2011, p. 229). The amount of outstanding loans dropped from $73 billion in 2003 to under $10 billion in 2007, and the IMF lost its credibility following its poor performance during the AFC (Loxley 2011, pp. 229-30; see also: Crotty & Lee 2005; Feldstein 1998; Seabrooke 2007; Wade 1998; Wade & Veneroso 1998). However, not all economic crises have challenged the existence of the IMF, with the GFC and European Union (EU) sovereign debt crisis giving "the IMF a new lease of life" (Loxley 2011, p. 230; see also: Ban & Gallagher 2015; Clift 2018; Gabor 2010, p. 805; Grabel 2011, p. 808; Moschella 2011, 2015). Between September 2008 and December 2011, the IMF made arrangements with seventy countries, representing an increase of 240% from 2007 (Güven 2012, p. 873). This revitalisation was also due to internal change, as "major questions about the theory and practice that underlie [the IMF's] operations" (Loxley 2011, p. 230; Grabel 2011; Moschella 2011) were raised. However, Güven (2012, p. 870) claims that no drastic or substantive change has occurred in the IMF's policy content and programmes; instead, there has merely been "reorganizations in [the] lending framework, modifications in policy narrative and some reshuffling of loan priorities." In this view, the extent of any change at the IMF is merely a refashioning of capitalism in a way that is palatable to the critiques of a given period. This position is echoed in the critiques developed by Marxist and 'Third Worldist' scholars and activists.

In the 1970s, the IMF was the subject of intense challenge from the emergent 'Third Worldist' arguments and dependency economics influenced by Marxist thought. They argued that the IMF was punishing deficit countries for problems which were "both endemic to the development process and the result of external and uncontrollable factors" (Pastor 1989, p. 87; see also: Dell 1982; Payer 1974). In Cheryl Payer's 1974 book, *The Debt Trap: The IMF and the Third World,* she argues that the IMF champions the interests of core countries, particularly the US, rather than those taking out the loans in periphery countries. In the 1980s and 1990s, the IMF was the target of multiple

critiques, including bias in its lending that reflected and protected US interests (Bird 1995), which is an ongoing focus of the literature (Broz & Hawes 2006; Copelovitch 2010a, b; Dreher & Jensen 2007; Harrigan et al. 2006; Nelson 2014; Stone 2008 and, Thacker 1999), with Seonjou Kang (2007) arguing that the five biggest contributors to the IMF (the US, UK, Japan, Germany and France) influence conditionality rules. This is what Joseph Stiglitz (2003) identifies as an accountability issue. He argues that the IMF voting system is grossly outdated, with voting shares "imperfectly measured [by the] economic weight of a country" (Stiglitz 2003, p. 120), meaning that wealth is the measure of influence in the IMF. This gives the United States veto power in the IMF, since it contributes 17.42% of the total member contributions, currently giving it 831,394 or 16.49% of the total votes (IMF 2025). Additionally, researchers argue that the bias in lending could be understood with respect to the biases in views and beliefs of staff within the bureaucracy (Chwieroth 2013; Momani 2005, 2007; Nelson 2014; Seabrooke & Nilsson 2015; Strange 1974).

Until the late 1990s, critiques of the IMF had largely come from "radical academics and left-wing NGOs" (Güven 2012, p. 871). In the 1970s, for instance, John Loxley (2011, p. 226) claims that the two strands of critique were the "'conspiracy approach'" and the "'systemic' one." The first approach, in this categorisation, refers to those works such as Payer's (1974).[15] The second approach refers to those who believed that IFIs are "enforcing a body of rules on capitalist rivals to ensure that the law of value, or more generally, market forces, arbitrated conflicts among them" (Loxley 2011, p. 226). Wide-spread scepticism of the Fund only gained traction with the release of 'credible' (Güven 2012, p. 871) criticism by Stiglitz (2002) and William Easterly (2001). These works were published alongside comprehensive analysis by activist movements and other critical publications (Danaher 1994; Peet 2009). The key points of critique coming out of this literature pertained to questions of agency, sovereignty, meddling and neo-colonialism. Specifically, scholars argued that the conditions attached to IMF loans could be perceived as 'overkill,' going "much further than was strictly necessary" (Dell 1982, p. 597), or as meddling (Martin 2022) in the sovereign authority of states to make their own decisions over domestic economic policy. The interventionist quality of the

[15] The reasons given for this categorisation are brief but broadly pertain to the perceived over-generalisation and simplicity of the critique.

Fund's conditions, as well as the global debt regime more broadly has widely been characterised as neo-colonial. Thomas Sankara (1987; see also: Bond 2005; Onimode 1992; Rodney 1972; Zajontz 2022), former President of Burkina Faso, observed that "debt's origins come from colonialism's origins" and that modern lenders are the same nations who colonised the recipient nations of these loans. Other critiques highlight the epistemic violence of the Fund's technical knowledge, which was developed in the West (primarily Britain and the US) (for example, Carmody 1998; Chwieroth 2009, 2013; Nelson 2014). With other scholars similarly raising questions about how staff selection, internal reform and normative evolution takes place in the Fund (Momani 2005; Park & Vetterlein 2010; Weaver 2008). This research calls into question the appropriateness of an undemocratic bureaucratic structure in an institution which has such a large impact on the economies and politics of nations, as well as the lived experience of people inhabiting these nations. Despite the Fund's role in assisting nations in economic crisis, many of these activist and scholarly works accused the Fund of being responsible or implicated in the string of financial crises which have characterised the operation of the global economy (Chorev & Babb 2009; Crotty & Lee 2005; Harvey 2005; Stiglitz 2002; Wade 1998).

The IMF's association with the destabilisation of economic and political security is particularly clear in the literature on and from the Global South. Studies have found that the presence of IMF loans and programs may cause a decline in government respect for human rights (Abouharb & Cingranelli 2007, 2009; Blanton et al. 2015; Daoud et al. 2022; Dreher & Gassebner 2012; Tarkpor & Clarke 2024; Woo et al. 2024) and an increase in political violence, protest and government crisis (Auvinen 1996; Hartzell et al. 2010; Walton & Ragin 1990). Caroline Hartzell's (et al. 2010) research collects data from 1970 to 1999 and finds an association with the adoption of IMF Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) and the beginning of civil wars. However, Trude Midtgaard's (et al. 2014; see also: De Soysa & Vadlammanati 2013; Eriksen & De Soysa 2009) research contests that structural adjustment induces civil war, arguing that there is no causation between these two variables, and that often a country entering into a SAP tends to already have the conditions that breed civil war. Additionally, following entrance into an IMF program, studies have observed that currency crises in borrowing

countries may be induced, and that there is a decline in labour conditions (Dreher & Gassebner 2012; Dreher & Walter 2010). Eleftherios Goulas and Athina Zervoyianni (2016) examine data from 30 developing countries who received IMF loans during 1991 and 2008 and find that there is a causal relationship between suicide mortality and participation in IMF programs. They find this relationship in the post-AFC context in Indonesia, South Korea and Thailand, which entered into IMF arrangements and experienced a substantial rise in suicides (Chang et al. 2009; Kim et al. 2010, cited in Goulas & Zervoyianni 2016, p. 44). This pattern was also observed in Greece, who turned to the IMF in 2010, in a post-GFC environment. Before the crisis, Greece had one of the lowest suicide mortality rates in the world. The number of people dying by suicide in the aftermath of the 2009-11 crisis increased the total suicide rate by 40% (Goulas & Zervoyianni 2016, p. 44). This research indicates that measures introduced to instil economic order and stability cultivate the conditions in which individuals and societies are thrown into uncertainty and instability.

The literature critiquing the Fund is important and valuable for this research. However, it fails to unsettle the representational categories on which the GEG system is premised, including gender and sexuality. In the next section, I turn to the feminist literature on GEG and the IMF, which in part, seeks to destabilise the conception of international politics that mainstream approaches to GEG and IMF take for granted.

IV. Feminist approaches to global economic governance

Feminist approaches to GEG vary in their theoretical and methodological commitments. There are three key streams in the feminist approaches to GEG explored in this section. Early feminist thought sought to incorporate women into the existing patriarchal, capitalist system of economic governance and in turn improve the representation of women in areas such as business and employment. The early feminist critique of economics has come to be known as the ‘add women and stir’ (Harding 1987) approach, as it generally maintained existing neoclassical models of economics and added women without making any substantive change to institutions or structures. The more recent iteration of this approach to global governance is discussed later in this

section. In contrast, Marxist feminists denounced the institutional politics of liberal feminism, and argue that the structures of capitalism and patriarchy have to be dismantled to improve the conditions of the working class and women. Recently, scholars have interrogated the meaning-making function of ‘the economy.’ This has comprised an epistemological move from studies of causality to that of meaning and discourse. This third phase of feminist study of the economy is explored in the following queer theory section, since I conceptualise its theoretical basis as queer within this study. This is to some extent an arbitrary distinction, since there is a significant overlap in post-structuralist feminist thought and queer theory. In relation to these strands, I argue that the IMF produces discourse on gender that harkens back to the ideas of the first strand of feminist thought. As a precursor to the discussion, I outline the key feminist critique of the ‘economic man’ since it is recognised yet treated differently in each strand of feminist theorising discussed here.

The epistemological underpinnings of mainstream economics assumes that economics is a neutral and value-free domain which is influenced by the behaviour of self-interested and rational economic actors (Adam Smith 2015 [1776)]. The neoclassical economic figure of the *homo economicus*, the economic man who is rational and self-interested, can be traced to John Stuart Mill’s (2017 [1863]) text *Utilitarianism.* In this text, Mill theorised that individual economic behaviour is always defined by seeking to improve his own condition and wealth. This economic figure is challenged in feminist thought (Ferber & Nelson 2003). Many argue that this figure, rather than representing some sort of naturally existing ‘self,’ is masculinised and ethnocentric (Ferber & Nelson 1993, 2003; Elson 1996). Additionally, this individualistic approach does not take into account the ways that invisible, latent power structures such as patriarchy and racism, for example, structure the economy and are reproduced within the economy through individual actors and institutions. Markets do not operate independently from the social, cultural and political world, but are directly implicated in their reproduction (Berik et al. 2009, p. 4). Accordingly, economics contains the masculine biases that exist in a patriarchal society (Nelson 1995, p. 131).

a. Institutionalist, (neo)liberal feminism

The influence of feminist movements has meant that women can now be considered to embody the *homo economicus*, so long as they adopt "typically 'masculine' characteristics" (i.e. rationality, self-interest, and competitiveness) (Griffin 2007a, p. 231). This approach has seen the rise of a figure that Elaine Coburn (2019) calls the *femina economica* which is discussed in the following subsection. Feminists also critique the figure of the 'Davos woman' which was a celebrated feminised version of the term 'Davos man,'[16] who is the "corporatized, globalized version of the *homo economicus"* (Elias 2013, p. 164; Beneria 1999). The Davos woman is the "rational economic woman… a profit and utility maximising individual who remains keenly attuned to providing the needs of her household" (Elias 2013, p. 164; see also: Saqer 2022). While the critique of the economic man holds genuine radical potential, this figure has also been mobilised to advocate for solutions which betray feminism's disruptive epistemological claims and instead endorse women embodying the rational economic figure. These works (see, for example: Desvaux et al. 2010; McKinsey & Company 2007; UN Women 2011; World Bank 2006, 2012) do not seek to question the institutions of global economic governance and instead suggest that the increased presence of women in the international financial system can strengthen productivity, growth and profit.

The 'gender as smart economics' approach is an example of earlier feminist approaches to economics as it assumes positive change can occur through the inclusion of women and gender-aware policies in the economic system as it is. Adrienne Roberts (2012, 2015) elaborates on how international institutions such as the UN, financial institutions, corporations, NGOs and some states have adopted 'transnational business feminism' and critiques how these institutions further entrench their own power by creating 'expert' knowledge about gender and development. A key example of this type of feminist thinking is the World Bank's 2012 World Development Report, which argues that a gender focus on economic policy is "smart economics." This has been critiqued directly by Adrienne Roberts and Susanne Soederberg (2012; see also: Calkin 2015a, b,

[16] The term 'Davos man' was coined to refer to the World Economic Forum annual meetings which take place in Davos, Switzerland on an invite-only basis.

2018; Chant 2016a; Elson 2009; Roberts & Zulfiqar 2019). Others have explored the ways that the business case for gender equality constructs women in the Global South as ‘victims’ who need to be saved by Western feminists and IFIs (Bergeron 2003; Chowdhry 1995; Chowdhry & Nair 2002; Spivak 1988). There is also a line of feminist critique that draws on Foucauldian governmentality to argue that gender as ‘smart economics’ “imbues women with a particular neoliberal form of rationality, constructing them as ‘rational economic women,’ whose responsible behaviour and individual choices will lift themselves and their families out of poverty” (Roberts 2015, p. 210; see also: Beneria 1999; Griffin 2009; Rankin 2001). These discourses have generated a large field of feminist literature influenced by the socialist feminist tradition which argue that feminism has been co-opted by neoliberalism and that we are entering an era of post-feminism.

Corporate female ‘empowerment’ initiatives[17] have been said to represent an era of post-feminism (Elias 2013; Hawkesworth 2004; Thompson 2008), market feminism (Kantola & Squires 2012; Stachowitsch 2018); and the co-optation of feminism (Eisenstein 2009; Fraser 2009; McRobbie 2009; Tornhill 2016). ‘Post-feminism’ is a term used to refer to the idea that feminist struggles are “no longer relevant, have been won, or have led to unhelpful social and cultural outcomes” (Elias 2013, pp. 155-6; McRobbie 2009). The term ‘market feminism’ was coined to describe the move from ‘state feminism,’ which refers to the policies concerning women that are advanced through state bureaucracy (Kantola & Squires 2012, pp. 383-4). Johanna Kantola and Judith Squires (2012, p. 390) observed the changing landscape of governance, with the increasing prominence of the market and non-state actors, and coined the term ‘market feminism’ to refer to the initiatives for gender equality that are promoted in the “channels and mechanisms offered by the market.” Market and state feminists both share faith in existing institutional avenues to achieve gender equality goals; they both articulate “feminist discourses that appeal to a wide range of policy makers, although

[17] The literature describes and critiques initiatives such as Nike’s ‘Girl Effect’ (see: Boyd 2016; Calkin 2015c; Chant 2016b; Elias 2013; Hickel 2014; Moeller 2013; Switzer 2013), the World Bank (as described above), the European Union (see: Elomäki 2015; Kantola 2010; Leon 2009; Lewis 2006; Stratigaki 2004; Young 2000), and micro-finance/credit programs (see: Federici 2014; Garikipati, et al. 2017; Kaushal 2025; Keating et al. 2010; Maclean 2010; Mayoux 1999, 2002; Morgan & Olsen 2011; Price 2019; Rankin 2001, 2002; Roy 2022; Sengupta 2013).

market feminisms tend to represent the interests of a narrow, elite group of liberal feminists" (Calkin 2015a, pp. 303-4). Fraser (2009) argues that the three dimensions of gender injustice that second-wave feminists identified: "economic, cultural and political" have been fragmented from one another, and with this fragmentation, the "utopian desires [of feminism] found a second life as feeling currents that legitimated the transition to a new form of capitalism: post-Fordist, transnational, neoliberal" (Fraser 2009, p. 99). This iteration of feminist thought relinquishes any resistance against cisheteropatriarchy,[18] capitalism and colonialism and instead promotes the 'empowerment'[19] of a few women; Federici (2020, p. 129) describes the 'empowered' woman as: "running around the globe with their laptops, lobbying, courting the media, battling for hours to change a few words in official documents, increasingly detached from mass movements." In the next section, I explore a key critique made by second-wave socialist feminists about the exclusion of housework, care work and other reproductive labour from the domain of economic interest.

b. Structuralist, socialist feminism

Socialist feminists of the 1970s and 1980s made a large contribution to economic thought by highlighting the ways that mainstream economics, in its study of the formal economy, was omitting a crucial arena of economics: the reproductive labour undertaken in the private domain of the home (Engels 2021 [1884]; Federici 2004, 2020). This contribution sought to more holistically account for the role of the family in a theory of capitalist production by theorising *social* reproduction. Social reproduction generally refers to three aspects:

> (a) biological reproduction of the species, and the conditions and social constructions of motherhood; (b) the reproduction of the labour force which involves subsistence, education and training; and (c) the reproduction and

[18] The term 'cisheteropatriarchy' refers to the idea that cis-ness, heterosexuality, and patriarchy are perceived as normal, natural and are the dominant way of organising social life (Arvin et al. 2013, p. 13). This is a system which is also bound up with settler-colonialism (see: Arvin et al. 2013; Moreton-Robinson 2000; Puar 2007; A. Smith 2010).

[19] Many scholars explore the power-laden and ideological use of the term 'empowerment' in development (see: Cornwall 2007; Cornwall & Brock 2005; Cornwall & Rivas 2015; Eyben & Napier-Moore 2009).

> provisioning of caring needs that may be wholly privatised within families and kinship networks or socialised to some degree through state supports (Bakker 2007, p. 541).

They argued that economic structures are embedded in, reproduce and naturalise gender roles through the "unwaged condition" of housework (Federici 2020, p. 4). The dichotomous nature of private/public and waged/unwaged roles are impossible without the presumption of innate gender roles, that women's work at home is a "labor of love" (Federici 2020, p. 12). Additionally, they highlighted how this invisibilised labour was a precursor for the existence of the formal economy. In other words, without the reproductive labour performed in the home, i.e. feeding, dressing and nurturing (male) workers, those workers would be unable to provide their labour to the formal economy. Further, this critique highlighted how the act of giving birth was providing the economic system with workers. Federici (2004) uses Karl Marx's concept of 'primitive accumulation' to make this point. She writes that the conquest and exploitation of the female body is a "precondition for the accumulation of labor and wealth" which is evident in the reproductive technologies which "reduce women to wombs" (Federici 2004, p. 17).

More recent scholarship on the reproductive economy is concerned with the state's withdrawal of support for women's caring and reproduction, and the replacement of public supports by non-state actors such as the market; the 're-privatisation' of social reproduction (Bakker 2007, p. 541; Bakker & Gill 2003). Spike Peterson (2002, 2003, 2005, 2010a, 2014, 2017) writes prolifically on the relationship between globalisation and intimacy, extending the analysis by focusing on reproductive, productive and virtual (RPV) economies. The 'RPV framing' seeks to contest the separation of "culture from economy, economics from politics, agent from structure or domestic from international politics" (Peterson 2002, p. 5). In explicating these three economies (reproductive, productive and virtual), Peterson (2002, p. 1) maps the materiality of commodity exchange, reproduction in the home and the virtual exchange of signs as mutually constitutive (albeit analytically distinct). This is a perspective which considers the 'household' as an important analytical unit in the study of economies (Douglass 2006;

Peterson 2010a). Mike Douglass (2006) uses the term 'householding' to highlight how the creation of a 'household' is an ongoing process of social reproduction that extends beyond the family unit. Peterson (2010a, p. 271) adds the concept of "*global* householding," to attend to the ways that 'householding' occurs across nation-state boundaries. She claims that this warrants much more critical attention, and has been neglected by IR and IPE scholars, which has masked how the state has an interest in "who counts as a family and how families are constituted" (Peterson 2014, p. 605). She sees the role of queer theory as disrupting the binaries of global-local, national-familial and public-private by exposing the ways they are fundamentally intertwined (Peterson 2017, p. 114). Theorising the interconnectedness of the body and the economy is a distinctly queer approach to studying global economic governance. Accordingly, the use of queer theory in theorising about the reproductive economy is explored later in this chapter.[20] Similarly, queer theory and post-structuralist feminists alike (which are not necessarily mutually exclusive categories) have interrogated the ways that the economy imposes meaning and order on unwieldy bodies, and how these symbolic codes shape material (economic) realities.

c. Feminists theorise economic restructuring and debt

Feminists concerned with the gendered, racialised and classed impacts of structural adjustment and economic restructuring seek to elucidate the ways that the GEG architecture intervenes in the private sphere and reorganises the way that people live. In line with the broader feminist critique of economics, economic restructuring through Structural Adjustment Loans/Programs (SALs/SAPs) is applied to populations who are presumed to adhere to essentialised gendered (and heterosexist) scripts of private life. In this section, I outline the scholarship exploring the direct ways that economic restructuring transforms the micro, intimate spheres to the way it indirectly reorganises the global economy and the way that these changes are connected.

[20] The queer theorists extending the socialist feminist school of thought can be said to constitute the 'materialist' turn in queer theory, which responds to the ways that certain elements of queer theory are amiable for neo-liberal co-optation (Eng & Puar 2020). See the Special Issue of *Social Text:* 'Left of Queer.'

Studies find that the presence of structural adjustment stalls progress in women and girls' education as they are pulled out of school to assist with reproductive or income-generating work (Arnove et al. 1996; Buchmann 1996; Reimers 1991; Rose 1995; Saadatmand 1997; Saadatmand & Toma 2008; Sparr 1994). Relatedly, there is a notable decline in women and girls' health. When food and resources are scarce, women and girls often suffer. For example, women tend to eat last and eat less in the family home (Buchmann 1996; Sadasivam 1997; Tanski 1994). Unemployment for women also increases, women become poorer, and women's unpaid work escalates as they have to carry out the services once covered by social services while navigating higher prices for necessities and stretching limited funds (Sadasivam 1997, p. 636; Sparr 1994, p. 25). Shirin Rai (et al. 2014; Rai 2024) argues that this increased social reproductive work can result in 'depletion,' occurring when "the resource outflows exceed resource inflows" rendering social reproductive work "over a threshold of sustainability, [and] making it harmful for those engaged in this unvalued work" (Rai et al. 2014, pp. 88-9). Feminists highlight that macroeconomic policies which take the household as a singular, "welfare maximizing unit" assumes that it is endlessly capable of absorbing the costs of structural adjustment which limit social spending (Sadasivam 1997, p. 639). Yet, in line with the socialist critique, the naturalisation of female labour in the home underpins this presumption in orthodox macroeconomics. This 'male bias' (Elson 1995a; Elson & Cagatay 2000) in macroeconomics presumes that reproduction and the "maintenance of human resources will continue" (Sadasivam 1997, p. 636) irrespective of the reallocation of resources in the formal economy. During COVID-19 this dynamic of over-work and depletion was clearly manifest. Women suffer(ed) "the triple jeopardy of austerity forces" as "public-sector workers, service users and the main recipients of social protection benefits," which put(s) them at greater risk of contracting COVID, suffering gendered/domestic violence and dying (Bohoslavsky & Rulli 2021, p. 100). Similarly, there is a connection between the macro, meso and micro impacts of austerity with the creation of conditions which may expose women and children to HIV/AIDs in sub-Saharan Africa (De Vogli & Birbeck 2005). SAPs/SALs decimate and entirely restructure the configuration of labour in the home. These effects indicate that research must be attentive to the ways in which gender, race and class dictate people's experience of economic restructuring.

This literature is related to critical feminist studies of globalisation and migration, as scholars consider the link between the effects of restructuring and conditions of austerity (i.e. unemployment and debt), and the migration of women from the Global South to find paid employment in the Global North (Sassen 2000, p. 505). As economic restructuring in a country under IMF-imposed austerity reduces the availability of quality employment in the Global South, people (often women) are forced to find alternative ways of securing a life-sustaining income for themselves and their families. This pattern in global migration is what Saskia Sassen (2009) has termed alternative "circuits of survival." As women in "Global Cities" (Sassen 2006), such as New York, London and Tokyo, take up paid employment in the formal economy, a gap is created in housework and childcare. Migration from the Global South to the Global North to work as nannies, maids and sex workers are being presented as the solution to the job shortage in the Global South and the care shortage in the Global North (Marchand & Runyan 2011, p. 5; see also: Constable 2009; Kofman & Raghuram 2012; Peterson 2010b; Pyle 2001; Pyle & Ward 2003; Raghuram 2012). Moreover, poor women (and men) are entering precarious jobs in the shadow economy, which refers to "all economic activities which are hidden from official authorities for monetary regulatory and institutional reasons" (Medina & Schneidner 2018 cited in Chletsos & Sintos 2021, p. 292; see also: Balakrishnan 2002; Pyle & Ward 2003, p. 470). The most prominent circuits for survival are illegal trafficking of "women for prostitution as well as for regular work, organized export of women as brides, nurses and domestic servants, and the remittances of an increasingly female emigrant workforce" (Sassen 2000, p. 523). Decimation of national economies through debt, austerity and restructuring cannot be theorised independently of the reorganisation and globalisation of the care and reproductive economy. Crucial connections have been drawn to the role of IMF austerity in creating the conditions and vulnerabilities which facilitate gendered exploitations such as the Dominque Strauss-Kahn sexual assault allegation discussed in the following section (Montoya 2016).

The erosion of social services, support for social reproduction and increasing deregulation and flexibility of labour have created what has been referred to as the

‘feminisation’ of poverty, survival and global labour (Cagatay & Ozler 1995; Chang et al. 2011; Elgin & Elveren 2021; Sassen 2000). The term ‘feminisation’ is used to indicate that these changes in the economic system are cultivating conditions wherein families and communities are dependent on women for survival (Sassen 2000, p. 506). Women’s migration to the Global North to find employment, removal from school, uptake of reproductive work in the home and increase in health issues are all examples of the ways that women sacrifice their livelihood and wellbeing in the face of economic restructuring. However, the term ‘feminisation’ has also been used to refer to the ways that men’s employment is taking on the characteristics of women’s (under)employment (i.e. insecure, underpaid, undervalued) (Standing 1989, p. 1077; see also: Roberts 2015; Standing 1999). This literature draws an important connection between gender and the materiality of structural adjustment and debt.

d. Feminists theorise crisis

The way that economic crises differentially impact people across gender has historically been deemed a “not-serious” terrain of research in global economic governance because it takes people, particularly marginalised groups, as the object of study rather than the state or institutions (Enloe 2013, p. 21). However, this neglects the significant impacts economic crises have on women. Studies in Europe, Southeast Asia, South America and the Caribbean uniformly indicate that employers are more likely to lay off women during economic crises (see: Blanton et al. 2018; Floro & Dymski 2000; Kushi & McManus 2018). Additionally, in post-crisis years, women’s participation in politics and the formal economy is undermined, and their health outcomes and educational attainment decrease (Blanton et al. 2018, p. 941). Feminists have also interrogated discourses of crises, and the way that it functions to stabilise both the economic paradigm and gender categories, as well as the ways that these interact.

In the same way that gender is often overlooked as an empirical category in the study of crisis, gender and sexuality as analytical categories are also deemed irrelevant. However, feminists have argued that anxieties around the stability of gender and sexuality can play out during times of economic crisis (Bedford 2008; Bosia 2013;

Butler 2024; Rao 2015; True & Hozic 2016). This was particularly evident, and widely studied, following the GFC wherein scholars debated the role of masculinity in risky decision-making and whether the presence of more women would temper the dangerous behaviour that led to the crisis (see: Brassett & Heine 2021; Calkin 2015b; Griffin 2013, 2016; McDowell 2010; Prügl 2012). In Elisabeth Prügl's (2012) discourse analysis of the gendered reporting of the GFC, she argues that a myth of male recklessness and the promise of female patience and even-headedness were mobilised to naturalise the crises built into capitalism, while assuming a progressive, gender-aware guise. Women were constructed as a corrective force for economic stability due to essentialist images about their "responsibility, domesticity and circumspection" (Griffin 2016, p. 182). Penny Griffin (2015) extends this further by theorising a 'crisis governance feminism' which suppresses calls for systematic overhaul and further entrenches unequal power dynamics. She argues that the GFC "precipitated and continues to reproduce techniques of governance that trivialise feminist concerns while further embedding a masculinised, white and elitist culture of global financial privilege" (Griffin 2015, p. 109). Economic crises are relatedly constructed as discrete events in the economic architecture: as a "crisis *in* capitalism rather than *of* capitalism" (True & Hozic 2016, p. 10). Such constructions obfuscate the constant state of 'crisis' that capitalism amounts to. This critique has been explicitly applied to multiple institutions of global economic governance, and is particularly relevant to the IMF, whose mobilisation of gender has been interpreted as a ploy to legitimise its neoliberal policies (Weinhold & Brodtmann 2017). This is the subject of the next section.

V. Feminist approaches to the IMF

Gender has become more of an explicit policy issue for the IMF, particularly following sexual assault allegations made against a former managing director DSK and discussions following the GFC concerning masculinity and risk-taking in IFIs. Ahn questioned whether there was a causal link between the institution's toleration of sexist behaviour and the disproportionate impact of IMF policies on poor women (Ahn 2011, cited in Enloe 2013, p. 54). Similarly, Celeste Montoya (2016, p. 155) draws a compelling connection between the micro and macro power dimensions of the assault

by arguing that DSK represented, as a French national, potential presidential candidate and head of the IMF, a symbol of colonial power, while Nafissatou Diallo, as a native of Guinea (a recipient of IMF funding), represents the "developing world at which this Western power is directed." The appointment of the Fund's first woman managing director, Christine Lagarde, prompted an interest and need for feminist studies of the IMF, including questions of whether its practices and policies have changed (Enloe 2013, p. 57; Coburn 2019). The feminist literature on the IMF can be said to comprise two concerns: (1) the gendered implication of the policies, and (2) the study of IMF discourse. This section is structured accordingly.

a. Gendered effects of IMF policies

Although studies on the way that IMF policies impact people in gendered ways exist, it is nowhere near as prolific as the comparable literature on its sister institution the World Bank or on austerity more broadly defined.[21] The studies I discuss below often do not belong within IR/IPE as a discipline and are thus not firmly rooted in the theoretical tradition of feminist and queer IR/IPE. These studies are nonetheless important to note as they highlight the incongruity and contradictions between IMF gendered discourses of gender 'empowerment' and the lived experiences of gendered disenfranchisement in the context of IMF policies.

In recent studies of the IMF, critical feminists take issue with the institutional constraints of the IMF in respect to its ability to empower women (Coburn 2019; Kern et al. 2024; Weinhold & Brodtmann 2017). Lisa Weinhold and Carolin Brodtmann (2017) critique the IMF by examining the gendered impacts of the policies in the context of the discursive 'gender turn' that the IMF has undertaken. They claim that the IMF: (1) engages in the instrumentalisation of women in lieu of improvements to social infrastructure and working conditions; (2) possesses an inability to challenge structural barriers to gender equality; and that it (3) entrenches an individualist and market-based ethos. Excluding the first critique, these are all limitations of the IMF's ability to effect change which are inherently built into the IMF's mandate. They claim that the IMF is

[21] See subsection 'Feminists theorise economic restructuring and debt' in this chapter.

participating in “gender washing:” that the IMF’s increased gender focus is for its own benefit rather than for the benefit of women (Weinhold & Brodtmann 2017). This critique echoes the co-optation critique of ‘smart economics’ feminism (Fraser 2009, 2013), since it reveals that the IMF uses feminist language without the commitment to feminism’s challenges to structures of patriarchy and racism. They view the IMF itself as an institutionalisation of patriarchy and racism.

Studies also document that IMF policies actively harm rather than empower women. IMF policies have been found to impact the education enrolments and workplace participation of girls and women in Ecuador (Saadatmand & Toma 2008; see also: Kern et al. 2024) and to have influenced people’s decision to join the teaching profession in Greece (Asimaki & Vergidis 2013). These arenas have been studied because IMF-imposed austerity removes funding from social services like education often to the detriment of women, as discussed earlier. Michael Chletsos and Andreas Sintos (2021) find that IMF intervention creates conditions in which a shadow economy emerges. As discussed earlier, participants in the shadow economy are typically poor women who lose their jobs and carry the responsibility of a family’s survival. Relatedly, Nicole Detraz and Dursun Peksen (2016) find that IMF programs create an environment of political repression and instability which erode government’s willingness to protect women’s economic and political rights. This again troubles the notion that the IMF is an agent of stability. These studies, however, do not interrogate the way that the IMF produces and reproduces gender categories in its practices and policy discourses. This is the focus of the following subsection.

b. Studies of IMF discourse

As mentioned earlier, feminist and post-structuralist approaches to economics have recently turned to the way that discourses of global economic governance generate meaning and construct social reality. These approaches recognise discourses and their silences as power-laden and that they demarcate the limits of policy possibilities. Eric Helleiner (2022) examines this in the context of the inception of the IMF at the Bretton Woods conferences. Key silences included colonialism and environmentalism, despite

these issues being discussed in other spaces at this time. These silences enabled European countries to: (1) maintain the legitimacy of their ongoing colonial empires; and, (2) construct a vision of economic stability and growth without considering the dependence of the economy on the ongoing existence of a functional and healthy natural environment (Helleiner 2022).

With the appointment of Lagarde as IMF managing director in 2011, feminists were interested in the way that gender concerns play out in the Fund's workplace culture, and how this influenced the IMF's agenda and discourse. Studies interrogate the way that the language of female empowerment is used to serve neoliberal goals; it represents an ostensibly "kinder, more inclusive and humane approach to economic growth" (Rao 2015, p. 39; see also: Fraser 2009, 2013; Berik 2017). These discursive studies reveal the way that economic language constructs ideas about human nature and naturalises social inventions such as the nation, 'economic growth,' *inter alia*. Similarly to feminist analyses of the World Bank, Coburn (2019, p. 768) finds that the *femina economica* epitomises the contradictions of the organisation and its feminist concerns. The novel female economic agent is "empowered" to participate in the formal economy, she is a:

> [S]table, level-headed investor and virtuous mother who contributes to national economic growth and economic stability through her sober and altruistic participation in capitalist market relationships (Coburn 2019, p. 777).

Coburn (2019, p. 768) claims that a 'gender turn' at the IMF took place in 2013, and identifies the gender and economic aims as the creation of a new actor, the *femina economica*, which is an extension of the neoclassical *homo economicus* mentioned earlier. She notes that despite this significant proliferation of gendered discourse, studies on change and continuity in the IMF neglect to discuss this change (Ban & Gallagher 2015; Clift 2018; Nelson 2018 Van Gunten 2017, cited in Coburn 2019, p. 769). Despite the existence of feminist studies of IMF discourse, the taken-for-grantedness of categories that the IMF espouses including race, heterosexuality and gender is limited. In other words, there is a need for the queer tradition of destabilising and making

strange that which is taken-for-granted in global economic governance. In the following sections I explore the existing queer critiques of global economic governance and the IMF.

VI. Queer approaches to global economic governance

Queer critiques engage with and extend the feminist idea of gender as a social construct. Because queer theory steps beyond the deconstruction of gender by deconstructing sex and the body, it is a useful tool to unpack taken-for-granted and naturalised discourses. Queer theory has contributed to the study of various dimensions of IR/IPE, including war, security (Howell 2018; Pratt 2007; Shepherd & Sjoberg 2012; Sjoberg 2014, 2015), political economy (discussed below), nationalism (Berlant & Freeman 1992; Brandzel 2005; Nagel 1998; Peterson 1994, 1999, 2013; Puar 2002, 2007, 2013; Rao 2013), colonialism (Ahmed 2000; Alexander 1994; Geeta & Nair 2002; Griffin 2017; Rao 2012, 2013, 2020), empire and foreign policy (Puar 2007; Puar & Rai 2002). In this section, I explore the contribution of queer theorists and works in the field of global economic governance, particularly engaging with queer critiques of international political economy.

a. Queer resistance to the 'rights-based' approach

'Queer Questions' in IR/IPE are distinct from the 'Woman Question' in the particular strand of feminist GEG, which asks: "where are the women?" Instead, 'Queer Questions' seek to supplement this question by troubling the very categories of 'man' and 'woman.' It is an ontological challenge: "about whom are you speaking?" (Rao 2014, p. 207). While queer scholars do "contest the erasure of non-normative sexualities," its solutions cannot be reduced to the liberal 'add queers and stir' (N.J. Smith 2018, p. 105). This is because queer is an analytical rather than empirical category (Peterson 2005). To treat queer as an empirical category is to interrogate the ways that LGBTQIA+ people "are differently affected by, and differently affect" international political economy, for instance (Peterson 2005, p. 499; N.J. Smith 2018, p. 105). In contrast, to take queer as an analytical category is to explore how queer

sexualities, “as a meaning system” (re)produce and are (re)produced by political economy (Peterson 2005, p. 499). Nicola Smith (2018, p. 105) notes that critics have argued that studying the binary of homosexuality/heterosexuality reproduces and entrenches it. However, the central premise of queer theory is to render non-normative sexualities visible while simultaneously seeking to destabilise these categories, and to reject the notion that sexuality and gender categories are coherent and stable (N.J. Smith 2018, p. 105). ‘Queer Questions’ create queer subjectivities and trouble the universal representational categories that feminist scholars have depended on for their rights claims (Rao 2014, p. 207; see also: Butler 2006). Accordingly, queer approaches have taken issue with the operation of a rights-claims approach to IR, since it inherently accepts those institutions within which it operates. Many have explored how rights-focused queer analysis (such as Huneke 2023; A.M. Smith 2007) may hinder the radical potential of queer movements by prioritising assimilation *vis-à-vis* the market and state.[22] In this view, it is not enough to ‘add queer and stir’ (N.J. Smith 2018).

Jasbir Puar (2005; 2007; 2013) and others (Binnie 2004; Hoad 2000, 2007; Lind 2014; Rao 2010, 2014) interrogate how the rights-based approach to asking queer questions in IR reworks colonial notions of progress, by often insinuating that those states which adopt and support LGBT rights are figures of modernity. Developing Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s (1988) question ‘can the subaltern speak?,’ Rahul Rao (2010) highlights how this dynamic plays out in queer politics, with ‘white homosexuals saving brown homosexuals from brown homophobes.’ Rao (2014, p. 200) argues that the “Homosexual Question” is now being asked alongside the “Woman Question” and that it is used to determine a state’s capacity for sovereignty. This is what Puar (2007) termed ‘homonationalism.’ As a concept, it aims to ask why a nation’s status as ‘gay-friendly’ is desirable and highlights how some homosexual bodies are constructed as worthy of protection and others are not; it problematises the complex “relationship between the state, capitalism and sexuality” (Puar 2013, p. 337; see also: Butler 2016, pp. 105-6; Weber 2016a). Peterson (1999) also interrogates the state from a queer theoretical vantage point, extending feminist insights about gendered nationalism by

[22] Whether it be through gay marriage (Warner 1999), or an LGBTQIA+ friendly genocidal state such as Israel (Hochberg 2010; Hochberg et al. 2010; Puar 2002, 2011; Stein 2010).

pointing to the ways that nationalism is also heterosexist. In the next paragraph I will briefly define and outline the literature on heterosexism and (anti)normativity.

b. Heterosexism, heteronormativity and homonormativity

'Heterosexism' is a concept which refers to the "institutionalization and *normalization* of heterosexuality and the corollary exclusion of non-heterosexual identities and practices" (Peterson 1999, p. 39). Important early engagements with this concept include Eve Sedgwick's (2008 [1990]) *Epistemology of the Closet*, Butler's (2006 [1990]) concept of the 'heterosexual matrix,' referring to the invisible norm that assumes everyone and everything is heterosexual, and Monique Wittig's (1980) 'heterosexual contract.' Peterson (1999, p. 40) interrogates the function of the normalisation of heterosexuality, intimacy and family life for state formation, and argues that:

> [T]his normalization is inextricable from the state's interest in regulating sexual production, undertaken primarily through controlling women's bodies, policing sexual activities, and instituting the heteropatriarchal family/household as the basic socio-economic unit.

Lisa Duggan (2002) has termed the liberal approach to queer rights "the new homonormativity," which subverts the notion of 'heteronormativity' by revealing how certain queer identities are mainstreamed and commodified while others continue to be marginalised. Homonormativity is thus a politics that does not challenge heteronormativity, but rather upholds it while "promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption" (Duggan 2002, p. 50). This is a phenomenon deeply embedded in the market politics of neoliberalism and is clear in the representation of gay identities in commercial settings (Chasin 2000; Ingrebretsen 1999). Diane Richardson (2005) argues that these movements, by using dominant neoliberal terminology, renders the presence and impact of the economic system invisible. The naturalisation of the capitalist economic system through gay rights rhetoric has become

an increasing area of concern for queer theorists. Later in this section, I will explore how the uptake of issues of sexuality by the IMF fits in this discussion.

c. Queer theory and social reproduction

In the face of neoliberal co-optation of gay rights and feminist rhetoric, queer theory has begun to more critically engage with questions of political economy. The materialist debate in queer theory has been historically antagonistic, as some have levied claims that queer theory is preoccupied with the "politics of recognition" (Fraser 1995) or the "merely cultural" (Butler 1998), rather than with the politics of redistribution (Griffin 2018; N.J. Smith 2018). Simultaneously, some have claimed that political economists have neglected to holistically consider sexuality (Butler 1998; Binnie 2004; N.J. Smith 2018, p. 102). Recent work in queer theory has explicitly engaged with issues of political economy and has highlighted the ways that gender, sexuality and capitalism are co-constitutive (D'Emilio 1983; Drucker 2015; Eng et al. 2005; Eng & Puar 2020; Floyd 2009; Gibson-Graham 1999; Hennessy 2017; Kirsch 2010; Liu 2020; Pellegrini 2002; Raffo 1997; Rosenberg 2014; Rosenberg & Villarejo 2012; Sears 2005; N.J. Smith 2020), as well as how the omission of gender and sexuality in studies of political economy and capitalism "is in itself (re)productive of gendered and sexualized power relations" (N.J. Smith 2016, p. 234). The silences and presumptions made in certain discourses are the most pertinent areas of study, as they are where ideology operates as common sense. Queer theorists are thus explicitly engaging with the ideas of second-wave feminists, connected by their interest in the embodied experiences of capitalism.

Feminist theorists interested in queer questions have taken up the concept of social reproduction (Bakker & Gill 2003; Bezanson 2014; Luxton & Bezanson 2006). Ara Wilson (2004, p. 11) has expanded this concept and coined the term 'intimate economies,' which refers to the "the complex interplay between intimate social life and political economic systems in a context shaped by transnational capitalism." Queer theory also interrogates how economic and social inequalities are embodied inequalities, imposed on bodies according to gender, sexuality, race, class, territory and dis/ability

(N.J. Smith 2018, p. 108). The focus on reproduction in both queer theory and feminist theory is how "it is *on* the body that systems of privilege and oppression are marked and it is *through* the body that such systems are made possible and sustained" (N.J. Smith 2018, p. 108). Roberts (2015; see also: Griffin 2016) argues that a process of 'financialisation of social reproduction' is underway, wherein women's bodily capacities are commodified, and framed as untapped resources or sites of potential exploitation for capital. The ways that the economic and sexual are connected and mutually constitutive has been the subject of multiple works (Alexander 2005; Bergeron 2009; Butler 1998; D'Emilio 1983; Padilla 2007; Richardson 2005). Mark Padilla (2007, p. xii), for instance, examines the "political economy of love" which attends to the ways that 'intimacy' cannot be decoupled from structures of inequality and how the marginalities in sex and gender reinforce these inequalities. The limits of what is classified as intimacy is also interrogated in Sasha Roseneil's (2004) research, which is a call to take friends seriously in discussions about care work and feminist policy. The communities and connections formed outside of the heterosexual nuclear family practiced by queer people are often due to marginalisation from their families of origin (Roseneil 2004, p. 411). By arguing that social reproduction is a fundamental concern of the public domain, and by highlighting the ways that inequalities are imposed on bodies differently, queer theory maintains a political imperative to challenge "the brutal fact that how bodies live, and if they get to live at all… is profoundly shaped by how those bodies are classified, organised, valued, regulated and policed" (N.J. Smith 2018, p. 109).

d. (Homo)sexuality in development studies

The ways that the development industry ignores matters of sexuality as outside the scope of economics and anti-poverty programs is also increasingly being challenged in development studies (Cornwall et al. 2008; Lind 2009, 2010a, b, 2014; Roy 2022). Development theory, since its emergence as a hegemonic discourse in the post WWII-period, has assumed the state as the unit of analysis, with implications across gender and sexuality (Bergeron 2004; Lind 2010a). Amy Lind's (2010a) focus is on how global development institutions, including multilateral institutions, bilateral aid

agencies, state agencies and NGOs, make the presumably heterosexual mother hyper-visible, while those who do not fulfil prescribed gender roles or who are LGBTQIA+ remain invisible. Lind (2010a, p. 39) also notes the emerging two approaches that are challenging heteronormativity in global development: (1) the pleasure approach, and (2) the sexual rights and gender justice approach. The visibility and construction of heteronormative or homonormative logics by hegemonic institutions such as NGOs has far-reaching impacts for the construction of the citizen in Latin America. Timothy Wright (2000, p. 89) discusses the attempt to classify and identify a gay community in Bolivia by the government and internal development agencies, finding that it was a highly exclusionary category; people who were "too rich or too poor or too masculine or too effeminate were unlikely" to fit in the category. Verónica Schild (2000; see also: Lind 2005) explores the development of a form of gendered 'market citizenship' in Chile. This theoretical focus has been mobilised in studies of the IMF's Bretton Woods counterpart, the World Bank.

The distinctly neoliberal vision of gender empowerment at the World Bank has been extensively studied (Bedford 2005, 2007, 2009a, b; Bergeron 2003, 2009; Berik 2017; Griffin 2006, 2007a, b, 2009; Prügl 2017). These studies pursue feminist and queer critiques of the feminist policies and principles of (primarily) the World Bank and the unexpected and implicit ways these policies define and limit care, intimacy and sexuality. Suzanne Bergeron (2009), for example, explores the way that global institutions of economic governance have responded to the critiques made by scholars dating back to the 1980s about care work and SAPs, as explored in an earlier section of this chapter. Institutions such as the UN and World Bank have responded to these critics by explicitly focusing on care work. However, they continue to make heteronormative presumptions including: that all adults belong to one gender in the gender binary; that they follow the script assigned with their respective gender; that they are in a sexual and reproductive relationship with a member of the opposite gender; that they have formed a household with said partner; and that all care work is performed around an understanding of a heterosexual couple (Bergeron 2009, p. 55). These presumptions erase the possibilities for other social formations. The gendered representations made by

the UN and World Bank are grounded in heterosexism and are productive of the social formations which produce citizenship and limit outcomes for women.

Bergeron (2003), Griffin (2006) and Kate Bedford (2007) explore the institutional constraints of the World Bank's gender policy. For instance, Bedford (2007, p. 289) identifies that gender policy at the World Bank suffers from a pressure to frame gender policy within a logic of efficiency and productivity, as well as producing "complementary sharing between men and women." Additionally, it makes certain presumptions about family structures and dynamics. This is of interest to a queer approach to IFIs because of the presumption that "couplehood [is] empowering" (Bedford 2007, p. 292). Work such as Bedford's (2007, pp. 305-6) recognises a need to place "feminist development research in conversation with other literatures, particularly from masculinity and sexuality studies." Similarly, in Bedford's (2005, p. 295) case study on World Bank Ecuadorian lending, she finds that normative, heterosexual arrangements of intimacy are the implicit policy preference. Spaces of silence, where gender and sex go unmentioned are of particular interest to discursive analysis seeking to interrogate the gendered and heteronormative assumptions made by the World Bank (Griffin 2007b, p. 227).

In summary, queer theorists have recently begun to discuss matters of political economy by asking "questions about how heteronormative gender logics might themselves be produced by, and productive of, the neoliberal economic order" (N.J. Smith 2018, p. 105). Institutions of the international neoliberal economic order are thus rich sites of analysis, and while the World Bank has been subject to this queer, feminist political economist interrogation, the IMF has for the most part avoided this scrutiny. In the next section, I explore in more detail the literature on the recent uptake of gendered and queer issues by the IMF in its policies and publications by queer and feminist political economists.

VII. Queer approaches to the IMF

Given the recent novelty of the IMF's 'gender turn' (Coburn 2019), there is scarce literature interrogating the gendered nature of its neoliberal discourses. Since the operations of IFIs are limited by their institutional constraints and historical backgrounds, the World Bank's neoliberalism, as discussed throughout this chapter, is "not articulated in the same way and with the same effects as that of, for example, the IMF" (Griffin 2007b, p. 228).

Alongside the World Bank, there has been an interest in queer sexuality at the IMF, given recent research indicating that homophobia lowers national productivity and output because of employment and education discrimination, as well as health issues such as the risk of HIV/AIDs, violence, depression and suicide (Rao 2015, p. 42; see, for example: Badgett 1995, 2020; Badgett et al. 2019). Rao (2015 p. 38) explores this rising interest in an analysis of the *It Gets Better* video campaign, which both the World Bank and IMF contributed to. The video's aim was to dissuade young queer people from committing suicide[23] and featured LGBTQIA+ staff speaking about their sexuality in their personal and professional lives. The same radical guise assumed by the World Bank in their neoliberal gender policies is present in the burgeoning interest in LGBTQIA+ issues. Rao (2015, p. 42) argues that the video is inextricably capitalist in its focus on ensuring expanding output, productivity and markets. Further, he argues that the queer vision of the good life espoused in this video is one in which there is "limitless growth, which is itself further insulated from environmental equity, and other critiques" (Rao 2015, p. 42).[24] This is what Rao (2015, p. 38; see also: Stoffel 2021) has termed 'global homocapitalism' and it emerges when homophobia is viewed as 'merely cultural' (Butler 1998) since it "enables international financial institutions (IFIs) to obscure the material conditions that incubate homophobic moral panics, and their own culpability in co-producing those conditions."

Similar to the approaches undertaken by queer theorists of IFIs (Bedford 2005, 2010; Rao 2015), my research seeks to not only ask the "Woman Question" but to consider the

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[23] In line with the 'It Gets Better' project, which formed in 2010 in response to a series of LGBTQ+ suicides with an anti-bullying message for LGBTQ+ youth (It Gets Better n.d.).
[24] See Ahmed (2010) for a discussion on queerness, happiness and the good life.

ramifications for and assumptions made about sexuality, intimacy, households and reproduction in the IMF's policies and publications. This research also seeks to provide a more holistic picture of how international development institutions, IFIs and GEG construct and regulate sexuality; to contribute to:

> [T]he urgent political task of addressing recent family initiatives promoted by development institutions, and to the urgent intellectual task of delinking compulsory heterosexuality from gender roles and expectations and from western narratives of family life (Lind 2009, p. 38).

This is the undertaking with which I am engaged, and I plan to extend existing research through analysis of a novel empirical dataset using a queer approach to the study of the IMF. More specifically, I interrogate how core motivating beliefs about economic stability and gender stability manifest and are (re)produced in IMF discourse.

VIII. Conclusion

In this chapter I have provided a critical overview of the existing literature concerning the study of GEG and the IMF. I firstly delineated the traditional or 'problem-solving' literature on GEG and the IMF, which predominantly focuses on questions of continuity and change. This literature offers some important critiques of the Fund, particularly following economic crashes, which is enriched by the feminist literature I explored in the second section. The second section of this review focused specifically on the IMF's role in (re)producing categories of sex, sexuality, gender, race and coloniality (and the role of GEG more broadly). These critical interventions bring closer attention to the binaries of national/familial, productive/reproductive and the personal/international that the traditional literature depends on. The third section of this chapter explored how queer scholars have troubled the constitution of sex, gender and sexuality within the neoliberal political economy, particularly in its co-optation by IFIs like the Fund. This chapter has remained attentive to the concept of stability throughout. From the IMF's imperative to stabilise the global economy through structural adjustment, to the unintended, de-stabilising effects of these same policies, and the very (in)stability of

categories of sex, sexuality and gender which characterises the global political economy. The (in)stability of the economy and of sex, gender, and sexuality will continue to be explored throughout the following chapters.

This chapter has engaged with the existing work that has been done on 'Queer Questions' of GEG and on the IMF. It has revealed that much scholarship has dedicated thought to the (supposed) contradiction between 'materiality' and queer, or 'Queer Marxism' or queer political economy. It has also explored queer interrogations of IFIs such as the World Bank. However, this investigation indicates that less has been done to explore the IMF's recent proliferation of written and visual discourses on gender and women, from a queer theoretical and methodological perspective. Given the established importance for queer theorists to take matters of political economy seriously, this research makes an empirical and methodological contribution to the literature discussed in this chapter. The details of my approach, as well as the queer design of this research, is the subject of Chapter Three.

Chapter Three: A methodology for queer (visual) discourse analysis

I. Introduction

This chapter introduces my queer feminist post-structuralist methodological approach to studying the gendered discourses of the IMF. It continues and develops the discussion of queer approaches to global economic governance and the IMF that I began in Chapter Two by describing the ontological, epistemological and methodological variety of queer theory and by locating my stance in this terrain. I understand queer theory as a terrain rather than a template in order to hold space for its multiplicitous dimensions and uses within the literature. As a term, queer continues to mean different things in different contexts in space and time and may be accordingly understood differently by different interlocutors. By extension, delineating the boundaries of what I understand by queer theory in this project faces the difficulty of being both analytically important, yet contrary to queer theory's imperative to destabilise a coherent subject. By understanding queer theory as a terrain, I am able to navigate this paradox. I do not understand queer theory in either/or terms (i.e. something *either* is queer *or* is not queer). However, I struggle with leaving 'queer' undefined, particularly as this queer approach comes up against an international financial institution which can benefit, and has benefitted, from the fluidity and all-encompassing nature of the undefined 'queer.' When 'queer' is removed from its roots in political movements that are anti-capitalist and anti-state, it is more amicable to co-optation (i.e. pinkwashing) by IFIs, the state, and the academy.

In the first section of this chapter, I navigate these difficult tensions within queer theory and ultimately come to an understanding and mobilisation of queer theory in line with Sedgwick (1993, p. 8) who defines 'queer' in reference to sexual and gender identities which 'fail' to "signify monolithically" and the possibilities which this 'failure' represents for social, political and economic life. In the context of this thesis and the focus on GEG and the IMF, for instance, queer theory resists capitalist realism (Fisher 2009) by highlighting that taken-for-granted apolitical economic discourses are crucial sites of meaning-making which depend on the stability of a coherent, gendered and cisheterosexist economic subject in order to purport its narrow vision of economic

possibilities. Queer post-structuralism, although philosophically indebted to the feminist post-structuralism of IR, is distinct in its attentiveness to the body and the gendered, sexed and racialised meanings that are imposed on it. This distinction makes it a compelling and appropriate theoretical framework to use to analyse the IMF, the mandate of which is explicitly concerned with stabilising the global economy. A queer theoretical framework opens up the scope for research to interrogate how the logics of stability and coherence on which gender depend function in economic discourses which also depend on logics of stability.

In this chapter, I also explore why a study of (visual) discourse is suitable for this project and for my research question. I adopt an understanding of truth, reality and knowledge which is ontologically anti-foundationalist and epistemologically post-positivist, which means I understand the world to be constituted by discourses. To take (visual) discourse as the object of analysis is to appreciate its political importance in world-building and meaning-making. Later, I delineate my conceptual framework which is similarly rooted in a post-structuralist thinking. I explore the interrelated concepts of sex, gender, the heterosexual matrix and race, and point to the invisible work that goes behind the construction of these concepts as natural or innate. I move beyond biological essentialism to explore their discursively constituted nature.

This chapter includes an overview of the research design of the project including methods of case selection, data collection and analysis. It is here where I develop the methodological contribution of this work to the literature. Specifically, I delineate the analytical toolkit I developed to analyse both written and visual discourse as co-constitutive parts of the Fund’s gendered discourse. Lastly, I offer reflections on ethical concerns and positionality rooted in a queer, feminist research ethic which understands that knowledge production is an inherently partial and subjective process which cannot be unwound from my position in the world.

II. Theoretical framework

In this section I firstly map the terrain of queer theory and then consider how it has been applied in disciplinary IR, as 'Queer IR.' I lastly delineate how I understand queer (visual) discourse analysis. This terrain-mapping exercise demonstrates that queer theory is not a homogenous theoretical framework and has multiple competing uses. My understanding and use of queer theory is most in line with Sedgwick's (1993, p. 8) definition of queer:

> [T]he open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or *can't be* made) to signify monolithically.

This definition of queer explicates a concern with (1) the destabilisation of a coherent gendered subject; and (2) the possibilities which exist beyond gender and sexuality as we know them. These points are distinct to a queer theoretical framework, to which I now turn.

a. Queer theory as a terrain

There is a multiplicity of uses of queer theory within academia which are at odds with one another; there is no singular queer theory. Nicola Smith (2020, p. 11) stressed that queer theory is "a terrain, not a template." This means that there is no one method of doing queer research. A research project rooted in a queer theoretical framework cannot be reduced to a series of instructions to be 'successfully queer.' Indeed, a central debate in queer theory, which I explore, is the contradiction of defining something as 'queer' with queer theory's imperative to destabilise and disrupt concepts such as 'homosexual.' To understand queer theory as a terrain is a recognition that queer as a term has a variety of meanings that are subjective, contextual and in flux. I delineate these tensions and some understandings of 'queer' before enunciating my position in these debates and turning to a discussion of queer theory's challenge to IR's disciplinary boundaries.

Queer theory's academic history begins as a divergence from Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) studies (Gamson 1995). LGBT studies is rooted in an ethic of political activism which takes LGBTQIA+ people and the discrimination and inequalities they face as the object of analysis (see, for example: Altman & Symons 2016; Ayoub 2014; Binnie & Klesse 2012; Calvo & Trujillo 2011; Carabine & Monro 2004; Kollman & Waites 2009; Langlois 2015; Paternotte 2015, 2016; Picq & Thiel 2015; Platero 2007; Wilkinson & Langlois 2014). This perspective views the stability of identity categories as important for political organising, community building and rights claims (Browne & Nash 2010; Cohen 1997, p. 440; Richter-Montpetit 2018, p. 223; for works on the distinction between LGBT studies and queer theory, see: Duggan 1995, 2006; Duggan & Kim 2006; Lovaas et al. 2006; Piontek 2006; Rao 2018). Political organising around rights claims depends on the existence of a marginalised group whose rights have been withheld because of certain traits that are distinct to the group. In order to give power to rights claims, movements name (and identify with) the difference for which they have been discriminated against. This act of naming is not only politically effective but also gives individuals the language to communicate their experiences and connect with people who share their experience. In LGBTQIA+ activist movements and literature, the *identity* of queerness is important.

Queer theory seeks to problematise the stability of a referent object by questioning foundational concepts such as 'sexual minority,' 'lesbian,' and indeed 'man' and 'woman' (Gamson 1995, p. 390; see: Butler 2006; Stryker 2004; Weber 2016a, b). In queer theory, by refusing the taken-for-granted assumption that a gay or lesbian referent object exists, research interrogates how queer subject-making is a political process (Richter-Montpetit 2018, p. 224). Queer inquiry challenges the centrality of identitarianism in 'queer' politics (Wiegman & Wilson 2015, p. 3) and is "animated by the radical contingency of the term 'queer'" (Richter-Montpetit 2018, p. 223). Scholars operating within the theoretical framework of LGBT studies have criticised queer theory for being an elitist intellectual exercise[25] and unhelpful in a practical sense for political activism (Picq & Thiel 2015, pp. 6-8). Research using queer theory, which often takes discourse as its object of analysis, has also been criticised for viewing

[25] Queer theory's canonical works have also been critiqued for their 'colourblindness' and implication in settler colonialism, which I explore later in this section.

politics as secondary and not taking seriously material inequalities (Picq & Thiel 2015, p. 14). Post-structuralist queer theorists, conversely, have commented on the normalising agenda of liberal LGBTQIA+ rights activism and criticise the ways that this narrows the potential for a radical, transformative political agenda (Eng 2010; Warner 1999). Melanie Richter-Montpetit (2018, p. 239) argues that the framework of LGBT studies "limit[s] the scope of the political to notions of 'discrimination,' 'equal inclusion' and 'human rights' for leaving many fundamental structures of oppression, exploitation and violence unchallenged." This is what David Eng (2010, p. 3; Wiegman & Wilson 2015, p. 7) names 'queer liberalism'[26] which attempts to gain acceptance for privileged and respectable gay subjects, certain forms of sexual conduct and for forms of political and intellectual engagement.[27] The critiques of queer theory reflect broader critiques of post-structuralist approaches to research and are addressed throughout this chapter. The contentions in queer theory's academic history outlined here demonstrate that there is not one way of understanding the term 'queer.' Further, it demonstrates that understanding 'queer' itself as a 'doing' rather than a 'being' word is a product of rich intellectual debate. Rooted in a post-structuralist feminist understanding of queer theory, this debate informs my contention that 'queer' is not an identity, but rather a tool for examining possibilities that lay outside of identity categories. Contrary to critiques rooted in structuralist or liberal thinking, this is not an apolitical or unproductive exercise. In my research, it is a necessary and transformative tool for examining the gendered economic discourses which stifle and limit transformative political possibilities. Next, I turn to a more detailed account of the theoretical roots of a post-structuralist feminist queer approach.

Queer theory's imperative to destabilise the internal coherence of the subject is rooted in a post-structuralist understanding of knowledge and reality. Foucault's (1978) genealogy of sexuality and Butler's (2006, 2011) examination of gender are particularly compelling examples of this and are explored in more detail in the conceptual

[26] Duggan (2002) has similarly termed the sexual politics of neoliberalism 'homonormativity' which extends the concept 'heteronormativity' by highlighting the ways that the language of gay activism has been mobilised for conservative ends. See Chapter Two for an overview of this literature.
[27] Often trans and inter-sex people are excluded from this form of respectable 'queer liberalism' (see: Gill-Peterson 2024; Gleeson 2025; Stryker 2004, 2008a, b), as well as non-white or Muslim queers (see: Arvin et al. 2013; Puar 2006, 2007; Puar & Rai 2002; Vernon 2024).

framework presented below. Post-structuralism is a theoretical approach that is ontologically anti-foundationalist, in that it does not believe in the existence of innate, pre-discursive truth about the world. Concepts are understood as 'real' in the sense that they "gain power within discourse" (Butler 2006, p. 162). Foucault's (1978) work demonstrates this position by offering a history of the concept of sexuality and highlighting its unfixed and changing meaning and significance over time; there was no truth of sexuality, yet it had real effects. Alongside these scholars, the 'canon' of this queer approach could also include Teresa de Lauretis (1984), Sedgwick (1993), and Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner (1998). This body of literature was committed to illuminating the discursive nature of sexuality and gender and the "varying degrees and multiple sites of power distributed within all categories of sexuality" (Cohen 1997, p. 439). Queer theoretical approaches highlight the hierarchical ordering of sexual categories, particularly drawing attention to ways that heterosexuality is constructed as natural, while homosexuality and non-normative sexual identities are characterised as aberrant and Other (Browne & Nash 2010). The term 'queer' is thus not an identity category but refers to those subjectivities that "exceed binary logics of the *either/or,"* and those subjectivities that do not signify as one gender, sex or sexuality, including those that signify more than one gender, sex and sexuality (Weber 2016a, p. 3). This is in line with Sedgwick's (1993, p. 8) definition of queer, which draws attention to the ways that bodies do not cohere with the categories prescribed to them. In the next paragraph, I discuss the paradox queer theory finds itself facing: having deconstruction and indefinability at its core while requiring the definition of theoretical boundaries in academia.

Defining queer as a concept is a notoriously fraught endeavour within queer theory and is the subject of ongoing debates (see: Berlant & Warner 1995; Richter-Montpetit 2018; Warner 1993, 2012; Weber 2016a; Wiegman & Wilson 2015; Wilcox 2014). Similarly, demarcating the boundaries of what constitutes queer theory is hotly contested (Duggan 1995; Weber 2014, 2015; Wilcox 2014). For C. Heike Schotten (2018, p. 15), queer theory is concerned with "desystematization, anti-definition, and opposition to normalization." In this understanding, to erect territorial boundaries about what queer theory is (and is not) seems to be incompatible with its intellectual aims (Browne &

Nash 2010; Schotten 2018, p. 15). For Lee Edelman (1995, p. 343), the creation of these boundaries is a "fantasy… on which the heterosexual colonization of social reality is predicated." A central tension in this debate is whether research that does not focus on heteronormativity or non-normative sexualities can claim to be queer research. This is a question of what queer theory's object of study is: is it concerned with norms and normativities (Warner 1993) or does it have to have an explicit focus on sexualities (Sedgwick 1993, p. 8; Weber 2016a, p. 14)? The theoretical terrain of queer research largely comprises scholars who claim to be anti-normative, which reflects an understanding of queer theory as concerned with norms, normativity and normalisation (Wiegman & Wilson 2015, p. 4; see also: Richardson 2005; Warner 1999). In this project I adopt a reading of Foucault (1978) that understands norms as an inescapable feature of social life; it is impossible to step outside of norms and occupy a position of 'anti-normativity.' A Foucauldian understanding of a norm is compelling as it claims that "in collating the world, [a norm] gathers up everything" (Wiegman & Wilson 2015, p. 17). Indeed, queer theory itself can implicate certain normativities (Wiegman & Wilson 2015). For instance, queer theory can reinforce trans-exclusionary or colonial norms by neglecting to account for the existence of heterosexual transgender people (Stryker 2008a, b) or its material context in settler-colonialism.[28] In the next paragraph, I outline the contributions of decolonial queer theory.

Decolonial queer theories challenge the foundation of whiteness on which queer theory can operate, as well as how queer theory may perpetuate colonial notions while attempting to disrupt them (Pereira 2019, p. 406). Colonisation is not one, discrete, historical act which occurred and ended, but rather is an ongoing process which shapes the lives of all people in a settler-colonial state (Wolfe 2006, p. 388). On occupied land, structures of sexism, homophobia and transphobia are constitutive of the ongoing project of colonialism (Morgensen 2012, p. 13; Perez 2004, p. 123; Pihama 2021, p. 355). When queer theoretical works neglect to consider the material context on which they are being produced, it creates a critical blind spot regarding the ongoing process of colonisation (Arvin et al. 2013). For me, this is the occupied land of 'Australia,' in 'Sydney.' This is the land of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation to which sovereignty

[28] This approach can also perpetuate a form of homonormativity that is blind to the ways that racialisation can queer (heterosexual) bodies (Haritaworn 2008).

was never ceded. Settler-colonialism is a structure in Australia which depends on white supremacy, heteropatriarchy and the illusion of the innocent, non-violent existence of the nation-state (Arvin et al. 2013, p. 9, 16; Moreton-Robinson 2020, p. 316). As Patrick Wolfe (2006, p. 388) highlights, the project of settler-colonialism depends on a logic of elimination, replacement and assimilation. Decolonial queer approaches thus trouble the primacy of European ways of knowing, whose taken-for-grantedness is the product of an ongoing colonial project (Pereira 2019, p. 408; Pihama 2021, p. 358). This is done, for example, by denouncing the function of universal categories such as homosexuality, recognising that there is no "universal translatability of (homo)sexuality as a stable category of knowledge travelling across different times and spaces" (Eng 2010, p. 14; see also: Pereira 2019, p. 408; Robinson 2020). In North America, Native Americans use the term 'two-spirit' to reclaim traditional roles within a given Indigenous nation that do not neatly map onto settler frameworks for understanding gender and sexual difference (Robinson 2020, p. 1681). As Margaret Robinson (2020, pp. 1677-9) writes, it is well-documented that Native American nations had specific names and roles for individuals whose gender can not be understood with the colonial binary system. For instance, the A:shwi had a gender called *Ihamana*, "who mixed masculine and feminine," and which has been translated as "man-woman" and "mediating spirit" (Roscoe, 1992, 1988, p. 56; Basaldu, 1999, p. 107; Hopcke 2002, p. 176, cited in Robinson 2020, p. 1678).

In contrast to the queer theoretical framework detailed above which resists a politics of normalising the LGBT subject, decolonial queer approaches highlight that what we now call 'two-spirit' experiences were normal before the imposition of colonial, European gender categories (Pihama 2021, p. 358; Robinson 2020, p. 1678; see also: Robinson 2017; Walters et al. 2006; Wilson 2008). This perspective draws attention to the categories of gender and classification of sexuality as a colonial tool (Lugones 2007). It recognises the ways that European gender categories have been arbitrarily and violently imposed on Indigenous bodies as an attempt to eradicate Indigenous sexualities and gender systems (Fanon 2008, p. 9; Moreton-Robinson 2020; Morgensen 2012). It also highlights the limitations of the language of queer theory and the ways that queer analysis is implicitly shaped by experiences of whiteness. Similarly, queer liberalism

and its discourses of multiculturalism are oppositional to a decolonial queer approach which takes seriously the resistance of the nation-state and a politics of colourblindness (Eng 2010, p. 4). Queer liberalism endorses the inevitability of the nation-state (see: Huneke 2023) by positing an impossible political vision of peaceful, inclusive and diverse cohabitation in settler-colonial contexts. Decolonial queer approaches posit an alternative political vision of sovereignty beyond the nation-state, one which is grounded in "care and responsibility" rather than "control over territory" (A. Smith 2008, p. 312; see also: Arvin et al. 2013, p. 21), and which recognises the violence which underpins the nation-state. Decolonial approaches to 'queer' place an emphasis on anti-state and anti-capitalist politics. The ways that the gender binary, hetero(/homo)normativity, monogamy and nuclear family configurations structure the ongoing project of colonisation is a key insight of this literature, which I operationalise in my conceptual framework outlined later.

The above discussion has delineated the 'terrain' of queer theory, and has brought attention to its multiplicities, divergences and critiques. In the following section, I narrow my focus to consider how 'queer' has been operationalised in IR. I believe that clarity about the political and analytical substance of queer is particularly important in the face of co-optation of the language of LGBT rights by institutions and states (see: Puar & Rai 2002; Puar 2007; Weber 2016a), the process of gentrification that critical theories[29] suffer when used in IR (Weber 2015, p. 43), as well as the universalising tendencies of some queer theorists who take whiteness as taken-for-granted. In order for this queer theoretical project to maintain a transformative (and decolonial) potential, it is pertinent to navigate what 'Queer IR' entails. This will be the subject of the next section.

[29] The gentrification process involves substitution, homogenisation and assimilation. Critical theories have undergone a similar process in order to fit into IR disciplinary boundaries rather than unsettle them (2015, p. 43). Critical theories forcibly undergo this process in order to find space in IR 'prime real estate,' such as in the top journals. For a discussion of queerness and gentrification see: Sarah Schulman (2012).

b. Queer International Relations

This section explores the area which has been termed 'Queer International Relations' (see: Weber 2014, 2016a, b). I discuss what it means to 'do' Queer IR, and outline the ways that Queer IR is indebted to the work of feminist post-structuralists, as well as its distinctions from them. Further, I explore how the principles of 'Queer IR' are translatable to its use in 'Queer IPE'[30] (see, for example: Gore 2022, 2025; Griffin 2009; N.J. Smith 2016, 2020) through examination of IFIs.

Similar to Cynthia Weber (2016a, p. 14), my theoretical approach is one which is concerned with "normative *and/or* perverse understandings of sex, of gender, and of sexuality," rather than being interested in the non-normative more broadly.[31] This is the distinction between a post-structuralist approach to studying the IMF and a queer approach to studying the IMF. I am not interested in *all* emergent norms and normativities which are contained in its discourses, but rather in the ways that gendered, racialised and sexualised logics are part of these discourses. In line with Sedgwick's definition of queer provided earlier, this is an approach which refuses to disconnect queer theory from a focus on those genders, sexualities and sexes which fail to signify monolithically (Sedgwick 1993, p. 8; Weber 2016a, pp. 14-5). It remains attentive to the ways that the presumed coherence of bodies with gendered and sexual categories underpins all discourses, including apparently apolitical economic discourses. This approach is also one which is distinct from merely adding sexuality as a variable to traditional IR theoretical frameworks (Richter-Montpetit 2018, p. 222). Such approaches fall short, in my view, since they fail to interrogate the taken-for-granted units of analyses in IR which limit the potential of research (i.e. the state, the family, the economic actor).

To undertake a queer IR project involves asking questions which unsettle and destabilise categories, units and systems that IR has depended on. A culture of

[30] I understand 'Queer IR' and 'Queer IPE' as sharing the same theoretical foundations, and diverging in the subjects toward which they direct their 'queer intellectual curiosity' (Weber 2016b).
[31] A more detailed outline of the debate between those who view 'queer' as concerned with the (non-)normative, broadly defined, and those who view 'queer' as concerned with (non-)normative expressions of sex, gender and sexuality is discussed in the preceding section of this chapter. I repeat this here to clarify my position within this debate.

cis-heteronormativity is at the core of these systems, which relies on the coherence of a sexed, gendered and heterosexual subject (Sjoberg 2012, 2015; Weerawardhana 2018). This subject often goes unnamed, rendering the complex ways that bodies fail to align with sex and gender invisible. By unveiling the ways that bodies do not align neatly with the categories prescribed to them, queer (and trans)[32] approaches to studying IR pose an intractable challenge to the way that traditional IR is carried out. It exposes how IR is "already queer," in the way the discipline anxiously attempts to stabilise, naturalise and conceal its internal contradictions and fluidities (Weber 1994, p. 346; Wilcox 2014, p. 613). For example, the fundamental unit of analysis of mainstream IR, the state, is itself not natural, given or fixed, but rather is characteristically fluid, changing and transitory as well as embroiled in ideas about the family, reproduction, gender, sex and sexuality (Nayak 2014; Weber 1998). It is for this reason that there appears to be no Queer IR (Weber 2015). Queer IR can be grouped in with who Weber[33] identified as the post-structuralist 'bad girls' who are elusive (1994, pp. 346-7; see also: Jayathunga 2021), difficult to define and impossible to make "serve the laws of science or the goals of the discipline," therefore placing them "outside of the boundary… around good science and good international relations theory." The very existence of these disciplinary boundaries establishes "what is right and good (behaviour/research) and what is wrong and bad (behaviour/research)" (Shepherd 2012, para. 6). For Queer IR's 'bad behaviour,' it has also been conceived of as a 'failure' (Weber 2015, p. 29).

Queer theorising on failure and disciplinarity points to the ways that markers of success are undesirable in a capitalist, colonial and cis-heteronormative society. For instance, productivity, wealth accumulation and the nuclear family are some markers of the ideal and successful life (Halberstam 2011, p. 3). To 'fail' as a theory of International Relations is to open oneself up for potential gentrification, as disciplinary boundaries function as a "code of normalization" (Foucault 2003, cited in Halberstam 2011, p. 10). The conservatism of IR and its tendency to "disciplining intellectual critique out of existence" (Weber 2015, p. 45) poses a real challenge to carrying out queer research in IR. A queer theoretical approach to IR refuses to entrench understandings of the world

[32] Sjoberg (2012) and Weerawardhana (2018) contribute to the queer IR literature by 'transgendering' IR and introducing a 'transfeminist' theory of IR respectively.
[33] In her critique of Robert Keohane's reading of feminist IR.

that would enable a practical solution to follow, since this course of action normalises violence as a mundane state of being or at best frames them as “administrative problems or minor constituencies” (Weber 2016, p. 11). It is for this reason that Queer IR (and some feminist IR) has not been taken seriously in the discipline. Those knowledge systems and lines of questioning which have been demeaned as frivolous or ‘un-serious’ represent domains of possibility. The discomfort (Ahmed 2006, 2014) generated in the face of disciplinary failure is indicative of a reckoning with and stance against “the punishing norms that discipline behaviour and manage human development” (Halberstam 2011, p. 3). If IR as a discipline depends on the maintenance of a stable cis-heteronormative subject to succeed (Barkin & Sjoberg 2020, p. 168), then one should take some joy in failing to cohere with these disciplinary boundaries. In this project and in IR, this commitment to challenging the limits of the discipline is done through the disruption of fixed understandings of concepts such as ‘women’ and ‘homosexual’ (Weber 2016b, p. 13). International financial institutions are particularly ripe for this analysis given the self-proclaimed neutrality of their discourses which unavoidably have gendered, heteronormative and/or homonormative logics built in, with real effects for loan and policy recipients (Lind 2014, p. 604; see also: Weber 2016a). These real effects are a key part of my investigation, embedded in my research question, and is evidence that queer theoretical approaches are amicable to an interest in materiality and in improving political and economic conditions, while concurrently refusing to use cis-heterosexist, capitalist, colonial conceptual tools to do so. My queer approach shares Ahmed’s (2014, p. 184) feminist hope: “[p]olitics without hope is impossible, and hope without politics is a reification of possibility (and becomes merely religious).”

c. Queer visual discourse theory

In this section, I begin to establish the methodological contribution of this research by outlining the theoretical framework which forms the basis of my methodological and analytical toolkit for queer visual discourse analysis in IR/IPE. I establish the queer feminist post-structuralist ontological and epistemological claims of the research, and

elaborate on the importance of visual discourse, rather than merely written and/or spoken discourse.

The politics of visual representation have increasingly become a subject of study in IR and IPE, emerging within the post-structuralist tradition which takes discourse as its object of analysis (see, for example: Achilleos-Sarll 2020; Adler-Nissen et al. 2020; Bleiker 2001, 2015, 2018; Bleiker et al. 2013; Callahan 2015, 2020; Campbell 2003, 2004; Der Derian 1992, 2001; Hansen 2011, 2015; Harman 2019; Shepherd 2017 and in IPE see: Griffin 2016; Wilson 2011). Post-structuralist research recognises that discourses are sites of knowledge production, wherein meaning about the social, political and economic world are *constituted* (Doty 1993, p. 302; Foucault 1978, p. 12; Griffin 2009, p. 23; Shepherd 2008, pp. 25-7). Post-structuralists contend that truth does not exist prior to or outside of discourse, but rather that social truths are created within the discourses that surround them (see: Milliken 1999; Shepherd 2008, pp. 24-6). This contrasts with ontologically foundationalist approaches, which hold an understanding of truth that is static and discoverable through the precise application of scientific method. The foundationalist approach also assumes that it is possible for a researcher to be objective and neutral in undertaking the research process. This is a key point of divergence for post-structuralist researchers, like myself, who believe that the process of research is one that is relational. In other words, there is no separation of the researcher from the researched, since the researcher inevitably brings their positionality and subjectivity to that which they are researching. John Berger (2009, p. 9; see also: Barthes 2010 [1968]; Bleiker 2001, p. 515; Bleiker et al. 2013, p. 400; Crone 2020, p. 580) states this clearly when he says that "we never look at just one thing, we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves." Rather than scientific methods resulting in the discovery of truth, ontologically foundationalist approaches are instead imbricated in a process of categorisation which attempts to establish "natural order" within "disorder" (Foucault 1978, p. 44). For instance, Foucault (1978, p. 44) writes of the medico-sexual regime:

> [T]he machinery of power that focused on this whole alien strain [abnormal sexualities] did not aim to suppress it, but rather to give it an analytical,

> visible and permanent reality: it was implanted in bodies, slipped in beneath modes of conduct, made into a principle of classification and intelligibility.

The task of establishing truths, according to Foucault, is not isolated to medical institutions, or to the law, but rather emanates from multiple centres of power, meaning that it is "so deeply ingrained in us, that we no longer perceive it as the effect of a power that constrains us" (Foucault 1978, p. 60; see also: Doty 1993, p. 302). It is because of this naturalisation of certain 'truths' that it becomes a necessary scholarly endeavour to consider the relationship between power and knowledge production. This involves questioning whose knowledge and expertise are most powerful and how certain truths are reproduced and reinforced in discourse, including the visual and the written word.

Many scholars have identified that the post-structuralist focus on the discursive as exclusively speech and written language neglects the "common language" of "symbolic references through which meaning is necessarily communicated" (Carver 2010, p. 427), particularly political and economic meaning (Bleiker 2015, p. 874). The significance of the visual is undeniable: "seeing comes before words… we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it" (Berger 2009, p. 7). There is therefore a complex relationship between the visual and the written. Preoccupation with *either* the visual *or* the written language in isolation neglects the ways that written language makes sense of what we see (Achilleos-Sarll 2020, pp. 1647-8; Berger 2009, p. 7; Sontag 2004, p. 108). For example, the sight of fire in the Middle Ages, during a time when people believed in the "physical existence of Hell," likely held meaning that the sight of fire does not hold now (Berger 2009, p. 9). This example points to two dimensions of a photograph that have been identified by Roland Barthes (1977, pp. 17-19, cited in Bleiker & Kay 2007, p. 143): the denoted and connoted message. The denoted message refers to a perfect representation of the image. In the above example, this refers to the visual of the fire. The connoted message refers to how the image is interpreted and situated within existing knowledge regimes, which correlates in the above example to the interpretation of fire as a vision of Hell. Here, it is clear that this process of meaning-making is one which is inherently relational. The viewer and their positionality within the social world, across time and space, is central.

Visual analysis is amenable to a feminist and queer ethic of research because of its attentiveness to the relationality of the audience and the image, as well as its emphasis on the discursive as a worthy area of study. A queer (visual) method, with its roots in post-structuralist ontology, extends studies of the discursive by prioritising "the question of the body" (Hansen 2000, p. 201; see also: Åhäll 2018; Dauphinee 2018). Queer visual analysis can grapple with this question through analysis of "how bodies are constructed as non-/conforming with spatio-temporally bound norms" (Cooper-Cunningham 2019, p. 389). In doing so, queer visual analysis acknowledges the imbrication of the visual in knowledge production and its role in categorising bodies within schemes of sex, sexuality and gender, as well as the binary system of "licit and illicit, permitted and forbidden" (Foucault 1978, p. 83). I am conscious that identity categories, including race, gender, sex and sexuality are not natural or innate and am therefore interested in the ways that images (and written discourse) are used to assign and stabilise these arbitrary categories to different bodies. I take seriously the historical role of visuals to naturalise the 'truth' of the physical differences which mark bodies (Higgins 2001, p. 24; Rowley 2010, p. 364) and I resist naturalist interpretations of gendered and racialised images (Bleiker & Kay 2007, p. 139). The analytical techniques I used to analyse the visual and written discourses which form the data corpus of this research are explicated later in this chapter, and will develop more clearly pragmatic tools for exposing, destabilising and making strange binary regimes of gender, sex, sexuality and race in the IMF's discourse. The next section of this chapter outlines the conceptual framework of this research.

III. Conceptual framework

In this section, I define the interrelated concepts deployed in this research, which are gender (and sex), sexuality, the heterosexual matrix and race. I adopt an understanding of these concepts that is rooted in post-structuralist, feminist and queer thought. Gender (and sex), sexuality, the heterosexual matrix and race are deployed in this thesis since I understand their interaction as a "governing code" (Peterson 2005, p. 505) in economic discourses. In other words, I believe that the maintenance of these concepts' stability and coherence both underpins and is maintained in the IMF's gendered discourses. The

queer theoretical approach adopted in this project pushes beyond a mere interrogation of gender to point to the ways that the classification of sexuality is connected to the regulation of the gender binary and racialised hierarchies. This connection is encapsulated in the concept of the 'heterosexual matrix' and points to the invisibilised ways that gender, sexuality and race are connected.

a. Gender (and sex)

I understand gender not as something that is innate, predetermined, or biological, but rather as a discourse (Shepherd 2015, p. 28). In the post-structuralist understanding, gender is *constituted* in discourse, it is a "process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot be rightfully said to originate or to end" (Butler 2006, p. 45). In Simone de Beauvoir's words, "one is not born a woman, but rather becomes one" (cited in Butler 2006, p. 1). This becoming is a citational process, wherein associations are made between the actions, expressions and features of a body and gendered categories. Although the associations we make between particular actions, expressions or features with a given gender may appear or feel fixed, pre-determined and pre-discursive, it is instead the result of a long-standing "shared template" (Doty 1993, p. 302) that is constantly in use. In other words, to be a woman is to repeatedly perform a set of actions that contain "meanings already socially established" (Butler 2006, p. 191). This means that there is no essence or truth to gender, and that gender identity does not exist before the expression of said identity. The acts which express gender *constitute* gender, there is no 'being' behind the 'doing' of gender. These are also the underpinning presumptions of Butler's (2006, p. 34; 2011) theory of gender performativity to which I subscribe. This understanding of gender troubles second-wave feminism's presumption of the unity and coherence of who we are speaking about, by highlighting that the category of woman itself has been long taken-for-granted (Butler 2006, p. 5; hooks 2014, p. 7).[34]

The conceptualisation of gender I have outlined above differs from other theories, which presume a relationship between gender and sex that I diverge from in this

[34] Taken-for-granted as a white, cis, heterosexual and middle-class woman.

research. For example, I resist 'biologically essentialist' understandings of gender, wherein sex and gender are both treated as innate, natural and pre-discursive categories. In this understanding of gender and sex, sex is a material reality, with a fixed truth and essence, that influences expressions of gender. Some early feminists purported a version of this belief, such as Virginia Woolf (1978 [1938], p. 9), who wrote that: "to fight has always been the man's habit, not the woman's." What characterises this understanding is a belief in the internal coherence, and translatability of a body's sex characteristics to gendered behaviour. In contrast, 'social constructivists' purport that gender is a social and cultural category, whereas sex is a biological and medical category (Germon 2009, p. 86; Shepherd 2015, p. 28). For the 'social constructivist,' "'sex' consolidated around the idea that it was the biological basis upon which cultural gender overlaid" (Germon 2009, p. 86). These views are important to delineate in order to differentiate my own understanding of 'sex' and its relationship to 'gender,' which often goes unquestioned, unexamined and under-theorised. Rather than being a 'fact' of the body, I view sex as a product of social relations and believe that sex is no less socially, culturally and historically contingent and fluid than gender (see: Gleeson 2025). The dimorphic categorisation of sex characteristics that appear on the body at birth does not name a 'fact' or 'truth' of the sexed nature of the body, but rather is a social intervention that exists to make meaning about who a person is (Butler 2006, p. 155; Shepherd 2015, p. 27). This is because there is no *a priori* relationship between sex characteristics; they are a "discontinuous set of attributes" which are grouped together under an "artificial unit" (Butler 2006, p. 155). It is a "regulatory fiction" that has been established to suit political and economic needs, "consolidat[ing] and naturalis[ing] the convergent power regimes of masculine and heterosexist oppression" (Butler 2006, p. 46). Although sex and gender have been compartmentalised as distinct phenomena, sex has always been gendered.

Specifically, sex is a phenomenon that was only recently medicalised and has operated through its history as a form of colonial power (Gill-Peterson 2018, p. 13). As historians of intersexuality point out, ambiguous sex characteristics have been medicalised, problematised and 'corrected' through invasive surgeries that align the sex characteristics of the body with one gender (see: Gill-Peterson 2018, 2024; Lugones

2007, 2016; Morland 2014; Stone 1992).[35] This, in effect, mandates, imposes and institutionalises the binary sex system. The unintelligibility of the body in this matrix of dimorphic sex has been characteristic of colonial fears of Indigenous and black people (Lugones 2007, p. 195). Indigenous peoples across the globe continue to organise and understand gender (and sex) categories differently to one another and therefore cannot be treated as a monolith. However, many Indigenous groups recognised intersex people before colonisation, and did not adhere to the assimilationist logic of the sexual binary that was introduced through colonisation (Lugones 2007, p. 195; see also: Moreton-Robinson 2020, p. 316; Morgensen 2012, p. 4; Pihama 2021, p. 358). I make this point here to highlight that, although I understand gender (/sex) as a discourse, this is not to say that the category does not have *real and material effects.* Colonial gender (/sex) is real in the sense that it has power through discourse (Butler 2006, p. 162), and is regulated, disciplined and policed through multiple points of power.

In sum, I understand gender (and sex) as incoherent, unstable, contingent and discursive. In my conceptual framework, gender and sex are not naturally binary systems, but rather appear this way through social, political, economic and medical intervention. Throughout this research, this understanding of gender and sex underpins my analysis of the IMF's discourse on women and gender. I am interested in how economic discourses maintain a particular vision of the gender and sex binary, and what economic and political effects this produces. My queer feminist post-structuralist understanding of gender is analytically useful in this project because it highlights that since gender is constructed, it can be constructed differently.

b. Sexuality

In line with the queer feminist post-structuralist understanding of gender (and sex) that I have detailed above, my understanding of sexuality is similarly informed by a belief that sexuality is *not* predetermined in nature or discoverable as a 'truth' of the body. Here, I

[35] This is a practice that was established by sexologist John Money, who identified the various components which constitute 'sex,' developed resources to identify anomalies in these factors and endorsed the correction of anomalies (see: Germon 2009, pp. 23-62 for a detailed overview of Money's work and its [harmful] effects).

explore how engaging in individual sex acts has been transformed into an identity, even when one is not performing a hetero/homosexual sex act (Warner 1999, p. 28).

The concept of possessing individual sexualities is relatively novel, and Foucault traces the construction of sexuality through speech to Catholic confession. He writes that the Christian pastoral "prescribed as a fundamental duty the task of passing everything having to do with sex through the endless mill of speech" (Foucault 1978, p. 21). This religious imperative to confess sexual desire, in turn rendering it explicable and allowing "no obscurity" (Foucault 1978, p. 20) was followed in the eighteenth century by a "political, economic, and technical incitement to talk about sex" (Foucault 1978, pp. 23-4). The justification for this discourse of sexuality was framed in utilitarian terms for public welfare rather than the moral terms posited by the Church. This development in discourses of sex saw sexuality and sexual desire transformed into something which was managed for the greater good; it was measured according to utilitarianism and became something that was administered (Foucault 1978, p. 24). This reframing of state interest into the private domain of people's sexualities justified intervention into individual sexual practices through institutions such as the economy, medicine and law (i.e. marriage) (Foucault 1978, p. 33). This regulation of sexuality has a racial dimension and is often bound up in the policing of the boundaries of white and black bodies (Perez 2004, p. 126). The science of sexuality has and continues to intervene in decisions about who ought to reproduce and what forms of kinship are acceptable. The discourse of sexuality infiltrates the way that societies are organised through the family unit:

> The family is the interchange of sexuality and alliance: it conveys the law and the juridical dimension in the deployment of sexuality; and it conveys the economy of pleasure and the intensity of sensations in the regime of alliance (Foucault 1978, p. 108).

The force, and authority, of Western scientific investigations into the 'truth' of sexuality has produced a hierarchy of sexualities that did not precede the discourses of sexuality. Indeed, the scientific investigation into "aberrations, perversions, exceptional oddities [and] pathological abatements" created them (Foucault 1978, p. 53). The development

of the concept of sexual orientation or sexuality is synonymous with the development of the concept of the sexual deviant or other. As Ahmed (2006, p. 69) writes "the emergence of the idea of 'sexual orientation' does not position the figures of the homosexual and heterosexual in a relation of equivalence. Rather, it is the homosexual who is constituted as having an 'orientation.'" The hierarchy of sexualities is clear in who is afforded privacy in their sexual affairs. Those sexualities that are normative benefit from the privilege of privacy and as a result are seldom named. It is the deviant sexualities that are obsessively discussed, classified and scrutinised. The legitimate couple within the heterosexual family unit "tended to function as a norm, one that was stricter, perhaps, but quieter" (Foucault 1978, p. 38). On the other hand, the sexualities of "children, mad men and women, and criminals," as well as those who did not like the opposite sex, were afforded greater attention and concern since they deviated from normal orientations (Foucault 1978, p. 38). In this way, we see the early Catholic obligation to confess in the current norm to announce and identify with our (homo)sexuality. As Warner (1999, p. 8) writes, those who possess a deviant sexuality bear the "special burden of disclosure." It presumes secrecy and deception, which requires that the homosexual finally tell the truth and come 'out of the closet' (Sedgwick 2008). This is a working of power that "is so deeply ingrained in us" that it is not perceived as an effect of power but is often viewed as a natural and liberatory impulse (Foucault 1978, p. 60).

Although sexuality does not often appear explicitly in IMF gender publications, this discussion of sexuality reveals that there is no conceptualisation of gender without sexuality. In the next section I explore the concept of the heterosexual matrix, which highlights the way discourses of gender and sexuality are co-constitutive.

c. The heterosexual matrix

The heterosexual matrix as a concept is central in this thesis because it points to the way that the heterosexual arrangement of intimacy and reproduction are inextricably bound up with (re)production of and coherence of sex and gender categories. In simple terms, an implicit part of being a man involves desiring women, and being a woman involves

desiring a man (Ahmed 2006, p. 71). It is in this sense that heterosexuality is the compulsory sexuality (Rich 2003 [1980]; Wittig 1980). Butler's concept of the heterosexual matrix extends the fact of compulsory heterosexuality by highlighting how gender and sexuality are interconnected and co-dependent concepts. Gender and sexuality are related concepts since the normative sexual desire of heterosexuality involves "the presumption that there is a straight line that leads each sex toward the other sex, and that 'this line of desire' is 'in line' with one's sex" (Ahmed 2006, pp. 70-1). The oppositional nature of the gender binary is reified and reproduced in heterosexuality. It also serves to naturalise the binary nature of gender (and sex) categories by placing the reproduction of children at the core of desire and intimacy. The heterosexual matrix thus points to the naturalisation of heterosexuality and gender (and sex) by highlighting how the myth of compulsory heterosexuality depends on the stability and coherence of a host of elements, including:

- Your biological (e.g. chromosomal) sex, male or female;
- Your self-perceived gender assignment, male or female (supposed to be the same as your biological sex);...
- The biological sex of your preferred partner;
- The gender assignment of your preferred partner (supposed to be the same as her/his biological sex);
- Your self-perception as gay or straight (supposed to correspond to whether your preferred partner is your sex or the opposite (Sedgwick 1993, p. 7).

Therefore, what renders a body 'queer,' according to Sedgwick's (1993, p. 8) definition, is that someone's sexuality *does not* signify monolithically within the heterosexual matrix of sex, gender and sexuality. For example, a subjectivity who *does* signify monolithically may be assigned F at birth (sex), then present and identify with the correlated gender of their sex, as a woman (gender). As a woman, they then express sexual and romantic interest in people of the opposite sex and gender (this person was assigned M at birth and identifies as a man). Such expression of sexual and romantic interest then connotes that this person (F) is a heterosexual woman. In this example, this person's sex, gender and sexual orientation are in line and in alignment, producing a 'straight' and coherent identity (Ahmed 2006, pp. 70-1). Despite the endless contingency of the factors which must be met to meet the criteria of the identity of heterosexuality, it is often treated as a biological, innate, and natural fact of existence

and thus acts as a taken-for-granted concept within discourse. The gender binary and the notion of a sexual identity involves "a consolidation of each term, the respective internal coherence of sex, gender and desire" (Butler 2006, p. 31). What the co-constitutive relationship between heterosexuality and masculine and feminine genders has made clear is that 'woman' and 'man' only make sense in "heterosexual systems of thought," which are the same systems of thought (and discourses) which render impossible queer possibilities (Wittig 1980, p. 110). The existence of heteronormativity in discourse *produces* the homosexual subject, as a deviant and aberrant subject from what is considered neutral (Ahmed 2006, p. 69).

For Wittig (1980, p. 110), if you follow the invisible assumption that being a woman is to be heterosexual to its logical conclusion, you will come to find that "lesbians are not women." For Wittig, the discourses of compulsory heterosexuality are so limiting that a genuinely transformative political movement would not use the "discourses of heterosexuality" and therefore would do away with referring to oneself as a woman, for example (Wittig 1980, pp. 107-8). The inescapability of heteronormativity implicitly communicates the message: "you-will-be-straight-or-you-will-not-be" (Wittig 1980, p. 107). Wittig's theorising on heterosexuality within discourses is useful for my conceptualisation of the heterosexual matrix within this research. It aids my understanding of the heterosexual matrix as something which is produced within discourses to imagine facts of intimacy, sexuality and gender that are so pervasive, all-consuming and omnipresent that it goes beyond mere "ideology… prejudice, or phobia" (Berlant & Warner 1998, pp. 554-5). It is produced in every facet of social, political and economic life, including through concepts of nationalism, family, and institutions such as the law, the state and education (Ahmed 2006, p. 91; Ahmed 2014, p. 148; Cohen 1997, p. 440; Wittig 1980, p. 107). It is a "compulsory way of life" (Rich 2003, p. 27).

d. Race

Lastly, this subsection consolidates the conceptual framework of this research by establishing my understanding of 'race.' Similar to the concepts discussed above, I understand race as a discourse, and as a historically, socially and culturally contingent term, which has real and differential effects for racialised subjects.

Although 'race' has been naturalised over history as an innate and biological fact, it does not actually refer to a stable, unitary feature of the body. Emerging as a (pseudo-)scientific category during the Enlightenment period of the 18th-century, 'race' purported to name and explain human variation. This system of racial classification was one which had hierarchy built in, and which attempted to map the "moral and intellectual worth of people… by skin colour" (Rattansi 2020, p. 13). This system of classification was given legitimacy as the 'truth' of human variation through the creation of a 'science' of race. This 'scientific' system depended on defunct methods such as the measurement of the human skull, which attempted to determine that the promiscuity, degeneracy and inferiority of subjects like sex workers, criminals, black people, and (some) women were inherent and "housed in the brain" (Stepan 1986, p. 266). The underpinning presumption of these methods was a "belief that the skull… [reflected] the various organs of mind housed in the brain, and that differences in brain organs explained the differences in human behavior" (Stepan 1986, p. 269). Pre-established social and cultural norms about (ab)normality along racial lines underpinned the establishment of this 'scientific' knowledge on race, and such ideas were developed to provide a rationale for slavery (Curran 2011, p. 176; Rattansi 2020, p. 16; see also critical IPE literature on race, colonialism, empire and capitalism: Bhambra 2021; Bhattacharyya 2018; Bourne et al. 2024; Dimick 2023; Tilley & Shilliam 2018; Virdee 2019; Williams 2021 [1944]). By the 1970s, the 'evidence' that formed the foundation of scientific racism had been overwhelmingly refuted, yet its biologically essentialist presumptions persist through discourses of culture, ethnicity and nation (Rattansi 2020, p. 57). For instance, Frantz Fanon (2008 [1952], pp. 83-5) writes of the epistemic violence of racism by pointing to the way that his body is read as

black through the cultural history of racial classification and slavery, which (re)produces blackness as inferior:

> The black man among his own in the twentieth century does not know at what moment his inferiority comes into being through the other… I was responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors. I subjected myself to an objective examination, I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics; and I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slave-ships.

Racialised discourse therefore may not explicitly make reference to biological differences but may also (re)produce binaries of superior/inferior, rational/irrational, primitive/civilised, traditional/modern and developed/under-developed (Lugones 2007, p. 192; Rattansi 2020, p. 65). In effect, racialisation configures the body into a particular shape; whiteness is a "straightening device" (Ahmed 2006, p. 121; Fanon 2008 [1952], p. 178) that disciplines bodies into fitting the configuration of 'normal' subjectivity. This is bound up with ideas of degenerate sexuality and has produced forms of sexual and gendered deviance that are particular to non-white bodies (Collins 2004, p. 27; Crenshaw 1991, p. 1244; Feder 2020, p. 62; Haritaworn 2008, p. 8; Puar 2007, pp. 37-8). For instance, Black heterosexualities have historically been targeted as a site of deviance and been subject to marriage prohibitions and forced sterilisations in which heterosexually identified people are rendered perverse, non-normative and queer (Haritaworn 2008, p. 6; see also: Cohen 1997). This "queering of racialised straights" points to the reality that "all racialised people transgress dominant gender norms" (Haritaworn 2008, p. 8; see also: Hoad 2000; Puar 2007; Weber 2016a, p. 55). In the same way, populations who were gay, sex workers, 'insane,' or working class were regarded as "racial deviants" in the Enlightenment period (Rattansi 2020, p. 22). I therefore conceptualise gender, sex, sexuality and race as constitutive of a discursive regime of normalisation, discipline and regularisation (Foucault 1978). The politics of race is simultaneously the politics of sexuality and gender (Collins 2004, p. 6).

The conceptual framework of this research acts as a guide for interrogating the ways that the IMF's discourses on women and gender deploy and (re)produce gender, sex, sexuality and race. Gender, sex, sexuality and race are understood as discourses, which are incoherent, contingent and fluid, rather than innate, biological truths. The instability of these concepts is a central assumption I make in this research, and this informs my approach to answering the research question of this thesis on the *stabilising* effects of the IMF's gendered discourses. In the next section, I turn away from the conceptual framework to consider the design and processes of research.

IV. Research design

In this section I outline how I came to study the IMF's gendered discourses as well as my methods of data collection and analysis. Specifically, I detail the methodological contribution that this research makes, in the development and deployment of a queer methodological toolkit for visual (discourse) analysis in IR/IPE. In the final subsection, I reflect on research as an inherently political process, and consider the ethical concerns of knowledge production.

a. Case selection

In 2022, at the beginning of this project, I presented a version of this work that I called 'Gender, Sexuality and the IMF.' This was a title which created some suspicion, since the IMF seemingly had nothing to do with gender or sexuality. In selecting the IMF and its novel gender discourse as my focus in this project, I wanted to bridge the historically antagonistic connection between (political) economy and sexuality. In this subsection, I trace how the IMF's gendered discourses came to be the object of this study.

The emergence of a focus on gender and women at the IMF is relatively novel when compared to other international development and financial institutions, such as the World Bank which has been studied extensively, as discussed in Chapter Two. Similar to the World Bank, the IMF and other international organisations that came out of WWII are fruitful objects of study since they produce "the conventional 'expertise,'

‘wisdom’ and ‘common sense’ of contemporary global politics” (Griffin 2009, p. 8). What differentiates the IMF is its specific focus on producing “micro- and/or macro-financial and fiscal expertise” (Griffin 2009, p. 8). In contrast to the World Bank, the IMF’s mandate explicitly pertained to economic concerns, rather than political ones. The IMF’s mandate post-WWII was a “relatively narrow” one, which covered the monitoring of fixed exchange rates and the provision of loans; this has since been expanded to a variety of policy-making issues including ‘good governance’ (Coburn 2019, p. 771). As Griffin (2007b, p. 228) writes, each institution operates within the unique “parameters of their own historical conditions which is why the Bank’s neoliberalism is not articulated in the same way, and with the same effects as that of, for example, the IMF.” The IMF’s adoption of moralistic and political issues emerged in a way that was distinct to the “complex, contested context” that the institution was negotiating (Coburn 2019, p. 775). Namely, it was navigating questions of corporate governance after the sexual assault allegations made about former managing director Dominique Strauss-Kahn by a housekeeper of a New York hotel and the post-GFC context “in which banks dominated by reckless, risk-taking men were blamed” (Coburn 2019, p. 776). It is within this context that IMF swiftly adopted the narratives of women’s innate level-headedness when making financial decisions, thus contributing to the naturalisation of the crises built into capitalism (Coburn 2019, p. 776). The pivot to these moralistic and political narratives about women and gender makes the IMF a particularly interesting institution to study given its roots in technical, apolitical, economic expertise. The IMF is an important agent in the production of economic knowledge on an international level and shapes policy norms (see: Park & Vetterlein 2010) in ways that have effects for the material conditions of people’s lives ranging from access to resources to the (re)production of ideas about gender.

The study of an economic institution using a queer theoretical approach is an imperative political and academic endeavour in the face of IFI co-optation of feminist and LGBTQIA+ activist language (Rao 2015) and the neglect of queer theory in IPE (N.J. Smith 2020). As Butler (2020) articulates, it is important to consider “what function… gender [is] serving in this political economy.” Indeed, to view queer theory and IPE as incompatible and distinct fields of inquiry neglects the very important ways that ideas

and attitudes about gender are linked to material conditions (Butler 1998, 2020; Rao 2015; N.J. Smith 2016, 2020). To demarcate homophobia and misogyny as exclusively cultural phenomena "enables international financial institutions (IFIs) to obscure the material conditions that incubate homophobic moral panics, and their own culpability in co-producing these conditions" (Rao 2015, p. 38). Economic (or neoliberal) discourses can evade this culpability given that they often do not name gender/sex categories explicitly. Yet, these discourses depend on the belief in the 'natural fact' of gender/sex categories and their heteronormative reproduction to maintain a particular vision of neoliberal productivity and economic activity (Griffin 2007a, pp. 221-3). It is these silences in economic discourses where the hard work of producing gender happens. To consider the question of materiality from a queer perspective, and the question of gender from a feminist IPE perspective is to open up possibilities outside of the 'common sense' production of a gendered and heterosexual neoliberal capitalism. It also seeks to elucidate the ways that particular embodiments of gender are produced in order to "better serve neoliberal ideals of marketisation, privatisation, deregulation and flexibilisation" (Griffin 2007b, p. 227). The ways that the IMF mobilises its gendered discourses to naturalise the economic system is one crucial way that economic discourses operate more broadly to narrow the possibilities that exist outside of neoliberal capitalism.

b. Data collection

The data analysed in this thesis has been retrieved online through the IMF website. At the time of data collection, in July of 2023, IMF publications were contained under a series of subheadings that categorised publications according to publication type including IMF Annual Report, World Economic Outlook, Global Financial Stability Report, Policy Papers, Staff Discussion Notes and so on. Each page contained a description of what a given publication type covers, who its intended audience is, and who it is written by. For instance, Fiscal Monitor publications are written as part of the IMF's surveillance responsibilities, prepared by desk economists of the IMF's Fiscal Affairs Department. This is significant to note since the data selected for analysis in this thesis tend to be those which are intended for a broader audience. This was not an

intentional choice, but rather was a result of the fact that technical IMF publications intended for policymakers or which are a component for the fulfilment of the IMF's mandate did not substantively mention 'gender' or 'women.'[36] The publication categories which did give 'gender' and 'women' consideration were IMF Annual Reports, Policy Papers, Staff Discussion Notes and Departmental Papers. Excluding the first category, these publication types reflect the research interests of individual staff members at the IMF and "do not necessarily represent the views of the IMF, its Executive Board, or IMF management" (IMF n.d.a); they exist only to "elicit comment and… further debate" (IMF n.d.b). As noted earlier, many are written in "nontechnical language, and so are aimed at a broad audience interested in economic policy issues" (IMF n.d.b).

At the time of data collection, the IMF website contained approximately 30,000 publications, with more than half of these being Staff Country Reports, followed closely in number by Working Papers. Using the website search function, 'gender' yielded approximately 8,000 results of which publications encompassed approximately half, followed by news, courses, events, other content, multimedia, *inter alia*. Searching 'LGBT' yielded 12 results. While 'gender' had been given some attention as a policy issue, the term LGBT primarily appeared in reference to IMF workplace diversity. The IMF website contained a page, *Publications on Gender and Women* that collated its various document types on 'gender.'[37] The earliest publication contained on this page was from 1996. The volume of publications increased over the years and reached its peak in 2016 when 18 documents were published. After this point, gender publications were published at higher volumes. Coburn (2019, p. 775) claims that a 'gender turn' at the IMF took place in 2013, which is the year that the IMF published a Discussion Note on *Women, Work and the Economy: Macroeconomic Gains from Gender Equity* (PUB13_8). Before the 2013 report, the last publication concerning gender was published in 2007. Indeed, publications on gender were inconsistent and haphazard and undeniably gained more momentum following 2013.

[36] They also certainly made no mention of 'sexualities' or 'LGBT.'
[37] It is worthwhile to note here that it does not seem that this page exists anymore on the IMF's website, and therefore it may be difficult for other researchers to replicate this dataset.

My data corpus comprises the 77 publications contained on the *Publications on Gender and Women* website page,[38] in addition to short online videos created for public consumption. These videos are contained both on the IMF website and have been published on YouTube. The latter category is interesting since it is the primary point of contact for the general public and the IMF. Additionally, it is the category in which the only substantive mention of 'LGBT' and 'sexualities' are made. 16 online videos are analysed in this thesis. As listed in the Appendices, publications and videos from this dataset are referenced with a unique code. This code contains the data type ('PUB' or 'VID'), the year of publication (i.e. '17' represents the year 2017), and the number of the publication. For instance, PUB06_05 represents a written document ('PUB') published in 2006 ('06') and is the fifth document in the data corpus ('05').

Data corpus	
Online written publications	77
Online videos	16
Total	**93**

Figure 3.1: Data corpus.

The data corpus represented in Figure 3.1 and detailed in the Appendices has never been studied in full, at the time of writing. This is a significant empirical contribution that this thesis makes to the literature on feminist and queer IPE and GEG, as well as to studies of the IMF and its discourse. Additionally, this research contributes to the literature methodologically, by developing an analytical toolkit for queer, post-structuralist (visual) discourse analysis, to which I now turn.

c. Data analysis

In this subsection, I outline the analytical toolkit which constitutes the basis of my novel methodological framework of queer (visual) discourse analysis. This analytical toolkit was developed in order to be attentive to the ordering principles of gender, sex,

[38] See: Appendices.

sexuality and race within both written and visual discourses produced by the Fund. Firstly, it comprises Roxanne Doty's (1993) analytical techniques for analysing written discourse, including analysis of *presupposition*, *predication* and *subject positioning*. Secondly, it includes the visibility spectrum developed by Columba Achilleos-Sarll (2020) to analyse visual discourse. Although these strategies are outlined separately here, in practice, they are used simultaneously to pay attention to the ways that meaning-making is both visual and written. Discourses are not *either* written *or* visual, but have a complex and co-constitutive relationship in making meaning of what is being seen, heard, read or felt.

Presupposition, predication and subject positioning

In Doty's (1993) research on the social construction of foreign policy, she outlines three analytical techniques for analysing written discourse, which I depend on heavily in this project.

The first of these is analysis of *presupposition*, which refers to the implications made about the "existence of subjects, objects, and their relation to one another" (Doty 1993, p. 306). Presupposition can be otherwise understood as the invisible work of creating background knowledge, 'common sense' and of creating a particular truth of the world (Doty 1993, p. 306). An author of a text, for example, may presume some knowledge or shared understanding of the world with their reader. Because of this presupposition of knowledge, the author may not explicitly articulate information that is 'common sense.' For example, in the IMF's written discourse, it often repeats a version of the 'women as smart economics' (Calkin 2015a, b; Roberts & Soederberg 2012) argument, which depends on presuppositional knowledge about the importance of economic growth. This is clear in the following example, from an IMF publication, which writes:

> Gender equality in its various facets is associated with higher growth; thus, lower gender gaps in labor force participation also raise growth (PUB20_56, p. 6).[39]

[39] This quote appears later, and is analysed in full, in Chapter Five.

The first sentence of the above presupposes that the reader shares an understanding of what ‘gender equality’ is, which is itself difficult, since it is a term that may refer to multiple measures of ‘equality.’ Additionally, it presupposes a shared understanding that ‘higher growth’ and ‘raising growth’ is a desirable outcome. The author of this extract does not explain the significance of increased growth, what its benefits are, and why it is important for gender equality and lower gender gaps to achieve higher growth. It also does not interrogate whether this is a necessary connection, but rather presumes the acceptability of subsuming gender equality into the matrix of economic outcomes. The establishment of this ‘common-sense’ knowledge (and values) is done through presupposition, since it presents this information without explicit qualification or explanation.

Secondly, I analyse *predication*, which is the way that certain labels are attached to subjects and objects through adverbs and adjectives. It communicates a quality or attribute about a person or thing and works to construct their identity, demarcating what the subject can do (Doty 1993, p. 306). For instance, in a video entitled ‘Policies That Empower Women To Work Is Good Economics,’ the IMF depicts black women and women of colour alongside captions with negative predicates including “low-income” and “poor,” and represents them as performing jobs that are “low-skill” (VID20_1; see: Figures 3.2 and 3.3 below).[40] As established in the conceptual framework presented above, racialisation through discourse has often depended on descriptors that predicate people of colour and black people as inferior in skill or intelligence (Fanon 2008 [1952]; Lugones 2007; Rattansi 2020). Scholars have highlighted that racialised predicates, such as low-skill and poor, have been attributed to entire nations (Puar 2007; Spivak 1988). For this reason, predication is an important discursive feature for analysis, since it allows me to attend to the ways certain qualities and descriptors are applied differently to gendered, sexualised and racialised bodies. This then opens up for deliberation whether the Fund’s use of certain predicates may (re)produce the stability and coherence of particular gendered and racialised subjects.

[40] These discourses are analysed in more detail in Chapter Five.

Figure 3.2: VID20_1.

Figure 3.3: VID20_1.

The last of Doty's (1993) techniques that I use in this research is analysis of *subject positioning,* which is the way that texts establish the relationality of subjects and objects to one another. Subject positioning works alongside presupposition and predication to create relationships through discourse (Doty 1993, pp. 306-7). These relationships may be those of "opposition, identity, similarity, and complementarity" (Doty 1993, p. 306).

To illustrate how subject positioning functions through and in discourse, I firstly revisit the example provided above to illustrate presupposition. In this extract (PUB20_56, p. 6), the Fund not only presupposes the importance of economic growth, but also creates a *complementary* relationship between gender equality and higher growth. This relationship is established through the word "associated," in the first sentence, and the words "also raise" in the second sentence. In contrast, throughout VID20_1, as depicted in Figures 3.2 and 3.3, the Fund establishes an oppositional subject positioning between the women depicted conducting reproductive work (collecting water and cooking food) and the formal work being undertaken by women in offices depicted at other points in the video (see: Figures 4.5 and 4.6). Their oppositional relationship is evidenced through the differential use of predicates, such as "low-skill jobs" (Figure 3.3) in comparison to "work" (Figure 4.6), or "poor" (Figure 3.2) in comparison to "progressive" (Figure 4.5).[41]

Doty's (1993) analytical strategies are compatible with this queer, feminist, post-structuralist research project since they are attentive to the binaries, exclusions and marginalities produced in policy and elite discourses. In this research, I extend the use of these analytical techniques on not just written or spoken discourse, but on visual discourse. I supplement these techniques with the visibility spectrum, which I now turn to.

The visibility spectrum

Alongside the above analytical strategies, I use Achilleos-Sarll's (2020, p. 1644) visibility spectrum, which identifies four notable points of (in)visibility in visual representations: hyper-visible, visible, absent presence, and invisible.

The visibility spectrum is premised on an understanding that it is important to pay attention to the prevalence and strength of particular representations since they are "always a product of power relations" (Achilleos-Sarll 2020, p. 1648). *Invisible* subjects are those which do not conform to dominant representations and do not appear within

[41] This example of oppositional subject positioning is explored in more detail in Chapters Four and Five.

discourse. This has the effect of creating a 'representational vacuum' (Achilleos-Sarll 2020, p. 1649; see also: Van Veeren 2018), leading readers to infer what exists in these gaps by drawing on dominant discourses. The invisibility of certain bodies and subjectivities can amount to forms of discursive violence, which has "specific performative functions that can and should be interrogated" (Shepherd & Sjoberg 2012, p. 5; see also: Achilleos-Sarll 2020, p. 1649). Our ability to perceive subjects depends on their visibility, or 'the notion that there is something or someone to be seen' (Achilleos-Sarll 2020, p. 1647). The function of invisibility is to exclude certain subjectivities from the domain of the intelligible, acceptable and see-able which, in turn, forms 'a domain of abject beings, those who are not yet "subjects," but who form the constitutive outside to the domain of the subject' (Butler 2011, p. xiii). In Butler's (2011, p. xiii) words, those unseeable and therefore abject subjectivities are designated to the "'unlivable' and 'uninhabitable' zones of social life." To render someone unseeable or invisible is to render them unworthy of perception and representation. This invisibility tends to exclude marginalised identities.

On the other hand, hyper-visibility may also operate as a form of discursive violence. *Hyper-visibility* suggests an excess of visibility which may have the effect of marking an idealised or fantastical subjectivity not necessarily grounded in 'realness,' perhaps best understood as a stereotype (Achilleos-Sarll 2020, pp. 1948-9). The third point on the spectrum is *visibility*, which exists between hyper-visibility and invisibility. The final point on the spectrum is *absent presence,* which refers to subjectivities that may be referenced, but which are not visualised. These final two points are important to keep in mind to gauge the images the IMF is most interested in representing and since they play an important role in the visual story being told within the discourse.

The four points of the visibility spectrum must be applied to the (visual) data corpus as a whole, in order to assess the frequency and strength with which certain subjects appear in discourse. As an example, Chapters Five, Six, and Seven are organised around different points on the visibility spectrum. Chapter Five, on the 'Working Woman' (see: Figures 4.6, 4.8, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6) interrogates this hyper-visible subject, who appears repeatedly in the Fund's written and visual discourses as an aspirational, feminised

economic agent. In contrast, the 'Risky Sexual Subject,' who is the subject of Chapter Seven, features exclusively in written discourse and does not appear in the Fund's visual discourse. The Fund predicates sex workers, prisoners, and drug users as "high-risk" (PUB07_7, p. 76), and presumably does not visualise these subjects given their established aberrance in the social, political and economic order. Lastly, Chapter Six explores the visible 'Heterosexual Nuclear Family' and relatedly the visible 'Caring Father,' who supports the success of the hyper-visible 'Working Mother.' Although the Fund's discourses are consistently heteronormative, presupposing the existence of the nuclear, monogamous and heterosexual familial unit, family and household composition does not appear as frequently and with as much emphasis as the hyper-visible 'Working Mother.' Rather, the visible 'Heterosexual Nuclear Family' is comfortably named and visually depicted, while working in background as presupposed knowledge about how most 'private' lives are arranged.

This subsection has detailed the analytical techniques I used to analyse my data corpus. This analysis is guided by my conceptual framework, and queer feminist post-structuralist methodological commitments. In line with my ontological and epistemological beliefs about the nature of truth, reality, knowledge and power, the analysis I have conducted as part of this research is an unavoidably subjective and therefore political process. In the final substantive section of this chapter, I reflect on the ethical implications of this research.

V. Ethical implications and positionality

As a research project which draws exclusively on publicly accessible data from an international institution, the ethical implications of the research in the traditional sense are low stakes. Yet, in this section I offer some reflections on feminist ethics of research, positionality and academia.

The process of knowledge production I am engaging in through this research is one that has been seriously considered from a feminist and queer research ethic. To research in line with a feminist ethic is to be attentive to "(1) the power of knowledge, and more

profoundly of epistemology… (2) boundaries, marginalization, and silences, (3) relationships and their power differentials, and (4) our own situatedness as researchers" (Ackerley & True 2008, p. 695). A key contribution of feminist methodologies is to elucidate the power imbalances that exist in research interactions. As addressed earlier in this chapter, this research attempts to transcend the conservative boundaries of IR/IPE by taking seriously the epistemological and ontological challenges that queer theory poses. In this sense, I take seriously what has, in IR, been historically considered a frivolous or unserious area of inquiry. Disciplinary boundaries create exclusions and marginalisations which reproduce and entrench structures of patriarchy, racism and homophobia, and thus are important to challenge from an ethical perspective. In my view, academic research would be unethical or "impoverished" (Ackerly & True 2008, p. 697) if it remained inattentive to the structures which it has historically been instrumental in upholding. Queer theory is useful in service of this goal, given its ability to offer methodological alternatives and I take Jin Haritaworn's (2008) reminder to be conscious of the "directionality of our queering." Queer theory has been the subject to a critique that it is a theory of the "white middle-class…respectable lesbian" (Anzaldua 1991, cited in Haritaworn 2008, p. 2), and I am aware that in being a white, middle-class lesbian there is real risk that I 'queer from above.' By 'queering from above' one pronounces their own standard of queer and 'plays god'[42] in deciding who and what is (not) queer (Haritaworn 2008, p. 2). It is in an effort to 'queer from below' that I focus on an international financial institution and consider the effects of their gendered discourses.

To reflect on researcher positionality is to acknowledge that I am a "socially situated subject of knowledge" and that the infiltration of my own political interests and moral values is a "part of knowledge production" that is unavoidable (Moreton-Robinson 2013, pp. 332-5). I reject the individualist myth that research can be undertaken in a truly objective manner, since it purports a "disembodied, depersonalised, fly-on-the-wall view from nowhere" (Haraway 1990, cited in Haritaworn 2008, p. 3). Rather, every facet of this research project has been shaped and dictated by my way of knowing and being in the world and my relationality to others (Moreton-Robinson

[42] To borrow from Haraway (1988).

2013, p. 341). Throughout the research process, it has been my intention to consistently be reflexive about the conditions and relationships that inform my research decisions.

VI. Conclusion

This chapter has established the methodological framework for my research. Significantly, it outlined the novel methodology and analytical toolkit that I have developed in order to undertake a queer feminist post-structuralist (visual) discourse analysis, which looks at the visual and written components of discourse as constitutive of the Fund's discourses on gender and women. This is a significant and worthwhile contribution, since the connections between the visual and written have been well-established in the scholarship, yet analytical toolkits for researchers interested in both the visual and the written remain scarce in queer IPE and IR.

Specifically, this chapter has outlined the 'terrain' of queer theory, and how 'queer' has transformed into a research agenda for 'Queer IR,' as well as the problems with this transformation. I have located this project within the 'terrain' of queer theory, and espoused a commitment to undertaking a queer project which is explicitly concerned with those subjects who do not "signify monolithically" (Sedgwick 2008, p. 8; Weber 2016a, pp. 14-5). I have also connected queer theorising to the literature on visual analysis, and made a case for the compatibility of visual analysis with a feminist and queer research ethic. I have offered a conceptual framework, which establishes my understanding of the key concepts of this research: gender, sex, sexuality, the heterosexual matrix and race. I have provided an explanation of these concepts which explains how they function as *discourse*, despite appearing innate, natural or 'true' to the bodies they are ascribed to. These concepts are important to delineate together since they are co-constitutive. Discourses are rarely, if ever, *just* gendered or *just* racialised, but function together, since sexual and gender politics are always racialised, and vice versa.

This chapter then described the research design of this project, including the rationale for the case selection and the process of data collection. This section explains in detail

the empirical contribution I make to the literature, through the collection and analysis of a data set that has not yet been studied in full. I have then detailed the analytical techniques used in the analysis of the novel data corpus. These include techniques developed by Doty (1993) for the analysis of written discourse, specifically the analysis of presupposition, predication and subject positioning. I also set out Achilleos-Sarll's (2020) visibility spectrum for visual analysis: hyper-visibility, visibility, absent presence and invisibility. Although I delineate these techniques separately here for clarity, in the analysis these techniques function alongside one another to create, (re)produce and stabilise knowable gendered, sexualised and racialised subjects. Throughout my analysis, I use Doty's (1993) analytical techniques to better understand the visual, and Achilleos-Sarll's (2020) visibility spectrum to interrogate written discourse, recognising that discourse is not *either* visual *or* written, but rather that the visual and written are co-constitutive of the Fund's discourses on women and gender. Lastly, I have reflected on the feminist and queer ethics of knowledge production within academia and expressed a commitment to researching with reflexivity. The following chapters of this thesis mobilise the methodological, conceptual and analytical framework that I have developed here.

Chapter Four: The parameters of the IMF's feminism

In this chapter, I interrogate the way that the IMF conceptualises and establishes its approach to feminism, gender and women. I closely examine the IMF's 2022 Gender Mainstreaming Strategy (PUB22_67), as well as the other gender focus areas that have been articulated across the Fund's publications. In addition to 'gender mainstreaming,' these focus areas include 'gender diversity' and '(in)equality and gender gaps.' I then move to examine the ways that binary gender and (hetero)sexuality are stabilised and (re)produced in the IMF's discourse. Here, I mobilise the conceptual framework detailed in Chapter Three, by interrogating discursive processes of gender, sex, sexuality and racialisation. This chapter establishes the parameters within or background against which the hyper-visible Working Mother of Chapter Five, the visible Heterosexual Nuclear Family of Chapter Six and the Risky Sexual Subject of Chapter Seven emerge.

I. Gender mainstreaming

The IMF's approach to gender and women in its policies is guided by a gender mainstreaming framework that was published in 2022 (PUB22_67, p. 4). Prior to this publication, the Fund engaged with questions of gender equality as peripheral to its core functions. However, this publication enunciated a commitment to gender mainstreaming in its core functions, including in its engagement with member countries, through surveillance, lending and capacity development. The strategy enumerates four pillars for the execution of gender mainstreaming:

(1) Giving member countries access to gender-disaggregated data and modelling tools to conduct policy analysis;
(2) A governance framework that ensures macro-critical aspects of gender are integrated into country work;
(3) Collaboration with external partners for knowledge sharing and peer learning;
(4) Efficient use of resources allocated to gender "by realizing economies of scale and avoiding duplication of effort" (PUB22_67, p. 4).

The paper thus commits to integrating gender as a key component of its knowledge production and dissemination to member countries, while retaining a focus on questions of macroeconomy (PUB22_67, p. 2). For the feminists who have advocated for an awareness of male bias in macroeconomics and who have insisted that gender is macro-critical (Elson 1995a, b; Elson & Catagay 2000), this is an important gain. As Diane Elson and Nilufer Catagay (2000, pp. 1347-8) write, macroeconomic policies are always enacted within a "certain set of distributive relations and institutional structures," and consequently, these policies inevitably have social outcomes. The need to make the gendered dimensions of these policies explicit here is indeed important and is a step that the IMF failed to adequately take in the years that this critique gained traction (Elson & Catagay 2000, p. 1352). More than merely considering the social (and gendered) outcomes of its policies, the IMF had been called on to consider the "social *content*" of their macroeconomic policy (Elson & Catagay 2000, p. 1352). In the feminist institutionalist literature, this is referred to as a "transformatory approach" (Elson & Catagay 2000, p. 1347). This is similar to the predicates that the Fund uses to describe its novel gender mainstreaming approach.

The Fund writes that it is committed to an "ambitious vision" that will be "coupled with [a] gradual, measured implementation timeline" (PUB22_67, p. 3). Here, the Fund's use of the predicate "ambitious," to describe its gender mainstreaming policies, is positioned as complementary to the predicates "gradual [and] measured," which describe the approach to its implementation. This is worth noting, since *prima facie*, the predicate "ambitious" might imply that the Fund's approach to gender mainstreaming is going to be aggressive, swift, or quick, rather than "measured," which implies an approach to implementation that may be slow or lacking urgency. The paper continues to explain that its gender mainstreaming approach is premised on a "recognition that reducing gender disparities goes hand-in-hand with higher economic growth, greater economic stability and resilience, and lower income inequality" (PUB22_67, p. 1). In this extract, the IMF positions "reducing gender disparities" as complementary to economic growth, stability and lower income inequality through the word "hand-in-hand." This statement, appearing on the very first page of this gender mainstreaming publication, depends on and establishes presuppositional knowledge

about the qualities of worthwhile macroeconomic policy. It explicates and reinforces this common-sense knowledge by reiterating throughout the paper that the IMF's focus on gender is conditional on the relevance of gender to its macroeconomic objectives, in line with the core activities of the Fund that are established in its Articles of Agreement (PUB22_67, p. 8). The Articles of Agreement, or the IMF's "core activities" (PUB22_67, p. 8), are referred to throughout as the fixed basis from which the IMF refuses to deviate:

> The vision of the gender mainstreaming strategy is to integrate gender into the IMF's core activities–surveillance, lending, and capacity development–in accordance with its mandate. This means enabling the IMF staff to systematically assess the macroeconomic consequences of gender gaps where they are macro-critical, evaluate the gender-differentiated impact of shocks and policies, and provide granular and tailored macroeconomic and financial policy advice and CD [capacity development] support (PUB22_67, p. 8).

In the above extract, the limits that the IMF demarcates around gender mainstreaming are particularly clear. The use of the word "integrate" suggests that the proposed gender mainstreaming policy should not *transform* the Fund's existing practices, but rather add to them. This is specifically enumerated in the second sentence of the above extract, which specifies that staff will be able to interrogate gender gaps which are produced as a result of macroeconomic policy. In Elson and Catagay's (2000, p. 1347) framework discussed above, this comprises what they call the 'mainstream' approach to "adding on social policy," in its focus on the (gendered) effects of macroeconomic policy rather than the (gendered) content of macroeconomic policy. The above extract also includes the qualification "where they are macro-critical" (PUB22_67, p. 8). This depends on the presupposition that the reader and writer have a shared understanding of what "macro-critical" means in this context. Although it is reasonable to assume that the reader has an understanding of this term, what is concealed here is the political substance of the IMF's use of the term "macro-critical." The IMF implicitly positions itself as the authority who gets to decide when the social (and gendered) effects of its own policies are "macro-critical," which itself depends on presupposition concerning their own technical or objective expertise. Additionally, this statement depends on the presupposition that the effects of the IMF's own policies are *either* macro-critical *or* not

macro-critical. This has the effect of creating false and arbitrary boundaries between these two categories, neglecting to consider the messiness of when a policy's effects may be: *both* macro-critical (or economic) *and* political (or social), or macro-critical globally, but not macro-critical for specific nations.

The above extract reveals some key threads that dominate throughout the IMF's written and visual discourse on gender and women. For example, the emphasis that the IMF places on "macro-critical" issues, as well as its core activities and its mandate, as established in its Articles of Agreements, functions as an absent presence throughout the data corpus analysed in this research. Specifically, economic growth and economic stability feature as both implicit and explicit standards against which all policies are measured. In the IMF's visual discourse, this is clear through the frequent mention of the word "economy" in the captions of certain visuals. In Figures 4.1 and 4.2, the "economy" is referred to in the captions of visuals that depict cities and their buildings. The first visual (Figure 4.1) is of a building under construction, with cranes and a building scaffold. The second visual (Figure 4.2) depicts skyscrapers, with a sunset glaring directly into the camera. Both images offer some depiction of the economy. However, I categorise the economy as an absent presence, rather than as visible, because the depiction of the economy in the Fund's visual discourse does not have a stable referent. In other words, the term "economy" appears to describe many different things and therefore cannot be said to appear in full in any of the visual discourse analysed.

Figure 4.1: VID20_1.

Figure 4.2: VID20_1.

Finally, the IMF's gender mainstreaming policy paper does not only have an outward-facing focus. In this paper, the Fund also makes an internal pledge to establish a "supportive organizational structure [that] would help departments deliver on their commitments" (PUB22_67, p. 23). To do this, it suggests the creation of: a centralised gender inclusion unit in its Strategy, Policy and Review Department; a Gender Working Group; and, a Senior Gender and Inclusion Accountability Group (PUB22_67, p. 23). The use of the predicate "supportive" to describe the creation of a particularly gender-aware organisational structure at the Fund does not reveal much about the

current organisational structure of the Fund, and the ways that it may have previously inhibited gender analysis. However, this predicate suggests future plans to enhance gender awareness and to mobilise the gender mainstreaming strategy.

Despite the use of predicates such as "ambitious" in the gender mainstreaming policy document (PUB22_67), which has formed the basis of this section's analysis, I determine that this approach to gender is a conservative one. Throughout the document, the IMF reiterates the central importance of its core mandate, (re)produces and consolidates its position as a global authority on whether the effects of its own policies are "macro-critical" and, in doing so, creates a presuppositional binary between politics and economics. Further, despite some commitment to interrogating the social contents of its own macro-economic policies through the creation of and increased access to gender-disaggregated data, the IMF places more emphasis on the social effects of macro-economic policies. In the following subsection, I continue to explore the Fund's internal commitments to gender diversity.

II. Gender diversity

In this section, I explore how the Fund's publications speak of gender diversity and parity within its internal organisational structure. Four publications that were collected during the time period with which I am concerned address the gender diversity of the Fund's Board of Members. In its most recent report, it is documented that only 9 out of the 55 Executive Director and Alternative Executive Director positions at the Fund are occupied by women (PUB22_69, p. 1). The report says, "[t]hese numbers can, and should increase" (PUB22_69, p. 1). In the same report, the following visual comparison across IFIs with respect to gender diversity of IFI member country boards is offered:

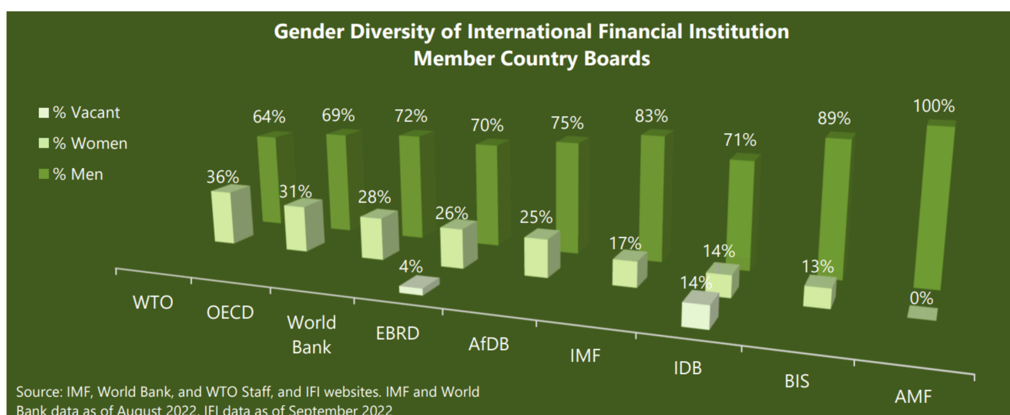

Figure 4.3: PUB22_69.

In Figure 4.3, the Fund visualises the percentage of male, women and vacant positions across IFIs like the World Trade Organisation (WTO), Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), World Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), *inter alia*. In visualising gender diversity this way, across these institutions, the IMF presupposes a particular understanding of what gender diversity *is* as well as how to achieve it. It also presupposes an understanding of gender which is binary, with only two options for humans given (women, men [and 'vacant']). As I established in Chapter Two, feminists and feminist goals are not monolithic. Cynthia Enloe's (2014 [1990]) seminal question 'where are the women?' can be interpreted in this context to ask, 'where are the women on the member country boards of IFIs,' as addressed in Figure 4.3. However, this question limits the Fund to an 'add women and stir' approach (Harding 1987), which presupposes that increased numbers of women on member country boards on IFIs will have some positive effect. This approach is unable to meaningfully grapple with other important questions, such as 'who are the women?'[43] on these member country boards, and what are their interests? Similarly, it forestalls the question of which women cannot gain access to elite roles like the ones depicted in Figure 4.3. As many feminist scholars have argued, the partial inclusion of some elite women into the upper echelons of IFIs, for instance, has very limited positive effects for those women (and girls) who are at the intersection of multiple marginalisations (see: Bergeron 2003; Eisenstein 2009; Federici 2020; Fraser 2009; McRobbie 2009; Tornhill 2016). In this visual, the IMF is also

[43] To adapt Enloe's (2014 [1990]) question slightly.

presupposing that increasing gender diversity in IFIs means that there will be an increase in women who bring 'gender-aware' advocacy into their work. However, the research that has been done on the staff and organisational culture at the IMF suggests that the culture of knowledge production and research is homogenous. For example, Bessma Momani (2007, p. 39) described it as "hierarchical, technical/economistic, bureaucratic, and homogenous/conforming." Jeffrey Chwieroth (2007) finds that the training IMF staff undergo socialises them into a particular type of knowledge, one that is distinctly neoliberal (see also: Nelson 2014, p. 297; Seabrooke & Nilsson 2015; Strange 1974). Although Momani (2007, p. 39) does suggest that altering the recruitment or organisational culture of the Fund may reduce the severity of the IMF's culture of conformity, the IMF's commitment to hiring more women does not itself represent a commitment to transforming its organisational structure. This literature suggests that, irrespective of the *demographic* diversity of staff members at the Fund, most staff are socialised into and share common beliefs about macro-economic policy. As problematic as this goal is, it is also important to note that the IMF is not even remotely close to achieving it.

In the same publication, testimonials are given about the benefits of having a female manager. Diversity makes "team interactions… richer, and output more robust," fosters "professional growth," supports "better outcomes" (PUB22_69, p. 5) and "enables a more effective working environment" (PUB22_69, p. 6). Diversity is positioned as complementary with robust output, professional growth, better outcomes and a more effective working environment. The predicates "richer," "robust," and "effective" function here to make this complementary and positive connection. Diversity is also described through the predicate, "bless[ing]" (PUB22_69, p. 5), for what it provides for the workplace, for outputs and for outcomes. By using these specific outcomes as positive measures of success, the Fund presupposes the importance and centrality of effective working environments and robust outputs. Additionally, the predicate "bless[ing]" (PUB22_69, p. 5) has spiritual or metaphysical connotations, embellishing this sentiment. The presuppositional common-sense that women bring something uniquely or innately *different* to the workplace than men is implied throughout the Fund's discourse on gender diversity, but it is also named explicitly. Another

publication writes, “adding a female perspective to the boardroom is an important first step” in a broader project of changing mindsets (PUB19_46, p. 18). This statement firstly uses “female” as a predicate to the word “perspective,” presupposing that a distinctly “female perspective” exists in ‘our’ common knowledge. The absence of further explanation about what constitutes a “female perspective” further cements this as natural and as not requiring further interrogation. However, this is an obviously flawed remark in its assumption that all “female[s],” a biological category, share a perspective. As I established in Chapter Three, the biological category of female, and the social category of women are internally incoherent and do not always line up. Additionally, this statement presupposes that all women carry in them the same set of feminist goals, and that these goals will have emancipatory or empowering effects for all women. Lastly, the IMF further limits the efficacy of this statement by limiting the “female perspective” to the “boardroom” (PUB19_46, p. 18). By advocating for feminist politics to take place in the boardroom, the IMF is participating in the “co-optation” of feminism, which subsumes radical politics into neoliberal politics of diversity and inclusion (Fraser 2009).

The Fund positions itself as a “benchmark and a norm setter” (PUB23_77, p. 3) and argues in one publication that gender diversity brings the Fund “closer to our society” (PUB22_69, p. 5). The Fund frames itself, in the same publication, as a “public institution” (PUB22_69, p. 5). It writes that as a “central bank,” an internal unequal structure will have consequences for the “norms and values coming out of those banks” (PUB23_77, p. 3). In these extracts, the IMF describes itself with predicates that contradict other documented ways that the Fund has categorised its role. Specifically, these descriptions are out of line with the Fund’s above insistence that its role ought to be limited to the content of its mandate, which is exclusively technical and economic. In contrast, these predicates aid in positioning the IMF as an institution interested in the moral and political substance of their work, and of their organisational structure.

In the following subsection, I continue to interrogate the ways that the Fund’s mandate limits its conceptualisation of feminist aims through a focus on (in)equality and gender gaps.

III. (In)equality and gender gaps

In this subsection, I explore how the Fund's feminism is represented as a question of gender (in)equality and gender gaps. I argue that the treatment of feminist concerns as concerns about inclusion, representation and parity has limiting effects and consequences.

The IMF's discourse on (in)equality and gender gaps similarly conceptualises the 'woman question' as a problem of inclusion in "senior corporate positions" (PUB16_28, p. 9). They write that there are:

> [L]arge gaps between the representation of men and women in leadership positions in banks and in banking-supervision agencies worldwide. It finds that, shockingly, women accounted for less than 2 percent of financial institutions' chief executive officers and less than 20 percent of executive board members (PUB18_43, p. 5).

In this extract, the IMF uses the predicate "shockingly" to describe women's low representation as "financial institutions' chief executive officers." This predicate helps create presuppositional knowledge about where women should be, in line with the IMF's feminist aims. The low percentage of women in this position is 'shocking' because of the Fund's presupposition that women should be represented equally in high-level jobs at "banks and banking-supervision agencies worldwide." This is also a product of the presuppositional work of the phrase "large gaps," which implies that the level of women's representation in these jobs need correcting. However, what is absent from this extract is an interrogation of *why* this disparity has occurred, *how* it is going to be corrected, and *what effects* the increased inclusion of women in these positions will have. Indeed, many people have described international finance, including the Fund, as a "macho men's club" (Salam 2009). In line with the drawbacks of all approaches which advocate for an 'add women and stir' approach (Harding 1987), the Fund's position here does not guarantee a cultural transformation away from what has been identified as a homogenous culture (Momani 2007), since women do not innately and uniformly possess an 'essence' that makes them different to men. Lastly, the above extract depends on presuppositional knowledge about what feminist goals are. As I identified in the above subsection, many feminists advocate for political ends which cannot be

achieved through the IMF's executive board. Indeed, many feminists resist the very political and economic project of the Fund's neoliberal policy prescriptions and therefore would position themselves in direct opposition to even the most 'progressive' aims of the Fund.

However, the 'gender gap' discourse does not stop at increasing female representation in high-level positions at banks and banking-supervision agencies. The IMF does also describe an interest in closing educational gaps (PUB18_38, p. 5; PUB16_30, p. 10; PUB18_37, p. 5), gaps in access to property and inheritance (PUB18_38, p. 7), the gender pay gap (PUB19_52, p. 16), and gaps in labour force participation (PUB18_40, p. 5). In PUB20_56 (p. 8) it says that:

> Although the gender gap in labor force participation has declined substantially over the past 30 years, average female labor force participation remains well below the male rate.

The above extracts which discuss 'gender gaps' in labour force participation and leadership positions depend on presuppositional knowledge about the existence of two distinct groups, and the differences which constitute them as separate, oppositional and disparate. The gender binary itself functions as a hierarchical category in which men are positioned above women. As the Fund describes existing gender gaps, in which men are positioned hierarchically above women with respect to their access to pay, property, education and labour force participation, it minimally interrogates the ways that these institutions and systems were designed with these gendered disparities built in, and the way that the Fund's own policies have exacerbated such gaps. For example, the Fund's interest in closing gender gaps in educational attainment contradicts findings in the literature that the presence of IMF policies in Ecuador affected the educational enrolments and participation in the workplace of girls and women (Kern et al. 2024; Saadatmand & Toma 2008; see also: Arnove et al. 1996; Buchmann 1996). Additionally, it also contradicts evidence of the gendered effects of austerity in pushing women out of the formal workplace in order to carry out the duties of social services which were defunded in line with IMF conditions (Sadasivam 1997). Lastly, it implies that closing gender gaps in the listed areas is plausible while the IMF simultaneously

continues to attach the same conditions to its loans that create gender gaps. In the IMF's discourse, this effect is achieved through complementary subject positioning. The IMF positions itself as compatible with closing gender gaps in a variety of areas, yet does not commit to changing its policy prescriptions.

The IMF also represents 'gender gaps' in its visual discourse. In Figure 4.4, from a video entitled 'Policies That Empower Women to Work Is Good Economics,' there is a woman's face in a circle next to text that reads "working women 60%" and a man's face in a circle next to text that reads "working men 80%" (VID20_1). It appears while a voiceover explains that women have made gains in labour force participation worldwide, with 60% of women in the workforce, but they have not reached parity with male levels of labour force participation (VID20_1). The use of the predicate "working" in this visual, and in the title of the video, depends on presuppositional knowledge about what work *is* and what work *is not*. Specifically, "work" is related exclusively to the workforce and to labour force participation. Further, the title of this video uses the predicate "empower" to describe policies which make women work. As a result, the IMF creates presuppositional knowledge about the 'empowering' characteristic of 'work' in the 'labour force.' As Andrea Cornwall and Karen Brock (2005, p. 1050) argue, the term 'empowerment,' alongside 'participation,' "have become normalised and bureaucratised through exercises in mainstreaming." Their repeated use, over time and across publications, loses meaning and only functions to "establish the moral authority" of the institutions using them (Cornwall & Brock 2005, p. 1056). To describe a policy as "empowering" or as increasing "participation," is difficult to refute or critique since they are "nice-sounding words" (Cornwall & Brock 2005, p. 1056). In the Fund's discourse, the predicate "empower[ing]" (see: PUB19_46, p. 2, 5; PUB20_54, p. 3; PUB21_62, p. 5; PUB22_71, p. 6; PUB23_75, p. 8) creates presuppositional knowledge about a set of universal and shared values (Cornwall 2007, p. 472); one cannot reasonably say that they are 'anti-empowerment,' for example. Yet the use of the word 'empowerment' is fundamentally contested, and can be used to describe a variety of contradictory political ends. Similarly, 'participation' and 'gender gaps' are part of the technical development discourse, and are words which also have fluid meanings depending on the speaker (Cornwall 2007, p. 474). Emerging as part of a

"counter-hegemonic approach to radical social transformation," 'participation' was co-opted by neoliberal political aims and "gained legitimacy within the institutional development world… achieving buzzword status" (Leal 2010, p. 539). The World Bank is implicated in the discursive transformation of 'participation' from transformative to a development buzzword. In its original meaning, participation was part of the emancipatory project of Paulo Freire, who sought to transform political, cultural and economic structures through Participatory Action Research (PAR) (Leal 2010, p. 540). Through its contortion in the development infrastructure, 'participation' came to signify involvement with free-market economics, rather than its original meaning, which pertained to increased political power (Leal 2010, p. 542).

This is evident in Figure 4.4, where men are positioned as closer in proximity to this condition of 'empowerment,' since they represent the larger percentage of workers: "working men" (VID20_1). Men's level of labour force participation is presented as aspirational because of the presuppositional work of the IMF's discourse, which creates the shared knowledge that labour force participation is desirable, a shared moral framework. Indeed, many (early) feminists have advocated for and written extensively on the benefits of women's increased participation in the labour force. These benefits include economic freedom from their (often male) partner, the pursuit of their interests, and the development of an identity distinct from their social role as mother and wife (see, for example: Friedan 2010 [1963]). However, as I explore here, the IMF's advocacy for increased participation of women in the labour force is predominantly concerned with the economic benefits of this increased participation for the nation. This is a common thread within international finance and development institutions, which position increased participation in neoliberal, free-market economies as the single avenue through which one can take "fuller charge of their lives," which in turn is presupposed as fundamentally empowering (Leal 2010, p. 542). The political effects of the predicate 'empowering' to describe labour force participation is homogenising. This representation of feminism flattens the diversity of women's aspirations into a matrix of national economic competitiveness. It also (re)produces "social consensus around the interests of dominant power structures" (Leal 2010, p. 543) by neutralising previously transformative concepts through neoliberal co-optation. These "buzzwords" (Cornwall

2007; Cornwall & Brock 2005; Leal 2010) appear natural and common-sensical, however, this is achieved through their use in discourse as presuppositional knowledge that does not warrant further clarification or explanation.

Figure 4.4: VID20_1.

Furthermore, the presumption that gender issues can be quantified and measured as 'gender gaps' is also indicative of a particular ontological position – one that is not natural, given, or pre-discursive. As Juanita Elias (2013, p. 159) puts it, the reporting of 'gender gaps' implies that women's equality can be transformed into a technical or scientific endeavour, involving quantification. The production of knowledge on a 'gender gap' by the Fund functions to legitimise its authority as a technical institution, and also to connect it to the prevailing interests of the nation-state (Elias 2013, p. 159). For example, the Fund writes that "narrowing participation gaps between women and men is likely to engender large economic gains" (PUB18_36, p. 4). In this sentence, the Fund positions narrow gender gaps in participation as complementary with large economic gains. In doing so, the Fund depends on the presuppositional connection that women's equality, or the closing of gender gaps, should be measured according to economic impact. This further legitimises and naturalises the neoliberal competitiveness which underpins the Fund's policy agenda (Elias 2013, p. 159). This is the ideological and political function of the Fund's discourse. The 'neoliberalising' of feminist rhetoric and ambition in the Fund's discourse, is the same sentiment that the critical feminists

discussed in Chapter Two (for example: Duggan 2009; Fraser 2009; Prügl 2017) have critiqued.

In the Fund's discourse on gender gaps and unequal participation, reference is often made to the disproportionate reproductive work women carry out in the home or private sphere. In this way, the Fund attempts to comment on and actively dismantle the social roles that women are expected to assume when they are married, for example. In 2016, a Fund publication determined that "marital status" is an indicator of gender gaps in labour force participation (PUB16_30, p. 23). Additionally, a 2021 publication writes that "women are significantly over-represented in the number of hours spent on unpaid work" (PUB21_62, p. 31). This is a phenomenon that feminists have long engaged with, by highlighting women's 'second shift' after work, within the home (Hochschild & Machung 2012; Myrdal & Klein 1968; Shelton 1992; Shelton & John 1996). In multiple studies within the literature, methods such as time-use surveys or time-budget studies have been used to determine the proportion of work done across gendered lines within the home. In Arlie Hochschild and Anne Machung's (2012) study, they estimate that, from their dataset, mothers employed in the formal economy were working an extra month of 24-hour days in the year, in comparison to men. In 2020, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) wrote that women carry out approximately 4 hours and 15 minutes of unpaid care work daily, whereas men carry out approximately 1 hour and 23 minutes of unpaid care work daily (Cattaneo & Pozzan 2020, para. 6). This labour has been transformed through economic vocabulary as non-work through its unpaid condition (Federici 2020; Folbre 1991). Rather than constituting economic work, unpaid work within the home is relegated through discourse as extra-economic work, or the product of biological, cultural and social forces.

Feminists in the academic literature and in political movements have long attempted to destabilise the boundaries between 'economic' work (as masculinised work) and 'extra-economic' work (as feminised non-work).[44] This debate is important in the context of the Fund's 'gender gap' discourse, as this discourse depends on the presuppositional figure of the "unproductive housewife" (Folbre 1991, p. 463). An

[44] This is the same literature that I discuss in Chapter Two, particularly in the section on socialist feminisms.

implicit feature of the discourse on ‘gender gaps,’ as discussed earlier in this section, is that paid employment and labour force participation is *empowering* work. Further, the association of paid employment with economic growth implies that absence from paid employment has a potentially negative effect for the economy. This presuppositional knowledge is one of the foundational binaries and oppositions which informs knowledge production in political economy (N.J. Smith 2020, p. 3). Specifically, it depends on the dualism of paid and unpaid work, without recognising the mutually constitutive relationship of these types of work. As Federici (2020) argues in her work on ‘wages for housework,’ paid work cannot be successfully carried out without the unpaid work which precedes and follows it. This is the care work of sustaining human bodies: feeding them, resting them, and tending to them physically and emotionally. The marital relationship, in which this care is often presumed to take place within the Fund’s discourse, is therefore a spiritual, sexual and economic unit (N.J. Smith 2020). Marriage, reproduction and care are depicted as barriers to economic participation in the IMF’s discourse (PUB16_30, p. 23; see also: Chapter Six). However, the positioning of marriage, care and reproduction as oppositional to empowerment and labour force participation conceals the ways that housework and wifedom are themselves conditions of work and labour. This is a point that the Fund makes briefly in one publication from 2019: “Unpaid work is an important aspect of economic activity and well-being of individuals” (PUB19_52, p. 4). However, this positioning of unpaid work as an important economic activity is not sustained throughout the Fund’s discourse, as I discuss in Chapter Six.

The literature on feminised reproductive, care and unpaid work discussed in this section reveals a binary or oppositional subject positioning that the Fund depends on in its discourse. Specifically, this is the binary of work and non-work, which functions as presuppositional background knowledge in the Fund’s ‘gender gap’ discourse. In order for there to be a ‘gender gap’ in the working patterns of men and women, shared knowledge about what constitutes work must be established. In this context, I have highlighted that the Fund presupposes that participating in the labour force, and therefore participating in the growth of national economies, occurs via paid work in the formal economy. This is not a neutral binary, but one that continues to (re)produce the

hierarchical ordering of paid 'economic' work above the unpaid 'extra-economic' work which sustains the former. Although it may be important for many women to enter the paid, formal economy, it is important to highlight here the ideological work that functions to naturalise and de-value the work undertaken within a marriage, and within a home.

The presuppositional work of the Fund's discourse on 'gender gaps' discussed above implies that all 'non-working' women are *potential* economic agents. As I discuss in Chapter Five with respect to the figure of the *femina economica*, the Fund positions empowerment as exclusively attainable through labour force participation. This is not a transformative re-imagining of women's potential, but rather endorses mapping onto women existing abstractions of the *homo economicus*, or the masculinised economic subject. Throughout the Fund's discourse, it (re)produces and renders coherent men and women in distinct, oppositional and hierarchical terms, which simultaneously defines power in binary terms (Mohanty 2011, p. 73). This gendered power binary manifests as "people who have [power] (read: men), and people who do not [have power] (read: women)" (Mohanty 2011, p. 73). In order for women to access power, the Fund implicitly endorses that women take on more masculinised roles, to become the hyper-visible subject-position of the Working Woman (see: Chapter Five). Federici (2004, p. 129) remarks on this noticeable trend wherein the aspirational feminist woman pivots from a radical, anti-capitalist agenda to being absorbed into the limited politics of the institutions they once critiqued:

> The long-haired, unshaven feminists of the 1960s have been replaced by the elegant, 'empowered' feminists of the 1990s, running around the globe with their laptops, lobbying, courting the media, battling for hours to change a few words in official documents, increasingly detached from mass movements.

The Fund's visual discourse offers a depiction of this novel post-feminist[45] woman, in Figures 4.5 and 4.6. These figures resemble the qualities of the elegant and 'empowered' women that Federici (2004) described above, with their suit pants and button-up shirts. Both women are situated within an office space and are described with positive predicates in the captions of the video, such as "progressive" (VID20_1; see: Figure 4.5) and "work[ing]" (VID20_1; see: Figure 4.6). These visuals are in line with the written discourse analysed above, with an emphasis on 'empowering' women by lowering existing barriers to their entry into the workforce. For example, in its written discourse, the Fund stresses that women ought to be working as board members, or in competitive, "higher paid and fast-growing sectors, such as computer science and engineering" (PUB21_62, p. 10). In the visuals, the Fund visually marks these women as 'empowered' by positioning them in close proximity to the formal workplace, and by describing them with positive predicates.

Figure 4.5: VID20_1.

[45] As discussed in Chapter Two, the concept of post-feminism was developed by Angela McRobbie (2009) in her book *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change.* She argues that elements of feminism have been included in political and cultural life, including terms like 'empowerment,' 'freedom' and 'choice,' but that they have been deployed in a neoliberal politics of individualism (McRobbie 2009, p. 1). It is a concept which has been deployed alongside the critique of feminism's co-option in institutions of global governance, and is helpful here for understanding the depoliticisation of feminism in the Fund's discourse.

Figure 4.6: VID20_1.

In this section, I have analysed the Fund's mainstreaming of gender in its external and internal operations. In doing so, I have interrogated the parameters that the Fund implicitly and explicitly establishes to limit its feminist goals. This section has also analysed the IMF's discourses on gender diversity and gender gaps, and has revealed the ways that the Fund's feminism co-opts historically transformative feminist rhetoric into their discourse, effectively 'neoliberalising' feminism. This section has also begun to interrogate the binaries and oppositions which underpin the common-sense knowledge that the Fund (re)produces about economics. Lastly, this section has interrogated the ways that many women are represented as *potential* economic agents, as well as the ideological work which underpins the Fund's presuppositional knowledge. I continue this analysis in the following section, in which I explore the construction of binary gender, (hetero)sexuality and racialisation through the Fund's discourse.

IV. Binary gender and (hetero)sexuality

In this section, I sketch the distinct ways that the Fund (re)produces the stability of a binary gender order. I do this in order to interrogate the importance of the coherence, stability and order of meaning ascribed to certain bodies as a precursor for the production of meaning-making about the economy and by extension the 'empowered'

Working Woman explored in the following chapter. I am attentive to the implicit and explicit ways that the Fund demarcates binary gender differences, drawing on the presumed knowledge that drives their analysis of women, gender and the macroeconomy. My analysis is motivated in part by a belief that Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1988, p. 78, emphasis in original) explains well: "it is only when men and women are seen as different categories or groups possessing different *already constituted* categories of experience, cognition and interests as *groups* that such a simplistic dichotomy is possible." I make the argument that the discourses of the Fund render the gender binary natural and commonsensical, by using it as a starting point from which economic knowledge is generated. 'Gender,' 'sex' and 'sexuality,' are theorised within binary and heterosexist systems, which are deployed in ways that constitute these categories in accordance with the demands of neoliberal economics.

a. Gender, sex and sexuality

Firstly, I interrogate the written publications in which the Fund attempts to define gender and sex (see, for example: PUB07_7, p. 122; PUB18_36, p. 5; PUB19_46, pp. 8-9; PUB19_47, p. 10; PUB21_62, p. 5, 33). In the publications, the Fund recognises gender and sex as distinct and related, with gender representing a socially constructed set of "roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women," and sex representing "characteristics that are determined biologically" (PUB21_62, p. 5). This understanding of sex is stated as well in the domain of health:

> In the area of health, the term 'gender equity' is used instead of 'gender equality' in order to emphasize that differences between men and women in some health outcomes are due primarily to biological differences between the sexes (PUB07_7, p. 122).

In the above, "men and women" are referred to as "the sexes," which are differentiated biologically, and therefore presupposes the dimorphic character of sex. Elsewhere, the Fund states that women's "new skills" in the workplace can be attributed to "social norms and their impact on upbringing, social interactions, as well as differences in risk

preference and response to incentives" (PUB18_36, p. 4). In this extract, gender is conceptualised as socially constructed, and influenced by external factors like upbringing. Across these publications, the IMF can be said to most often adopt a socially constructivist view of gender and sex. Classifying gender differences in behaviour is important for the Fund, since they can "be usefully incorporated into theoretical models of growth to enrich the modelling" (PUB06_4, p. 32), as well as for "effective gender budgeting" (PUB16_26, p. 5). Despite the analytical significance of the Fund's socially constructivist understanding of gender and sex categories, in some publications, the Fund lapses into a conflation of gender and sex. In one publication, the Fund describes the "factual" physical differences of the bodies of women and men, slipping into an understanding of gender differences as appearing naturally on the body:

> Starting from the factual physical differences between the average man and woman… national ergonomics standards should be introduced to guarantee that new machinery is designed and adjustable to meet male and female body characteristics (PUB21_62, p. 33).

This treatment of gendered differences as naturally occurring on the physical body of "the average man and woman" acts to stabilise, entrench and conflate social experiences of gender with apparently natural and biological 'facts' of physical size and features. It makes the assumption that "gender read off the social body maps to the 'authentic' or biological sex of the person in question" (Shepherd & Sjoberg 2012, p. 18). Although in its publications, the Fund ultimately disregards the hypothesis that gender is innate to female and male bodies, it represents differences in gendered behaviour as deriving from "women possess[ing] innate traits more consistent with better management of risks in financial institutions" (PUB17_31, p. 7). Elsewhere, gender and sex are conflated, where the Fund states that "gender at birth is what determines whether a person becomes a manager in Japan" (PUB19_46, p. 28). This directly contradicts the conceptualisation of gender as a product of socialisation over a person's lifetime (PUB18_36, p. 4), by instead pinpointing its interpellation at birth. This is an important conflation to point out and disentangle, because of the ways that it stabilises and naturalises gender and sex differences within a binary of female and male. As Colin Danby (2007, p. 30) puts it, it is important to "pay particular attention to the way biology, cultural meanings, social institutions, and material practices are made to line

up, so that they appear to explain and reinforce one another." More than this, it is important to pay attention to the ways that these different categories are framed as one and the same. Griffin (2007b, p. 226) captures this process well when she writes that economic discourse, specifically neoliberal discourse, "(re)produces the social reality that it defines through particular discursive practices, predicating, pre/proscribing and (re)producing the meanings, behaviours and human identities that best correspond with the pre-given, economic 'reality' thereby constructed." Next, I examine the traits that women in particular are prescribed in the Fund's discourse.

Women are represented as "more risk averse, reflecting greater fear of negative outcomes" and as being "more averse to competition" (PUB18_36, p. 12). The Fund also represents women as more vulnerable and less educated than men, reproducing an image of an "essentialised category of 'passive victims'" (Wilson 2011, p. 315), particularly with respect to 'Third World' women. For example, women are described as "more likely to be illiterate and poor" (PUB22_71, p. 7), "less educated than men" (PUB19_49, p. 9), and as "secondary earners" (PUB06_6, p. 12). Women are described as having a preference for having children (PUB06_6, p. 7), which is positioned as a conflict with labour force participation and educational attainment, resulting in the problem of "reconcil[ing] work and family" (PUB06_6, p. 21). As a result, and as has been identified by Shulamith Firestone (2015 [1970]), women are represented as *dependent* in their relationship to children and in their relationship to the private domain. In one publication entitled 'Guilt, Gender and Work-Life Balance in Japan: A Choice Experiment' (PUB19_48, p. 23), the Fund writes that gendered differences in emotions, particularly concerning guilt around working as a parent, are analytically significant in determining what kind of jobs women choose. Elsewhere, women are described as having a preference for "job security" (PUB06_6, p. 7), and as self-selecting into "low-risk [finance] firms" (PUB18_43, p. 14):

> To the extent that managing high-risk firms involves longer working hours and less flexible schedules, women might disproportionately self-select into low-risk firms to be better able to fulfil the child-rearing and household responsibilities that they often disproportionately carry (PUB18_43, p. 14).

Moreover, certain women are described with the predicate *vulnerable* and are enumerated as follows: "of particular concern are Aboriginal women, immigrant women, senior women and women with disabilities who remain more vulnerable to poverty" (PUB17_32, p. 28). These women are positioned as proximate to poverty, and therefore of "particular concern." Within the context of the IMF's institutional remit and the discourses discussed above, these groups of women may be those which have the most challenges to entering the labour force, and 'empowering' themselves through economic participation. These are therefore the women who are unable to transform into the aspirational 'Working Woman' and to transcend poverty through labour force participation. They are rather the inverse of this aspirational economic subject, the vulnerable and "concern[ing]" woman.

The above predicates and subject-positions are also represented in relation to the (in)stability of the economy. Explicitly, the Fund argues that women's inclusion into the formal economy affects stability:

> Women's preference for a stronger role for public insurance may impart an upward bias to the size of government, with ambiguous effects for growth, though it makes a contribution to stability (PUB06_4, pp. 16-7).
>
> Women's greater caution has benefits: gender-balanced corporate boards improve firm performance, especially in high-tech manufacturing and knowledge-intensive services. Gender diversity on boards of banking supervision agencies is also associated with greater financial stability (PUB19_46, pp. 8-9).

In the above extracts, the strengthening and naturalisation of the gender binary is the common-sense starting point for understanding how to increase stability and strengthen growth in the economy. There is an invisible connection made between the micro practice of living gender and the macroeconomy. In the first extract, the IMF presupposes the existence of "women's preference for a stronger role for public insurance," a sweeping and unique assumption of a perspective that 'women' have regarding insurance. This preference is positioned as ambiguously connected to growth, but as complementary to stability: "it makes a contribution to stability." In the second

extract, the IMF similarly depends on the presupposition of "women's greater caution" and positions this as complementary with firm performance. Secondly, it positions gender diversity on boards of banking supervision agencies as complementary with greater financial stability. In these extracts, the IMF's production of knowledge on *economic* stability is also dependent on the stability and internal coherence of binary *gender*. Without the presupposition of binary gender, and the differences which mark men and women, the above two extracts would not make any sense. The dependence on this background knowledge on binary gender, masculinity and femininity underpins the IMF's discussion of economic stability.

Before I close this section considering gender and sex, I want to highlight that in the Fund's discourse, women are *always* predicated as heterosexual. Heterosexuality is the invisible fact that not only structures "an orientation toward others, it is also something that we are orientated around" (Ahmed 2006, pp. 90-1). The representation of women as mothers that I have discussed throughout this chapter depends on the presupposition of women's heterosexuality, representing a form of 'compulsory heterosexuality' that the Fund is implicated in. It takes heterosexuality as natural, rendering it compulsory since heterosexuality itself "is not prescribed by nature: the heterosexual couple is 'instituted' as the form of sociality through force" (Ahmed 2006, p. 84). As Foucault argues, monogamous heterosexuality enjoys the unique privilege of silence given its status as 'normal;' it is only deviant expressions of sexuality which are subjected to constant naming and categorisation (Foucault 1978). One of the only explicit mentions of sexuality is made in a publication written by former Prime Minister of Iceland, Katrín Jakobsdóttir:

> If there is anything that people living in the 21st century - the century of gay liberation and women's liberation, to name two - should know better than those living in the previous one, it is the benefits of liberating people from predesigned social norms and structures (PUB19_46, p. 13).

In this extract, the presupposition that "predesigned social norms" are inherently 'backward' is made through the normative claim that people ought to be "liberated" from them. No explanation is given for what constitutes the norms and structures that

people ought to be liberated from. This implies that norms themselves are problematic and oppressive. This phrasing can be understood as a form of ‘anti-normativity’ (Wiegman & Wilson 2015, p. 12), which falsely presumes that all norms are synonymous with “what is constricting or controlling or tyrannical.” However, as I have established in Chapter Three, it is impossible to escape norms. Therefore, to make a meaningful political point about resisting norms, one has to be specific about which norms they seek to contest. For this reason, I argue that the above does not advance a clear political agenda that is either pro-LGBTQ+ liberation or pro-women’s liberation, but rather uses this language in order to align the IMF with this rhetoric. This is also evident in the way that the word ‘liberation’ is used, which is vague and goes unexplained. Without naming specifically the norms which we ought to seek ‘liberation’ from, the word is empty. Further, the context in which the word is used, in the *Finance & Development* magazine on ‘Women and Growth,’ fundamentally contradicts the substance of this extract. Queer liberation, and many movements for women’s liberation, were (and continue to be) foundationally resistant to capitalism and its neoliberal iteration (see, for example: Chasin 2000; Federici 2004, 2020; Ingrebretsen 1999; Richardson 2005; Warner 1999). To further interrogate the ways that progress and development are represented in the Fund’s discourse, I now turn to a discussion of racialisation.

b. Racialisation

Processes of racialisation are inextricably bound up with the (re)production of the binary gender order in the Fund’s discourse. In this section, I pay particular attention to the micro-practices of representation that are implicitly or explicitly racialised through ideas of backwardness, progress, advancement, tradition and culture. Race, similarly to gender, is a categorisation imposed on bodies to give them order and to make sense of ‘difference.’[46] I find that racial categorisations also operate as a binary, moving away from explicit practices of racism to implicit forms of subordinating non-white women to white women. The Fund does this through the (re)production of the “advanced and developing” (PUB03_2, p. 16) binary throughout their written and visual publications.

[46] See Chapter Three for a more detailed conceptualisation of race.

In this binary, advancement operates as shorthand for the white woman, who is a rights-holder, a worker, and who is 'liberated' and 'empowered' from religion, culture and tradition. The meaning of 'women's rights,' 'empowerment,' and 'liberation' are importantly political, and are in line with the types of precarious policies that the Fund endorses. Capitalism, particularly in its neoliberal form, is indicative of "advancement" (PUB22_71, p. 16), since the workplace, rather than the home, is synonymous with empowerment. Women's disenfranchisement and oppression is positioned as the same as culture, tradition and religion, such as in the following extracts:

> [U]nequal treatment of women is a product of a culture of patriarchy and the consolidation of power in men, with religion serving as justification for conservative interpretations regarding gender roles (PUB22_71, p. 16).
>
> In some parts of the world, ignorance and minimizing of gender mainstreaming is deeply rooted in the culture and traditions (PUB03_2, p. 12).

In the above extracts, 'culture' and 'traditions' are positioned as corresponding with patriarchy and the power of men over women. Here, the universally oppressed woman is a monolith, who leads "an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender and being 'third world' (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, religious, domesticated, family-oriented, victimized, etc.)" (Mohanty 1988, p. 65). This treatment of culture and tradition as markers of permanent and monolithic victimhood does not account for the specific, contextual and local ways that culture and tradition intersect with gender for different women over time and space (Mohanty 1988). In the second extract, the IMF depends on presuppositional knowledge about which "parts of the world" are particularly laden with "ignoran[t]" "culture and traditions" by not naming the areas that they are referring to. This contributes to the creation of common sense and background knowledge about some, distant parts of the world as un-developable because of culture, religion and tradition, which are represented as always disempowering (Weber 2016a). This racialised device also depends on the implication that the centrality of economic participation in women's lives is indicative of empowerment. In other words, capitalism is empowering. Displacing and de-valuing religion, culture and tradition is a central discursive device used throughout these

publications in order to make this case. In the way that the Fund represents culture and tradition as 'Other,' the speaker and the reader are invited to share an ostensibly neutral, secular subject-position. By extension, it depends on "assumptions about Western women as secular, liberated and having control over their own lives" (Wilson 2011, p. 319), as well as being "educated [and] modern" (Mohanty 1988, p. 65). In addition to the strategies of racialisation discussed earlier in this chapter, the Fund also visualises colonial binaries of advancement and backwardness, such as in Figure 4.7. Figure 4.7 depicts a New York City road crossing with a large group of people using it to cross the road. The caption reads "this means when women make less, they're taxed less, and societies move forward" (VID20_1). In Figure 4.8, a woman of colour is depicted in a mid-shot walking through a city wearing a grey suit jacket. In this image, she is transformed into an agential, 'empowered' working woman in contrast to images discussed in the following chapter (Figures 5.1, 5.2, 5.3), which are negatively represented. She is emblematic of a broader pattern in the Fund's visual discourse, wherein both agential and passive women of colour are depicted, supporting the claim that women have the potential to lift themselves out of poverty and find 'empowerment' in work. This politics of exceptionalism operates as an obfuscation of the racialised logics of development and also serves to conceal or entrench the structures that produce poverty. As Sarah White (2006, p. 62) writes, "racism also works by 'marking' 'others' as hypervisible," and the presence of women of colour as agential, happy and positive in the visuals of other development institutions has been critiqued on this front, as well (Wilson 2011). I argue that the Fund's (re)production of the binary gender order is inextricably racialised, and that the Fund's discourse depends on marking bodies with signifiers of race, gender, sex and sexuality in order to construct a uniquely feminine, heterosexual and racialised economic subject.

Figure 4.7: VID20_1.

Figure 4.8: VID20_1.

V. Conclusion

This chapter has explored the parameters that have been set in IMF discourse around the feminist aims of the institution. Specifically, I have analysed the IMF's discourses on 'gender mainstreaming,' 'gender diversity,' '(in)equality and gender gaps.' I find that the IMF's approach to gender mainstreaming does not represent a transformation of the IMF's practices and policies, but rather integrates gender where it contributes to the IMF's central focus: to promote economic stability and

growth. In doing so, the IMF's discourse articulates a limited and conservative set of feminist goals. The limits of the IMF's feminism is evident in the discourses on gender diversity, (in)equality and gender gaps. Throughout this chapter, I have identified that these discourses depend on presuppositional knowledge about women as a monolith, the meaning of 'empowerment,' and the binary of work and non-work.

This chapter has also analysed the way that IMF discourse conceptualises gender and sex difference, as well as how processes of racialisation occur through logics of culture, tradition and development. By identifying the ways that the IMF theorises and mobilises gender differences in its knowledge production on the economy, I point to the ways that economic knowledge is always gendered and therefore depends on the stability of the binary gender order. I develop this analysis in the following chapter, which focuses on the hyper-visible subject of the 'Working Woman' produced within the limited parameters that I have established in this chapter.

Chapter Five: The Working Woman

In this chapter, I analyse the hyper-visible figure of the Working Woman in the Fund's discourse. The Working Woman represents the neoliberal feminist promise of female inclusion and participation in the economic system as it is. She adopts the masculinist and ethnocentric traits of the ostensibly universal economic man, *homo economicus*, but in doing so brings a particular feminine and maternal essence that is framed as innate to, and representative of, a universal woman and mother. The Working Woman has multiple key characteristics. The Working Woman is a mother, but she wishes to transcend and extend herself beyond motherhood by participating in both the productive and reproductive economy. In order to do so, she must be supported by a partner who is willing to support the work undertaken in the reproductive realm, which is explored in Chapter Six on the Heterosexual Nuclear Family. The Working Woman is predicated as an untapped talent or potential for the economy, which forms the basis of the dominant 'women as smart economics' argument within IMF publications on gender and women. The Working Mother's participation in the productive labour force is framed as not only good for her, but also good for her country and the economy. Central to this discourse is the presupposition of a commitment to neoliberal capitalism in the Fund's economic policy prescriptions.

To unpack the features of the Working Woman, this chapter is structured as follows. The first section examines the figure of the *femina economica*. In the second section, I explore the assumptions that the Fund makes about women as a monolith, and what function this performs in its gender discourse more broadly. I explore the ways that the Fund sweepingly classifies women as more risk-averse than men, which frames women's interventions as a potential antidote to the instability and crises built into the neoliberal economic policies the Fund endorses. In the aspirational Working Woman, the Fund (re)presents a particular type of feminine and heterosexual expression of selfhood which is compatible with the demands of increasingly precarious economic conditions, brought on by its conditions of austerity. Austerity, in this sense, demands a type of woman who both works in the reproductive and the productive realm: she is both a mother and a worker. The Fund presumes, naturalises and stabilises a particular

vision of personhood which is masculinist, utility-maximising, able-bodied, and heterosexual.

I. The *femina economica*

In this section, I expand on earlier works on the *femina economica* and other iterations of the feminised economic agent (see: Beneria 1999; Coburn 2019; Elias 2013; Griffin 2007a) by delineating the features of the Working Woman in the Fund's discourse. The *femina economica* is an established figure in the Fund's discourses, identified in Coburn's (2019) work. Coburn (2019, p. 796) describes the *femina economica*, in the context of the Fund, as a:

> [S]hape-shifting figure who encompasses the very poor and the very elite, is simultaneously self-seeking in the labor force but altruistic at home and is imbued with virtues, especially prudence, at once economic and moral.

Elsewhere, a similar feminised economic agent figure has also been termed the 'Davos woman' (Elias 2013; see full discussion of this literature in Chapter Two), and the rational economic woman (Rankin 2001). The 'Davos woman,' was coined in a New York Times article, and was a play on the concept of the 'Davos man.' This figure emerges from the early feminist critique of the rational economic man, the *homo economicus* (Griffin 2006), which argued that foundational economic theories depended on a universalist conception of the human, who ultimately does not exist. It does not exist because it is modelled according to a particular type of person, namely a white, heterosexual, able-bodied, cisgendered man. This early critique challenged the very foundation of many economic theories (see also: Beneria 1995; Elson & Cagatay 2000) which presumed the universality of personhood. The myth of universalism remains central to the economic discourses the Fund produces on women and gender. The Fund avoids reckoning with the falseness of its monolithic characterisation of the economic agent by instead claiming that *women can also be the homo economicus.* This presumption forms the basis of the figure of the *femina economica* and the subject-position of the Working Woman more broadly.

In the Fund's discourses on women, men remain the benchmark for good behaviour in the economy. That is, the figure of the *homo economicus* remains central. The *homo economicus* or the 'Davos man' refers to an abstract yet all-encompassing universal figure of personhood, which is masculinist and ethnocentric. The *homo economicus* appears to exist in a vacuum, "both disembodied and socially disembedded" (Roberts 2015, p. 112). This figure is utility-maximising, which obscures and obfuscates human potential for feelings, emotions and objectives which do not have economic and utility-maximisation aims (Roberts 2015, p. 112). In the Fund's discourse, there is recognition that the myth of the *homo economicus* or rational man is a partial and insufficient theorisation of human behaviour:

> Many lived in a theoretical world populated by a mythical figure known as homo economicus, or rational man, whose only attribute was a drive to maximize his well-being. Differences among people, or groups, were irrelevant. Variety was irrelevant. Only averages matter (PUB19_46, p. 31).

In the above extract, the Fund resists the neoclassical positioning of women as extra-economic (or potential economic) agents, and seeks to transform the subject of the economic agent, positioning women as complementary to the inclinations of the economic man. To do this, the Fund echoes early feminist critiques of the *homo economicus*, as a concept which flattened the diversity of bodies who participate in formal economic activity, and which was itself an abstraction from the embodied experience of economic activity. Similar representations also appear in the 'IMF Strategy Toward Mainstreaming Gender' wherein the Fund's vision of gender mainstreaming is said to:

> [R]ecognize the fundamental diversity of lived human experience. It acknowledges the need to better understand how the different circumstances of women and men can lead to sub-optimal macroeconomic outcomes (PUB22_67, p. 13).

In the above two extracts, the Fund positions itself as complementary to and supportive of difference. However, in the extract directly above, this vision of diversity is flattened by positioning it within the context of "macroeconomic outcomes." This extract depends on the presuppositional normative position that "sub-optimal macroeconomic

outcomes" need to be avoided. The above two extracts reveal that the Fund has a burgeoning interest in difference and diversity, however this interest is limited by the Fund's mandate and core functions, which must be expressly 'macro-critical.'

In the Fund's written and visual discourse, the *femina economica* is an explicitly racialised subject-position. The Fund writes that gender 'development' is a feature of 'modern' economies, and invokes the racialised pre/modern binary (Lugones 2007, p. 192; Rattansi 2020, p. 65; Said 2003) in the following extract:

> We regard societies where social opportunities and rewards are determined primarily by individual achievements as 'modern' and societies where they are determined by an ascribed status as 'pre-modern' (PUB19_46, p. 28).

Elsewhere, the Fund extends this binary of the world as under/developed, pre/modern, and backwards/progressive by using racially neutral predicates that invoke similar meanings. For instance, the Fund takes issue with the ways that "cultural characteristics" (PUB06_6, p. 21), "religious traditions" (PUB16_23, p, 8) and "social norms" (PUB17_33, p. 30) are obstacles to gender equality and development (associated with women's labour force participation). As I established in Chapter Three, the explicitly racial categorisation of people(s) as biologically inferior/superior is often now re-interpreted and re-framed through racially 'neutral' references to culture, religion, modernity or development. This creates a novel way of (re)producing defunct hierarchies of race or culture. As discussed in Chapter Four, the Fund's institutional remit is limited to technical, macroeconomic concerns. This makes the mention of 'culture' stand out in its written discourse. The Fund writes that "structural reforms are particularly difficult to implement as the institutions they target are often the result of long-standing social norms and cultural traditions" (PUB21_62, p. 24), implying that social norms and cultural traditions are obstacles to economic restructuring and the economic benefits of gender equality. This statement depends on the presuppositional assumption that structural reforms are to be prioritised *vis-à-vis* the institutions they threaten. The extract positions social norms and cultural traditions as oppositional to structural reforms. The former are problematised and described as 'barriers' to the development of the Fund's own structural reforms, which are positioned as more

modern (PUB19_46, p. 28). In the same paper, the Fund invokes the need for a "cultural revolution" in order to address the 'gender gap' established earlier in Chapter Four. The paper asks:

> What tools are employed to address the gender gap in its many dimensions? In large part, the solution cannot abstract from a cultural revolution that will enfranchise women from their traditional roles as mothers or caregivers and will at the same time extol these qualities in men (PUB21_62, p. 18).

In this publication, the Fund positions itself in line with a "cultural revolution" that will "enfranchise" women. These words positively position the IMF as progressive, revolutionary, and empowering. In contrast, social roles such as being a mother and caregiver are described negatively through the predicate "traditional," which has connotations of oppression. This positions the IMF and the "traditional roles" of mothering and caregiving as oppositional. Simultaneously, the extract positions caregiving qualities in men as a characteristic of the "cultural revolution" that they endorse. This is a feature of the Fund's discourse that is discussed in more detail in the following chapter. The Fund's implication in the transformation of social and cultural norms in the above extract contradicts the stern boundaries they have elsewhere placed around their feminism. For instance, the term "revolution" (PUB21_62, p. 18) has starkly different connotations to the "gradual, measured implementation timeline" (PUB22_67, p. 3) that the Fund endorsed for its own gender mainstreaming strategy. Further, the IMF's earlier positioning of itself as a "benchmark and a norm setter" (PUB23_77, p. 3) is complementary with the above encouragement of a wholesale "cultural revolution" (PUB21_62, p. 18), however, the Fund details no practical commitment to support this global, cultural transformation. For this reason, I argue that the moralistic stance that the Fund takes here is an empty commitment that clashes with its more dominant and powerful "technocratic, instrumental economistic logics" (Coburn 2019, p. 770), as well as its commitment to its core mandate.

In the IMF's written discourse on 'pre-modern' societies, cultures, religions and norms, the Fund depends on presuppositional knowledge about who belongs to these categories. The Fund does not often explicitly name the regions, countries, religions or

cultures that it takes issue with, referring to them at one point as "some parts of the world" (PUB03_2, p. 12); "many countries" (PUB22_71, p. 2); or "across the globe" (PUB20_56, p. 26). In doing so, the writer depends on the presumption that they share with the reader common knowledge about these "parts of the world" and "countries" which are problematic. In the rare cases they do specify regions, they cut across clearly racialised (as well as cultural and ethnic) lines:

> [W]e find that the higher the share of Muslims and Hinduists, the lower the level of gender development and the higher the level of gender inequality. In addition, the shares of Catholics and Protestants are positively associated with gender development and gender inequality (PUB18_37, p. 31).
>
> And while in some countries (Iran, Morocco), the authorities found policy recommendations difficult to implement due to differences in cultural and religious norms (PUB18_40, p. 13).

In the above extracts, the Fund represents countries like Iran and Morocco, or countries with higher shares of Muslims and Hindus, as problematic, or difficult to (gender) develop. It does this by positioning Muslims and Hindus as oppositional to gender development, and by positioning Catholics and Protestants as complementary to gender development. The association between "cultural and religious norms" and gender inequality has been observed and critiqued in many development contexts, as it reproduces ideas about the superiority (and neutrality) of Western capitalism and the inferiority of other forms of economic governance (Mohanty 2011; Wilson 2011). Further, in the second extract, the IMF establishes an expert position, when describing how "the *authorities*" found policy recommendations hard to implement. From this position of expertise, the Fund (re)produces differences between 'us' (the authorities) and 'them' (some countries). By positioning cultural and religious norms in Iran and Morocco as barriers to policy implementation, the IMF is also hierarchically ordering these cultures according to which are most compatible with the IMF's mandate of economic stability and growth.

This demarcation of superior and inferior ways of conducting labour and (re)production is also achieved visually. In the below visuals (Figures 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3), the Fund

depicts non-white women alongside captions with negative predicates. Their countries are described as "low-income," the women are described as "poor" and as performing "low-skill jobs" (VID20_1). In these visuals, the women are depicted in mid or long shots and are gazing away from the camera while they carry out a variety of different tasks. The distance created by these shots is reflective of the connotations of 'racial otherness' wherein "racial others become associated with the 'other side of the world.' They come to *embody distance*" (Ahmed 2006, p. 121). The woman in Figure 5.1 is engaged in commerce, the women in Figure 5.2 are carrying water, and the woman in Figure 5.3 cooks food. In all these visuals, these women are simultaneously engaged in (re)production yet are represented as 'under-developed.' This is in contrast to the visuals discussed earlier in the preceding chapter, such as Figure 4.5. In Figure 4.5, the woman gazes directly into the camera within an office setting and is positively represented with a caption which reads "so do progressive social norms." In contrast to the 'racial others,' whiteness is rendered 'proximate' in the visual discourse, as "the 'starting point' for orientation" (Ahmed 2006, p. 121). In the Fund's discourse, the aspirational Working Woman wishes to transcend cultural and social norms that tie her to the reproductive domain. This is exemplified in the following extract, where these norms are negatively represented as "burdens" in need of easing and as barriers to participation in "empowering activities:"

> However, these projects, if well targeted, can have disproportionate benefits for women, because they can ease the burdens that have traditionally reduced women's ability to participate in more empowering activities (PUB07_7, p. 58).

The predicate "disproportionate" to describe the benefits for women depends on the presupposition that the women being referred to are particularly disempowered. This is further clarified through the predicate "empowering" appearing later to describe activities that are likely related to labour force participation (see earlier discussion in this chapter). As Mohanty (2011, p. 65) argues, development discourse can often characterise the "Third World" as involved in "the lesser production of 'raw materials'" as opposed to the "First World" who are involved in "the 'real' productive activity." Similarly, scholars have highlighted how development institutions and corporations

(re)produce an aspirational and empowered young girl, who seeks to transcend her poverty through her own hard work (Calkin 2015c; Chant 2016a, b; Hickel 2014). These tropes are repeated in the Fund's written and visual discourse, through the representation of the *femina economica* who desires to 'empower' herself through labour force participation.

Figure 5.1: VID20_1.

Figure 5.2: VID20_1.

Figure 5.3: VID20_1.

The *femina economica* is also a mother. In the Fund's discourse, the balance between utility-maximising economic engagement and the mother's obligations to the heterosexual nuclear family (see: Figure 5.5) is a careful one. As noted above, the *femina economica* ought to be 'liberated' from traditional caring roles which bound her exclusively to the reproductive realm. It is presupposed that women and mothers *want* to leave the home in order to enter the labour force in Figure 5.4, where the caption reads "helping new mothers become the working mothers they want to be" (VID20_1). In the image, two women are looking at a laptop screen together in an office space. Their children are absent from the frame, and one of the women smiles while the other points to the screen. Through these components of the visual, the IMF presupposes the desires of the women depicted. This presupposition functions through the creation of a shared and common sense understanding that women "want to be" "working mothers" – and that work takes place at a computer. This reproduces the fundamental presumption of the *homo economicus*, which is the existence of "an economic rationality inherent in all persons" (Williams 1999, p. 79). Through this visual discourse, the IMF therefore presupposes an understanding of market-based arrangements of work. The figure of the *femina economica* is centrally positioned in this ideological work, transforming the category of 'women' into one that can "shape-shift" (Coburn 2019, p. 780) to fit the

"traits of economic rationality" in a way which transcends or "theoretically strips away concepts such as culture, class, or gender" (Williams 1999, p. 82). Since women are framed as universally interested in working, a trait that can be said to reflect the universalist claims of the *homo economicus*' imperative to "maximise their material well-being or pursue their preferences," the "market economy is thought to be the most efficient arrangement" (Williams 1999, pp. 82-3). Because of the repetition or hyper-visibility of this sentiment in the visual discourse, this working figure gains aspirational status.

Figure 5.4: VID20_1.

Figure 5.5: VID20_1.

In conclusion, the depiction of the *femina economica* or the Working Woman as a mother is important, because it presupposes the existence of 'feminine traits' including a propensity for caring, nurturing and altruism (particularly when it concerns the family or home). Although these traits have historically been mobilised to justify women's exclusion from the formal economy, the Fund positions them as compatible with the demands of economic efficiency, growth and productivity. The *femina economica* or Working Woman is a subject whose skills can be harnessed in order to support economistic imperatives for growth, which is the topic of the next section.

II. Women as smart economics

The figure of the Working Woman is mobilised in the Fund's argument that 'women are smart economics.' In this section, I analyse the ways that this discourse reflects the Fund's institutional remit, and interrogate how this argument functions within the Fund's discourse. I argue that the function of women as 'smart economics' serves to stabilise and (re)produce femininity in line with economic virtues of productivity, flexibilisation and 'work' rather than to open up *possibilities* for women. I find that the Fund emphasises gendered stereotypes about feminine traits such as motherhood, care and nurture, and positions them as complementary qualities with the betterment of the

economy, nation, and ultimately the world. This has the effect of reinforcing and naturalising the existence of the Fund, as well as neoliberal economics, by transforming femininity into a neoliberal virtue that sustains and serves the economy.

The Fund's 'smart economics' discourse mirrors the dominant development discourse that has been identified in GEG. Roberts and Soederberg (2012) identified the concept of 'women as smart economics' in their analysis of the 2012 World Development Report by the World Bank. They argued that this framing of gender-related goals reflects the increasingly prominent role of business in development. The 'women as smart economics' discourse is one that normalises employment informality and insecurity, which emerges as a result of the exploitation and domination inherent in neoliberalism (Roberts & Soederberg 2012, p. 949). It also reflects the interests of corporations, which serve to transform women into economic subjects, or "consumers and entrepreneurs" (Roberts & Soederberg 2012, p. 949). Sylvia Chant and Caroline Sweetman (2012, p. 517) also write on this concept in the context of UNICEF, arguing that it is a "direct descendant of the efficiency approach to women in development (WID)."[47] Elisabeth Prügl and Jacqui True (2014) have also interrogated the World Bank's 'smart economics' discourse, and draw attention to the ways that public-private partnerships are making corporations act like states, and states like corporations. To make this case, they focus on Nike's 'girl effect' campaign,[48] pointing out that corporations have begun to emphasise social issues and that states are taking on corporate features by "branding themselves, using business-speak, downsizing and

[47] Chant & Sweetman (2012) are referring here to feminist debates in development studies. 'Women in development' (WID) refers to a framework for feminist development that emerged in the 1970s. It was the product of the efforts of liberal feminists, who advocated for the inclusion of women in development agendas so as to promote efficiency and gains for women; a "win-win" (Calkin 2015a, p. 297). However, this approach was criticised for its treatment of women as a monolithic category (Hirshman 1995). The Women and Development (WAD) approach developed as a more critical alternative to the WID approach, however, was still identified as lacking a structural analysis (Rathgeber 1990, p. 493). Socialist and Third World feminists promoted a framework known as 'gender and development' (GAD). These feminists aimed to levy a structural critique of capitalist development, rather than merely promoting inclusion (Sen & Grown 2013). GAD feminists also sought to shift the focus from 'women' in development to gender as a category and power relation (Calkin 2015a, p. 297).

[48] 'The Girl Effect' is a corporate philanthropic brand as part of the Nike Foundation (Moeller 2013). This campaign has been widely studied by feminist (see: Calkin 2015c; Chant & Sweetman 2012; Hickel 2014; Moeller 2013; Prügl & True 2014; Switzer 2013; Wilson 2011). The campaign involved branding and promotional material such as online videos (Switzer 2013). It also involves educational workshops on skills compatible with entrepreneurship and administrative work (as Moeller 2013 studies from 2008-2011).

privatizing" (Prügl & True 2014, p. 1138). These scholars all advance a similar critique of the transformation of gender equality into a matter of economic growth. Chant and Sweetman (2012, pp. 523-4) argue that the concept "seeks to use women and girls to fix the world," and that such an approach "represents, at best, pragmatism in a time of economic restructuring and austerity." Indeed, Rai et al. (2014, p. 88) further argue that, during periods of austerity and economic crises, "the restructuring of states and markets is leading to a situation where the subsidy provided by [social reproduction] is being increasingly relied upon to fill gaps in the state provision of welfare." This is a responsibility that women bear, and which they argue amounts to 'depletion through social reproduction' (Rai et al. 2014; Rai 2024). This literature raises the question of whether 'women as smart economics' is being deployed to truly realise gender equality, or whether it is a convenient branding device for economic institutions which simultaneously allows them to "facilitate development 'on the cheap'" (Chant & Sweetman 2012, p. 521). This literature only briefly engages with the IMF, which is a contribution I wish to make here.

As I discussed above in the section on the *femina economica*, the Fund's discourse reveals an imperative to transform formerly extra-economic agents into economic agents. This manifests in discourses of 'closing the gender gap' in labour force participation rates and by advocating for women's metamorphosis into the rational, masculinist, utility-maximising *femina economica.* The 'women as smart economics' discourse is another means through which these ideals are reproduced. This representation occurs as early as 2006, when it is written that: "gender budgeting is just good budgeting" (PUB06_5, p. 3). The predicate 'good' used here to describe gender budgeting continues to appear in relation to economic measures of success across time. In 2015, the Fund positioned gender equality as complementary with the macroeconomy: "[Gender equality] is not just desirable from a social equity perspective, but would have beneficial effects for the macroeconomy" (PUB15_9, p. 4). In this statement, the IMF presupposes an understanding of gender equality as an issue of social equity through the words "not just." This is followed by a re-positioning of gender equality as *both* social *and* economic. The use of the word "just" alongside "social equity" suggests that issues with a focus on only social equity are limited. The

word "but" preceding a description of the "beneficial effects for the macroeconomy" suggests that bringing benefits to the macroeconomy makes gender equality a more worthwhile cause than if it were "just" an issue of social equity. The phrase from 2006, as well as the general sentiment of gender as good for the economy, increases notably in the IMF's publications from 2016 onwards. Some examples include the below extracts:

> The pervasive gender-based differences in economic outcomes make gender inequality, not only a matter of human rights, but also an economic phenomenon (PUB22_68, p. 3).
>
> Gender equality and the empowerment of women are, thus, not merely issues of human rights, but also economic necessities, and central to the development agenda (IMF and WB 2007; IMF 2017) (PUB20_54, p. 3).
>
> In recent years we have increased our emphasis on women's empowerment precisely because, beyond the important ethical considerations, it also represents a missed opportunity in the pursuit of macroeconomic stability and inclusive growth - where the IMF's expertise lies (PUB19_46, p. 5).

In these three extracts, the IMF reiterates that gender equality and the empowerment of women are human rights issues, but also, significantly, economic phenomena. In the second extract, the use of the word "merely" precedes "issues of human rights." This has a diminishing effect on the importance of issues of human rights and contributes to the production of presuppositional knowledge concerning the values of the IMF. This is particularly cemented when the publication continues with the phrasing "economic necessities." In contrast to the word "merely" used in relation to human rights, the words "necessities" and "central" function to suggest a hierarchical importance of economic and development issues over human rights. The phrasing the IMF uses presupposes this hierarchy: an issue cannot be "merely" human rights, it must also be an "economic necessity" and "central to the development agenda." The third extract makes this hierarchy explicit. The IMF positions itself as distinct from issues which have "important ethical considerations" through the use of the word "beyond." The word "beyond" here suggests that the IMF's interest in gender is more advanced than ones which just focus on questions of ethics. To go "beyond" something implies that you have transcended it, moved past it, or already tackled it. Instead, the IMF positions itself

and its expertise as complementary with the "pursuit of macroeconomic stability and inclusive growth." This framing depends on the creation of presuppositional knowledge about what criteria the IMF uses to establish whether an issue is a valuable, worthwhile or beneficial commitment: growth and stability. Economic growth and stability are emphasised throughout the IMF's discourse on women's equality:

> [W]omen's full and effective participation in the workforce and decent work for all are critical to inclusive and sustainable economic growth (PUB20_54, p. 3).
>
> Gender equality in its various facets is associated with higher growth; thus, lower gender gaps in labor force participation also raise growth (PUB20_56, p. 6).
>
> In summary, gender equality is a critical cog in the engine of inclusive, resilient, and sustainable economic growth (PUB22_68, p. 4).

In the above extracts, the IMF attempts to create a relationship between gender equality and economic growth. In the first and third extracts, the IMF creates a relationship between women's participation in the workforce and economic growth through the word "critical." Whereas in the second extract, this relationship is established through the word "associated," and the words "also raise." The positioning of gender equality as complementary with or "critical" to economic growth is important here, because it is through this connection that the IMF establishes its authority over issues of gender. It depends on the presupposition of its expertise and authority in economic growth to extend this to gender equality. It makes this explicit where 'gender equality' and women's full participation in the workforce are described as a "cog" in the broader "engine" (PUB22_68, p. 4) of economic growth. In other words, it is not an end in itself, but a means to a more important goal. In the below extracts, reference is made to gender and economic (and bank) (in)stability, by stressing their complementary relationship:

> Growth and stability are necessary to give women the opportunities they need. And women's participation in the labor market is also a part of the growth and stability equation (PUB13_8, p. 23).

> [T]he presence of women as well as a higher share of women on bank boards is associated with greater bank stability (PUB18_41, p. 7).

> Helping women fully participate in the economy is not only growth promoting, but it also diversifies the economies, reduces income inequality, mitigates demographic shifts, and contributes to financial sector stability (PUB20_54, p. 3).

Growth and stability are positioned as the most important outcome of policies concerning women in the above. In the first extract, this is achieved through the positioning of women's participation in the labour market as one *part* of "the growth and stability equation." This is also done through the opening sentence of the first extract, which positions growth and stability as a precursor to women's opportunities. Further, through the use of the word "need," in the first extract, the IMF presupposes the opportunities that women require in order to thrive and participate. This phrasing also depends on the presupposition that the reader accepts and understands the IMF's authority on growth and stability concerns. In the second extract, the IMF presupposes the desirability of "greater bank stability," and assumes that the reader knows what characterises bank stability. By positioning the presence of women on bank boards as complementary with greater bank stability, this extract naturalises a politics which prioritises the stability of banks over achieving gender equality as a means within itself. This sentiment is reiterated in the third extract, where the IMF makes a case for women's participation in the economy by stressing its benefit to the economy. In this publication, the benefits are enumerated but not elaborated on. By refusing elaboration, the IMF presupposes the desirability of mitigating "demographic shifts" and contributing to "financial sector stability." By orienting gender equality around technical language concerning stability and growth, the IMF's discourse becomes increasingly difficult to critique. As Rosalind Eyben and Rebecca Napier-Moore (2009, p. 293) write, "the word 'smart,' especially when attached to economics, is a conversation stopper" since "who wants to be labelled 'stupid' for not supporting it?" In this way, it becomes difficult to argue against growth and stability, if they are framed as "*necessary* to give women the opportunities they *need"* (PUB13_8, p. 23, emphasis added), or as "critical" to "inclusive" and "sustainable" (PUB20_54, p. 3; PUB22_68, p. 4) growth. These words have urgency. Growth and stability, through the IMF's 'women

as smart economics' discourses, are represented as "necessities," "not merely issues of human rights" (PUB20_54, p. 3). To argue that 'women are smart economics,' this discourse depends on a presumed or common-sense knowledge about the qualities of women as a monolith. I turn to this discussion now.

III. The stabilising promise of women

In this section, I develop the above 'women as smart economics' discourse by identifying that it depends on the presupposition of 'common-sense' assumptions that women possess a variety of either innate or socialised features. Specifically, the Fund represents women as risk-averse and as beacons of stability for an otherwise tumultuous and crisis-prone global economic system. This presumed knowledge depends on the representation of women as mothers who are caring, nurturing and family-oriented. However, it also depends on the presumption that they are utility-maximising. By representing the inclusion of women (and girls) as the solution to a problematic economic system, the Fund naturalises the existence of neoliberal capitalism and instead promotes a gender-friendly capitalism.

The IMF's gender discourse implies that women's natural propensities for care, nurture and stability within the home are assets that women can bring to the workplace. Women have been associated with "emotions" and "nature" "ruled by appetite, and less able to transcend the body through thought, will and judgement" (Ahmed 2014, p. 3). The Fund reproduces this presupposition. In the hierarchy between emotion and reason, the below discourses imply that these "lower" (Ahmed 2014, p. 3) emotions are compatible with the rational, utility-maximising realm of the economy. This may manifest in altruistic reasons for participating, and succeeding, in the economy. For instance, in a YouTube video called 'Youth Rising - India,' the Fund spotlights a young female entrepreneur in Mumbai, India. The woman, Dhara Shah, is said to want the number of female-led businesses to increase: "Women lead only 14% of India's businesses. Dhara wants that share to increase. Not just for her generation - but her daughter's too" (VID20_2). In this extract, Shah aims for success in the economy (through entrepreneurship or leading a business) not for selfish, personal or egotistical purposes, but rather for the quality of life of her daughter. In Figure 5.6, Shah and her daughter are pictured running through

the street after the work day. Her daughter sits on a small bike, and Shah pushes her down the street while carrying three bags, a jacket and a phone. In this visual, Shah appears to be overloaded with belongings and this could be interpreted as more broadly reflecting the amount of responsibilities she carries as a mother (carrying her daughter's bag) and a worker (carrying the other two bags, jacket and phone).

Figure 5.6: VID20_2.

In the YouTube playlist 'Gender and the IMF,' the Fund has several videos that spotlight young women who are working, studying or entrepreneurs. The mother/daughter dynamic appears in almost all these videos. In the description for a video titled 'Youth Voice: Estefani Adriano of Brazil on her Future,' it reads:

> A large, young population can be a country's most valuable asset, opening the door to higher incomes and a reduction in poverty (VID20_4).

In the video, the viewer is introduced to 24 year old Adriano, a student and part-time employee as a training area designer. The video depicts her working at her desk as well as walking to college early in the morning through Brazil. She is interviewed by the Fund with her desk in the background as she speaks about her profession. The music in the background starts inquisitively and playfully and then progresses into sweeping sounds which communicate success and inspiration. Adriano describes feeling powerful in her job and studies: "I feel very powerful because I can create many things"

(VID20_4). Adriano connects her position in her studies and employment to the support of her mother (Figure 5.7):

> There's a big difference between my life and my mother's life when she was my age… because I have the support from my mother and my family to go to school and that makes all the difference (VID20_4).

Figure 5.7: VID20_4.

In the above, Adriano reiterates the liberal, first-wave feminist emphasis on women's right to access education (see: Wollstonecraft 2014 [1792]). Adriano also highlights the significance of the mother/daughter relationship for women's success in the formal economy. This extract, with the visibility of the (extra-economic) mother, may firstly indicate personal (rather than rational, utility-maximising) reasons for studying and entering the workforce. For instance, Adriano may wish to give back to her mother, who raised her and whose work enables her to move outside of reproductive work. It also alludes to the significance of women's reproductive work. In investing in her child, Adriano's mother has successfully cultivated human capital (see: Chapter Seven) which is valuable for the economy. The video on Adriano concludes with her reflecting on her future, she says:

> I see myself being more practical, finishing college and working actively in the field that I graduated in. In the future, I think about taking my art to the

> world, travelling, and meeting different and diverse people, to enrich myself, to enrich the place where I was born, to enrich other girls like me so they can have the same opportunities as me or even better opportunities (VID20_4).

In the above, the predicate "practical" is used to describe how Adriano envisions herself in the future. Specifically, she describes herself as "being *more* practical" (my emphasis). In the context of this video, the word "practical" is positioned as complementary to finishing college and working actively in her field. Although the comparison is not directly made, Adriano could also be implying that she imagines herself as being "more practical" than her mother, who she previously positioned as different to herself (see: Figure 5.7). She also discusses "enrich[ing]" herself and her community. Adriano specifically imagines enriching Brazil, which is the place "where [she] was born." This statement also echoes the first-wave feminist case for women's education, which explicitly made reference to the creation of virtuous, moral and patriotic citizens (Wollstonecraft 2014 [1792], p. 22). Furthermore, it is compatible with the IMF's 'women as smart economics' argument, established in this chapter.

Similarly, in a video titled 'Youth Voice: Rebka Feleke of Ethiopia on her Future,' we are introduced to Rebka Feleke, who is studying a Construction Technology and Management degree. Feleke is depicted walking through a male-dominated construction site in the Figure below while she discusses her degree and plans for work.

Figure 5.8: VID20_6.

Similar to Adriano, Feleke is shown studying in her home. She also reflects on the differences in her circumstances to her mother's and comments on the ways that her mother has supported her independence and access to "more privileged things" (VID20_6). She also then comments on this generational difference by speaking on the changing role of women in Ethiopia. She says:

> The role of woman [sic] is changing in this country of course. There is a change. Back then, the women were, like, just serving food and being housewives. But now, there's a lot of women on the whole fields. On construction, on politics and so on - everything (VID20_6).

Feleke and Adriano distance themselves from the traditional positioning of women as housewives. In the above extract, Feleke devalues reproductive work through the use of the word "just" to describe the role of women within the home. In doing this, she positions women's work "on construction, on politics" hierarchically above "just serving food and being housewives." While acknowledging the reproductive work that enables their access into the productive realm, these two young women embody a new type of 'empowered' femininity which is realised through labour force participation. When discussing her future plans, Feleke prioritises her mother and herself when she says that she never thinks about marriage, but rather prioritises finishing her degree,

getting her Masters qualification, and supporting her mother (VID20_6). These three videos reveal the significance of family connections and support for women's work. They are also united in their emphasis on the promise of women and girls from the 'Third World' for economic development.

The figure of the 'Third World girl' is established in the literature. She is both a racialised and gendered figure who represents a site of potential for the economy (Moeller 2013). She is simultaneously constructed as a victim of her circumstances, in need of saving, as well as the key for ending poverty. In taking ownership for her own circumstances through studying and work, she is represented as the solution to her own problems of poverty: an individual solution for structural conditions that the IMF helps produce. This has been referred to as 'Third World potential' which is "the imagined potential of particular adolescents to either end or reproduce poverty" (Moeller 2013, p. 614). This individualised responsibility to transcend the circumstances of their mothers (as manifest in the above two examples) places the burden on young girls and women as "disproportionately responsible for ending poverty for themselves, their families, communities, nations and even the world" (Moeller 2013, p. 614). A particularly illustrative and explicit example of this logic in the Fund's visual discourse is its video entitled 'Youth Rising: Uganda,' which spotlights Faith Aweko, a 26 year old Ugandan woman. The video plays generic music, with no voice over, as it presents several long shots of the landscape of Kampala, depicting houses, a train track, and mounds of plastic waste. Before introducing us to Aweko, the screen goes black, with white text reading that for Aweko, Kampala's "struggle" with "tons of plastic waste" is "an opportunity" (VID20_3). In this video, Aweko's entrepreneurship is represented as an all-encompassing solution, which "helps women, the environment, and the economy all at once" (VID20_3). She is depicted as exceptional, in her creativity to "make… stylish handbags and backpacks from materials that others throw away" and in employing locals in a context where young people (defined as under 30s in this video) "are jobless" (VID20_3). This video presents an individualised and feminised solution (handbags) to poverty, rather than a structural transformation (which might involve reducing plastic waste). In the closing shot of the video, Aweko is posing outside of a red house, with a palatable political message painted on the exterior wall reading: "Reform [Africa]"

(VID20_3, Figure 5.9). Here, the IMF's discourse presupposes the idea that the 'Third World girl' could be the solution to global poverty.

Figure 5.9: VID20_3.

The 'Third World girl' is a figure which has emerged above in the Fund's discourse, and has also emerged in corporate campaigns, such as Nike's 'Girl Effect' campaign. In both this campaign and the Fund's discourse identified above, girls are framed as 'potential' (Switzer 2013, p. 347). However, success requires girls to relinquish the 'traditional cultural norms' (as I identified earlier) of early motherhood and marriage. As Feleke and Adriano show, they must focus on their career and studies rather than the traditionally feminine responsibilities of cooking, cleaning and reproduction. In Nike's 'Girl Effect' campaign, these options are presented in oppositional and mutually exclusive terms with one being a "path of choice, autonomy, productivity, and promise" and the other as a "path of tradition, confinement, reproductivity, and peril" (Switzer 2013, p. 347; see also: Wilson 2011, p. 317). This binary is similarly invoked in the Fund's representation of the mother/daughter subjects. The mother occupies a subjectivity marked by sacrifice and lost potential (in the Youth Voice videos), whereas the daughter is constituted as a beacon of hope and potential.

I have thus far addressed the ways that the Fund frames women and girls as a site of potential. Now, I turn to examine the Fund's feminism, showing how it depends on a

belief that women are fundamentally risk-averse. As discussed above, the IMF presupposes that women have nurturing, altruistic and caring features. These features, according to the Fund, have consequences for the ways that women engage in economic behaviours. For instance, the Fund writes that:

> Women tend to have a higher propensity to save and invest in productive ways. They also show greater caution in their savings and investment behaviour (PUB06_4, p. 5).
>
> For instance, working women likely invest more in education, food, and health of their children, which spurs the accumulation of human capital further in the longer term (e.g. Schultz 2002, World Bank 2012) (PUB22_68, p. 4).[49]
>
> Some authors rely on the biological and reproductive role of women to explain the peaceful attitudes of women. This leads to an inclination to give life, and not to take it (Demeritt et al., 2014; Smith 2001). With this natural preference for peace, women would prefer to prevent societal problems from escalating to conflict and attempt to de-escalate armed conflicts when they do occur (O'Mahoney, 2012; Sayer, 1997) (PUB19_47, p. 10).

In the first two extracts, the IMF states that women are more likely to "invest" in "productive ways," including in education, food and health, which contribute to human capital. In these extracts, the choice to describe this action as an "invest[ment]," rather than a 'contribution,' for instance, is a political one which subsumes behaviour into economic language. In this way, the IMF transforms women into an economic subject, who is utility-maximising, efficient and productive. The category of "women" is transformed into an abstract generalisation, an agent whose actions can be predictably attributed to 'womanhood.' This functions to create background knowledge about who 'women' are and what qualities they can be thought of to possess. This is done through the use of predicates, including "cautio[us]" in the first extract, and "peaceful" in the third extract. The third extract is where the IMF most explicitly attempts to generalise about women and their characteristics. Biology and reproduction are positioned as causal factors that "explain the peaceful attitudes of women." This is a biologically

[49] Elsewhere, the Fund also claims that "women tend to devote a larger share of household resources to meeting the basic requirements and to fostering their children's potential" (PUB06_4, p. 5).

essentialist understanding of gender, which implies that women's femininity is innate, static and true, and that it can be traced to things like the primary and secondary sex characteristics of female bodies. Femininity is given this innate character in the third extract, through the use of the predicate "natural" to describe women's "preference for peace." The presupposition of 'women' as a uniform and monolithic category is also evident, when the IMF states that "women would prefer to prevent societal problems from escalating to conflict." In all three extracts, the IMF attempts to recontextualise those 'feminine' traits which have often gone explicitly under-valued and relegated to 'mere' reproduction (Ahmed 2014, p. 3) as *assets* to the IMF's imperative for economic growth and stability.

This direct connection between women's prioritisation of family and economic benefits is made in PUB06_4 (p. 14), which claims that "increasing women's control over resources may strengthen economic growth by redirecting consumption, saving, and investment in more productive ways." However, as Kalpana Wilson (2011, p. 318) identifies, women's often-cited industriousness, and investment of resources in their family (including both children and parents) directly: "stem[s] from specific patriarchal structures, institutions and ideologies, notably the gendered divisions of labour and responsibility, and the various constructions of 'good' mothers/daughters/daughters-in-law as those who 'make sacrifices' for their families," rather than representing a departure from these things. The Fund actively values and exalts these traits and harnesses them in support for women's 'freedom' from traditional gender roles, while simultaneously reinforcing and reproducing them.

IV. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have traced the emergence of the hyper-visible figure of the 'Working Woman' in the IMF's discourses on gender and women. On the visibility spectrum, hyper-visibility marks an aspirational or idealised subject. This means that the 'Working Woman' represents the IMF's ideal, feminist economic subject.

I have analysed the figure of the *femina economica,* which has been established elsewhere in the academic literature. I found that the *femina economica* is not a significant departure from her masculinised predecessor, the *homo economicus,* but rather is also utility-maximising, rational, efficient and productive, as well as maternal, caring and level-headed. Further, this chapter has discussed the IMF's (re)production of the dominant 'women as smart economics' discourses which has been documented in other development institutions. This discourse depends on presuppositional knowledge about femininity and the (innate or socialised) uniqueness of women. I have also analysed presuppositions used to make the case that women represent untapped potential or offer a stabilising promise for the economy. In this way, I have interrogated the complementary connection that the IMF's discourses make between women and macro-economic stability.

In the next chapter, I interrogate the ways that the binary gender order is (re)entrenched through the presumption of the heterosexual nuclear family as the unit for ordering private, ostensibly extra-economic life and activities.

Chapter Six: The Heterosexual Nuclear Family

This chapter develops earlier discussions of the IMF's (re)production of an aspirational feminised neoliberal subject, by interrogating how the Heterosexual Nuclear Family functions as the common-sensical arrangement for intimacy, reproduction and care in the discourses of the IMF. In this chapter, I analyse the features of the Heterosexual Nuclear Family, and point to its effects in sustaining a heterosexist vision for human relationships and (re)production. The visibility of the heterosexual family goes unexplained and unqualified, forming the presuppositional background knowledge of the IMF's economic discourses on gender and women. This is the basis of an important relationship between heterosexuality and the Fund's economic growth and stability mandate. The IMF, and the economy more broadly, depends on the Heterosexual Nuclear Family for the reproduction of workers for the economy, constituting the very foundation of economic participation.

To analyse the features of the Heterosexual Nuclear Family, this chapter is structured as follows. Firstly, I analyse the ways that the Fund has explicitly and implicitly defined the household. This section also includes an interrogation of the differential roles assigned to each member of the household, and how this (re)produces, stabilises and depends on binary gender and the presumption of heterosexual monogamy. Next, I analyse the binary of burdensome care work/empowering paid work that emerges within the discourses of the IMF. I explore how the use of negative predicates to describe care, and the use of positive predicates to describe paid work perpetuates the myth that these domains are mutually exclusive and separate. Additionally, I question the way that the IMF positions 'care work' in the domain of un-skilled work. Then, I analyse the IMF's support of increasing men's care work within the home in order to support the career aspirations of the hyper-visible Working Woman. Rather than supporting a transformative vision for gender relations, the IMF depends on, and (re)produces, heterosexual care and intimacy in order to advance a supposedly more gender-equal vision of neoliberalism. The last section of this chapter continues to explore this critique, by highlighting the ways that the IMF promotes flexible work as a solution to working men and women, in order to get them to work *more* around the demands of

care in their life. Presented as an emancipatory solution to the 'issue' of caring, parenthood or other 'barriers' to work, increasing flexibilisation represents increasing precarity under neoliberalism.

I. Household configuration

This section mobilises the conceptualisation of the heterosexual matrix that I developed in Chapter Three, by highlighting the ways that the IMF engages explicitly with defining the household in its publications. As I have established elsewhere, the presumption of heterosexuality as the natural site for organising intimacy, care and (re)production depends on the presumption that gender (and sex) is stable, coherent and binary. This is an ideological assumption, and is one that development institutions have depended on to produce economic truths (Bedford 2005, 2007, 2009a; Bergeron 2003, 2009; Griffin 2006, 2007a, 2007b, 2009). While many scholars have critiqued the development industry for not engaging in questions of (homo)sexuality (Cornwall et al. 2008; Lind 2009, 2010a), heterosexuality remains central to development, neoliberalism and the discourses of economic institutions. In this section, I develop the work done by queer scholars of political economy by pointing out how heteronormativity is indispensable to the discourses of the IMF, specifically in the way it explicitly and implicitly defines household configuration.

The IMF engages explicitly with defining the household in its publications, and these definitions often, if not always, name the presence of a woman and a man, who are presumably in a romantic relationship. The Fund reiterates, over several publications, that "households consist of one man and one woman" (PUB21_57, p. 12). For example, in 2006, the Fund writes that:

> Most households consist of more than one person and usually of both genders. This raises the issue of how to allocate the benefits of services received by one member of a household to the other members of the household who may benefit, and may confound measures of benefit, disaggregated by gender (PUB06_5, p. 21).

In the above extract, the 'household' is centred around the heterosexual couple, presupposing the fixity and binary nature of gender, through the use of the word "both," implying the existence of (only) two genders (presumably men and women). As Bedford (2005, p. 302) writes, "biological sex, conversely, was presented as static and natural, and it was hereby cast into the prediscursive domain - a central mechanism through which hegemonic heterosexuality is currently forged." In the context of the above extract, this means that 'sex' categories are interpellated as natural, and as synonymous with heterosexual desire and relationships. This is an ideological presumption because the alignment of sex, gender and sexuality is not a natural one, but requires stabilisation, reiteration and (re)production through discourse in order to appear fixed, static and coherent. The IMF's discourse gives heterosexuality and binary gender the appearance of fixity and naturalness in the above by failing to mention the existence of alternative household configurations. Although the above extract is not definitive, it does not explicitly name alternative forms of household configuration. The use of the word "most" suggests the existence of households which are perhaps not heterosexual, or which only include a single person. Yet, these households are not provided space within discourse in order to occupy the domain of the 'common-sense' or natural. By rendering these households secondary, in the above extract, the IMF contributes to the naturalisation of heterosexual monogamy as the cornerstone of 'normal' household configuration. In the below extract, the Fund again delineates the components of the 'household' for a specific economic model:

> [W]here D denotes the household consisting of two working parents (we assume here a married couple) and two children, and S denotes the household consisting of a married couple and two children with only one parent working (PUB17_33, p. 22).

In contrast to the explicitly gendered conceptualisation of the household unit offered by the Fund above, this extract instead assumes a (gender-less) married couple, who have two children. Despite the lack of gendered words to describe this couple, it is reasonable to assume that this is also a heteronormative conceptualisation of couple-hood, since gay marriage is only haphazardly legal globally.[50] Additionally, the above may also be heteronormative since it presumes the reproductive function of the marital unit, by

[50] Gay marriage is legal in only 38 countries, at the time of writing (Human Rights Campaign n.d.).

writing that the members of the household are ‘parents’ and have two children. Similar to the extract analysed earlier, this curtails the imagination of alternative forms of household configuration, which may be equally meaningfully premised on care and intimacy, but which do not have children. As Danby (2007, p. 29) writes, heteronormativity is central in economic conceptions of the household, which unproblematically can presuppose that “kinship is organized around conjugal bonds,” letting ‘the family’ or in this case ‘the household’ “stand automatically for a husband, wife, and their children.” By making this invisible assumption about the function of the household, economic discourses (re)produce heterosexuality, and bring heterosexual sex and intimacy into the domain of macroeconomic policy. The IMF positions the ‘household’ with respect to the ‘economy’ explicitly in the following extracts:

> Households consist of male (m) and female (f) members who derive utility from consuming market goods, home goods, and leisure. Each member either owns a firm (i.e. entrepreneur), supplies labor (i.e. participates in the labor market) to entrepreneurs, or stays at home (PUB18_35, p. 9).

> The economy consists of: a) households with male and female members (PUB18_35, p. 6).

> In each life period, households (comprised of a man and a woman) make decisions about the consumption of goods and services produced in formal and informal sectors, while decisions on labor supply are made separately by men and women (PUB23_76, p. 9).

In these extracts, the IMF positions the household as a component of the economy. In doing so, the Fund’s insistence on gender questions which are “macro-critical” (PUB22_67, p. 8), that I discussed in Chapter Four, is complicated as the binary of microeconomics and macroeconomics become blurry. In the final extract above, the IMF places emphasis on the significance of household behaviours and choices within national and global economies. Extending the presupposition of gendered differences in decision-making, the IMF delineates a difference between those decisions made regarding labour supply by “men and women.” In the first extract, the IMF similarly delineates the features of household members. They are either “male (m)” or “female (f),” and they “derive utility” through consumption. In this extract, the IMF transforms the household member into an economic agent, who is described in economistic terms.

Each household member is gendered and brought into a position within the economy, either as an entrepreneur, as someone who supplies labour to an entrepreneur or as someone who stays at home. The decisions made about engagement in the labour force are also described, across publications, in gendered terms. For example, women are described with the predicate, "the secondary earner" and men with the predicate, "the primary earner" (PUB20_56, p. 19). The words primary and secondary have hierarchy implied in their meaning. These predicates hierarchically position men, in economic terms, above women, with implications that their work is more important, or more central to the economy. Further, women are elsewhere positioned below "their husbands," such as in the following: "often wives who earn less than their husbands" (PUB17_33, p. 17), and also: "'poorer' than men in some developing countries" (PUB03_3, p. 21). In these extracts, the positioning of women below men is achieved through words such as "less than" and the predicate "poorer." In the IMF's discourse on household configuration, women are framed as less significant subjects within the formal economy, and are instead depicted as the subject who "stays at home" (PUB18_35, p. 6), or the secondary earner. This household configuration is the dominant one within the Fund's discourse.

The 'non-participating' woman is positioned in opposition to the aspirational Working Woman established in Chapter Five. However, the IMF does not represent these 'non-participating,' stay-at-home feminine subjects in its visual discourse, but rather exclusively represents women as workers. This is a contradiction between the IMF's dominant conceptualisation of women as secondary earners, and as non-workers in their written discourse. For instance, in Figure 6.1 (VID20_2), Shah (see also: Figure 5.6) is depicted coming home after a day at work, in the office. Her male partner is shown greeting their daughter, by lifting her up into the air. Shah is pictured standing away from the two, still holding her (and her daughter's) bags, indicating that she has just returned home from work. This visual, in the context of the entire video, is endowed with positive associations. Shah is represented as a positive role model for her daughter, because she works. This implication, as well as the concurrent lack of representation of women undertaking care work, functions to privilege labour force participation over care done in the home and paid care work. The below visual implies that Shah picked

up her daughter from workers who were caring for her, yet this type of work remains invisible.

Figure 6.1: VID20_2.

A move to recognising the different (gendered) responsibilities and roles of men and women in the household has occurred within the Fund's discourse. The IMF writes about the importance of collecting "better data on households" (PUB03_3, pp. 18-9), in relation to gendered differences within the home. For instance, a 2006 publication writes:

> In the early neoclassical paradigm, household production was ignored and households were represented as a single decision-making entity, ignoring any sources of heterogeneity within the household (PUB06_4, p. 7).

The above excerpt positions the IMF as opposed to early neoclassical economic paradigms, and aligns it with a more holistic way of understanding heterogeneity within the household. The Fund maintains this commitment elsewhere, for example, with their concern about the negative impacts of tax policies on women as 'secondary earners.' This is visually represented in Figure 6.2, in which a man, a woman and two children (a girl and a boy) are depicted standing in front of a home. The man, and two children have been obscured by a blue tint, which functions to bring the viewer's focus onto the woman, the mother. In the context of taxation policy, the caption at the bottom of the

screen reads: “Working women also benefit when personal income taxes are levied not on households, but on individuals” (VID20_1). In doing so, the Fund is indicating the importance of considering the individuals within the broader household unit, rather than the household as a monolithic unit itself.

Figure 6.2: VID20_1.

This focus is indicated explicitly in written discourse, such as when the Fund states a need to procure: “More detailed, household level data… to investigate these mechanisms in depth” (PUB17_34, p. 22). Some of the differences in behaviours within the household unit that the Fund documents include:

> [W]omen are often more likely than men to invest a large proportion of their household income in their children’s education. Higher economic participation and earnings by women could therefore translate into higher expenditure on school enrollment for children (PUB18_40, p. 7).

As I discussed in Chapters Four and Five, the IMF presupposes gendered differences in order to make sense of the decisions that women and men make. In the above, the IMF presupposes that the household is composed of a woman, who is concerned with their children’s education, and a man, who is less likely to “invest” the household income into their child’s education. In this extract, the Fund positions women and higher

expenditure on school enrolment for children as complementary. Collecting gender-disaggregated data on household composition, for the IMF, functions to indicate how money may be spent by a household. In the following extracts, the IMF attempts to make sense of the gendered differences in decision-making within the heterosexual household:

> Husband and wife [sic] make all the decisions together, including labor supply, consumption and savings/borrowing (richer households only). In terms of labor choices, they decide husband's labor supply in the formal and/or informal sector and women's female labor force participation and, in the case of participation, how much time she is going to work in the formal and informal sectors. There is no unemployment in the model, so that all individuals participating in the labor force are employed. In terms of consumption choices, they decide how much to consume of each of the two types of goods in the economy - formal and informal goods (PUB19_44, p. 9).

> Fiscal spending shocks may stimulate female labor supply more in response to the loss in household income during recessions (household income effect)... If a married male worker involuntarily loses his job, the nonparticipating wife may enter the labor force to make up for the family income loss (PUB19_45, p. 20).

In the first extract, the IMF attempts to delineate the terms of an economic model which presupposes the ways that a "husband and wife" make decisions pertaining to labour force participation. In the second extract, "the wife" is predicated as "nonparticipating," in the case that she is not formally employed in the labour market. This negative representation of women's care work serves to de-value or render invisible the importance of reproductive work for the reproduction of workers, and therefore the economy itself. In another case, the predicate "inactive" is attached to women who stay at home which contributes to the negative representation of the reproductive worker as an "inactive spouse[s]" (PUB19_14, p. 5). Simultaneously, the Fund elsewhere writes that working mothers come at a cost to the household: "Households have children and face child care costs when women work" (PUB20_56, p. 14). This underscores the reality that care work has to be conducted by someone. Both forms of care work, the carrying out of care work either by the mother within the home or by someone else in a formal child-care arrangement, are represented negatively. Despite the explicit

de-valuation of reproductive and care work in the above extract, elsewhere the Fund represents the life-cycle of the heterosexual family, in which it is illustrated that the reproductive work which occurs in the household is the crucial work that sustains and reproduces the existence of the economy over time. This is evident in the representation of the "life cycle model" (PUB20_56, p. 14), or the "overlapping generations model" (PUB19_44, p. 9), which is explained in this extract:

> In this economy, in the first period, a household is comprised by [sic] a man and a woman - husband and wife - and two children. In periods 2 and 3, the children have left to form their own households, and the original household is comprised only by the husband and wife. Since all agents die at the end of period 3 and each couple has two children throughout life, the population remains constant over time (PUB19_44, p. 9).

In the above extract, sexual reproduction (and its associated care work) is positioned as fundamental to the reproduction of the economy, because it continues to produce workers, so that "the population remains constant over time" (PUB19_44, p. 9). An interesting contradiction emerges in the Fund's discourse, where care work, and stay-at-home parents have negative associations, yet the very existence of this 'non-participation' and 'inactivity' is presupposed and inscribed into the functioning of the formal economy. Without reproduction, in the model that the above extract describes, the very foundations of the economy crumbles. However, it is not made explicit in the Fund's discourse that care work is the work of the economy. The Fund writes that:

> Households incur a utility cost when women participate in the labor market. This cost comes from the need to coordinate multiple household activities (for example, home production, child/elderly care, and other unpaid work) as well as comply with laws and social norms that create barriers for women to work outside the household (PUB23_76, p. 9).

In the above, the term "cost" appears to describe when women enter the formal labour market. The IMF presupposes that women's activities include home production, child/elderly care, and other unpaid work. Further, it implies that women's entrance into paid employment comes at a cost to households, because of the need to coordinate these activities. Women's entrance into the labour market is therefore predicated as 'costly'

because of the drop in time to carry out care work, however the IMF elsewhere depicts women's unpaid care work as low-skill (see next section of this chapter). This is one example of how the IMF struggles to conceptualise care work within its economistic logics, which prioritise stability and growth. However, as illustrated above, care work and reproduction form the very basis of the economy. This means that the IMF's growth and stability mandate is unachievable without the invisible, unpaid care and reproductive work that it predicates as costly.

To conclude this section, I explore the alternative configurations of households that the IMF represents in visual and written discourse. Although the Heterosexual Nuclear Family is the visible household configuration, the IMF does also represent alternative forms of household configuration. In written discourse, the IMF mentions "single parents or other family situations" (PUB19_52, p. 9). For example:

> [T]ax reforms to help low-income families, which are disproportionately headed by women, and on reduced taxation of secondary earners in households, which tend to be women (PUB18_40, p. 25).
>
> The majority of single parents are women, and data suggests that single parenthood increases the risk of poverty compared to other family types (PUB21_62, p. 7).
>
> Single mothers and migrant women as well as older women living alone are more vulnerable to poverty than men in similar types of households (PUB21_62, p. 7).

The above extracts describe "low-income families" headed by women, single parents who are women, as well as *vulnerable* single mothers and migrant women. These extracts are all predicated on the absence of the income-generating male and are highlighted here not as an aspirational model of household configuration, but rather as exceptional and unfortunate cases. This is achieved through the use of the predicates "vulnerable," "low-income" and the word "risk" as well as the close proximity to poverty "compared to other family types." To envision the household without a male income-earner is an abnormality in the IMF's discourse, and one that is not presented in neutral terms.

The above description of households headed by single women, migrant women and low-income families headed by women are not depicted visually. In the Fund's visual discourse, the only engagement with non-normative family arrangements are the following two visuals (Figure 6.3, 6.4), which depict two gay men and their two adopted children. In the first visual the men on the far left and right are smiling, while the child on the right stares with concern into the camera, not smiling, holding her hand in a thumbs up. The child on the left smiles, revealing gaps in his teeth. In Figure 6.4, the back of the two men's heads are depicted. One of them is holding a small baby. Despite the presence of a homosexual family in these images (two partners and children), I argue that queerness is invisible in the Fund's visual discourse, since these depictions take on a homonormative quality (Duggan 2002); they adopt and echo traditional markers of heterosexual couplehood.

Figure 6.3: VID13_16.

Figure 6.4: VID13_16.

Homonormativity, as coined by Duggan (2002, p. 179) "is a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them." In the above Figures, the institution of heterosexuality is reproduced through the homosexual couple by placing an emphasis on reproduction, monogamy, and marriage. Indeed, the subject-position of 'parent' is an important one in order to frame homosexual partnership as compatible with the social and economic order which implicitly mandates reproduction. As Nicola Smith (2016, p. 244) writes, "the property-less and child-less, in contrast, become constituted as non-subjects: surplus, abject, and unintelligible… neither economically productive nor socially productive." In the 'It Gets Better' video that Figures 6.3 and 6.4 appear, the Fund represents homosexual staffers as both workers and parents, therefore rendering them homonormative. One gay staffer reflects that coming out did not "hurt [their] career at all" (VID13_16). Another staffer shares worries about the incompatibility of their (homo)sexuality with their career, by reflecting: "I've been at the Fund for 12 years and for the majority of these 12 years I have not been out to most people I work with. Again, it's because you are scared that you may not get…promoted… because maybe this person is homophobic" (VID13_16). Homonormativity functions here, because homosexuality's relationship to normality is measured by its compatibility with career

growth. Elsewhere in the video, these gay staffers reflect on their subject-positions as parents:

> I adopted my first son in 1999 and there was no adoption leave for men… men should have adoption leave and that was important because *gay men adopt children* and then the big thing was to get a recognition of domestic partnerships and I think the Fund was relatively early as an employer to go towards almost full benefits for domestic partners (VID13_16, emphasis added).

The above extract is attributed directly to the images depicted above (Figures 6.3 and 6.4), and it reveals multiple dimensions of a homonormative logic. Firstly, this statement constructs gay men as potential carers and parents, through the statement "gay men adopt children." In doing so, the speaker resists presumed knowledge that homosexual partnerships are devoid of reproduction. By extension, he makes the case that, *homosexual couples can perform the 'normal' function of a partnership.* By positioning homosexuality as compatible with reproduction, the speaker draws homosexuality into the remit of 'normality.' Queer is conventionally read as a form of "non-life" (Ahmed 2014, p. 156) lacking what Edelman (2004, p. 19) calls "reproductive futurism," which refers to the idea that queerness does not 'fight for the children' because it brings "children and childhood to an end." In contrast, heterosexuality is symbolically associated with children and futurity (Edelman 2004, p. 21). For Edelman (2004, p. 26; see also: Halberstam 2011), the queer must encounter their "own inescapable failure," the failure to reproduce. The symbol of the child in the above aligns gay sexualities with the future, by bringing it into the realm of "compulsory reproduction" (Edelman 2004, p. 75).

In addition to the brief consideration given to gay families, the Fund also engages with the difficulties of defining a household so that it does not disadvantage single women who are the head of a household. In 2021, it was written:

> In the preparation of the specific law, attention should be paid in the text, for example, on how 'household' is defined, to make sure that single-parent families (predominantly with single mothers) are included without any limitation (PUB21_62, p. 20).

This extract explicates a need to interrogate how ‘households’ are defined so that it does not exclude single-parent families. In doing so, the IMF does pay attention to these alternative forms of householding, but only as aberrations from the natural household model that they have established elsewhere. In previous articulations of the household, the income-generating male is central, and here it is their absence which is documented as note-worthy. Those aberrations from the ‘natural’ household unit established earlier in this chapter are framed as requiring further interrogation. This reveals that there is a normative arrangement which does not require thought, “attention” or consideration, and there are those forms of households which *do* require these extra steps. The Fund also mentions single-parent households in the context of tax codes in South Africa, stating that:

> [C]oncern remains that the income tax codes contains elements of implicit bias against single-adult headed households, which is very common among women in South Africa (PUB16_25, p. 28).

The same need for interrogation or “concern” to be given to single-adult headed households appears in the above extract, which articulates that there is potentially bias against single women in the income tax codes. This positions single-headed households as oppositional to income tax codes and further reveals the way that the monogamous couple forms the natural, common-sense basis of economic policy. This oppositional positioning is further entrenched elsewhere, where the married couple is positioned as complementary with tax policies, writing that “taxation was seen as a way to benefit families, so as to encourage marriage and fertility” (PUB22_66, p. 28). In this sense, taxation served to (re)produce the heterosexual family and support its associated functions of reproduction and marriage. In the same publication, it writes that:

> [C]ohabitating without marriage is not a tax-effective choice. While it may be chosen for nontax reasons, it would not be chosen by couples as a solution to higher marginal tax returns (PUB22_66, p. 11).

Here, the choice to marry is a decision made with respect to tax-efficiency. In this extract, marriage is transformed into an explicitly economic institution. In order to create meaning about heterosexual partnership in this way, the Fund engages in multiple processes of abstraction, as well as presupposition about how sexual and romantic

partnerships are ordered and formed, in relationship to the state and economy. Marriage, as a cultural code, has connotations with love, romance, sexuality, and intimacy. In the Fund's discourse, these connotations are transformed into utility-maximising terms – a strategic decision about outcomes. Marriage is merely "functional," or seen as the natural outcome of a sort of partnership that does not need explaining since it is presumed to be "driven by biological, evolutionary impulse" (Bedford 2005, p. 302). The heterosexual couple form is the telos of human relationships, in this way. Further, because of their compatibility with tax codes that presume/presuppose a family consists of "a working husband" and a "stay-at-home wife and multiple children" (PUB22_66, p. 10), it has the effect of (re)producing this form as legitimate, effective and *easy* within the neoliberal context. Drawing on Ahmed's (2006) queer phenomenology, bodies are ordered and configured to be straight. The neoliberal economy, and the Fund's discourse here, is transforming heterosexuality into the compulsory sexuality by "'institut[ing] [it] as the form of sociality through force" (Ahmed 2006, p. 84; see also: Rich 2003 [1980]). Indeed, the very visibility of the heterosexual couple as synonymous with the household functions as discursive violence, in the way that it diminishes the space wherein other forms of social organisation can exist as legitimate: "bodies take the shape of norms that are repeated over time and with force" (Ahmed 2006, p. 91). The naturalisation of the heterosexual couple as *family* and as *household* is important to undo, because it serves to simplify and conflate biological, cultural and social meanings. The invisibilities in the Fund's visual and written discourses on household configuration transforms otherwise neutral social arrangements (single people, no children, homosexual couples) into failures, in the sense that their way of living and relating to others is *incompatible* with the way that the economy is ordered. Both heterosexual marriage and the capitalist economy are represented as, and (re)produced to be, natural and common-sense. In the extracts that I have analysed in this section, I have drawn out the ways that these two, otherwise discrete and unrelated units, are actually represented as mutually constitutive and reinforcing. To be outside of the heterosexual family is to be out of line with economic ideals for organising social life. The subject who is outside of the heterosexual family or outside of marriage is *queered* in the sense that they represent "a 'failed orientation,'" "such a failure is read as a

refusal to reproduce and therefore as a threat to the social ordering of life itself' (Ahmed 2006, pp. 91-2).

In literature on the World Bank, scholars found that the heterosexual nuclear family was not only presupposed and (re)produced, but heterosexual partnership was a "key social safety net mechanism" during periods of economic crisis (Bedford 2008, p. 61). As a result, often during periods of economic crisis, there is perceived to be crises in and of the family and sexuality (Bedford 2008, p. 64, 65; Butler 1998, p. 42). As Butler (1998, p. 42) writes, it is often in times of crisis that the "specific mode of sexual production and exchange that works to maintain the stability of gender, the heterosexuality of desire, and the naturalisation of family" is bolstered. Indeed, the Fund's discourse analysed in this chapter reveals that there is a complex entanglement of the 'family' or 'household' unit with the market and macroeconomy. In the next section, I explore this further by interrogating the Fund's representation of care work as burdensome, and of formal economy work as empowering.

II. Burdensome care work/empowering paid work

In this section, I interrogate the binary representation of work in the Fund's discourse. In the IMF's discourse, it presupposes and depends on the separation of the work undertaken in the formal economy and the unpaid work conducted in the informal economy or the home. This is a binary that I seek to trouble in this section, developing the work of feminist political economists who have highlighted that such binary falsely categorises sectors which are "structurally interlinked at the economic level" (Antonopoulos 2008, p. 15). As I outlined in Chapter Two, feminists have highlighted that 'householding' (Douglass 2006; Peterson 2010a), and the reproductive work which takes place in the non-market sphere, forms the very basis for market activities. It is for this reason that the IMF's hierarchical ordering of 'burdensome' care work and 'empowering' care work is an ideological and political divide.

In its discourse, the IMF represents care work with negative predicates, encouraging women to transcend traditionally feminised work by instead taking up paid work in the

formal economy. For instance, the IMF writes that it is "[d]eeply entrenched stereotypes [that] keep women trapped in centuries-old caregiver roles" (PUB19_46, p. 2). In this sentence, various words and phrases are used in order to create a feeling of claustrophobia. For instance, the phrase "deeply entrenched" to describe "stereotypes" gives caring a primordial or backwards inflection. A "stereotype" is rarely used to characterise something positive, so in this extract it functions to negatively describe "caregiver roles." The words "trapped in" and "centuries-old" have connotations with 'tradition' or 'culture,' phrases which are typically associated with the conservatism found outside of the market. 'Family' is further positioned as a 'trade-off' in competition with 'work:' "[t]he trade-off between family and work is also reflected in a negative correlation between female labor force participation and marriage rates" (PUB18_38, p. 6). The binary between care work or marriage and labour force participation is (re)produced in this extract. Oppositional subject positioning is achieved through the use of "trade-off," which presents work and marriage in *either/or* terms.

In contrast, paid work in the formal economy is represented with positive predicates, and is described as an empowering activity. The IMF defines unpaid work as "home production or non-market production… not compensated by a wage" and as "fall[ing] outside the standard definition of economic output" (PUB19_52, p. 6). It continues:

> Unpaid work broadly comprises of two areas of activities: (i) care work for children, the elderly and the sick and (ii) domestic chores - cleaning and household upkeep; construction and repairs; cooking and food production; household management and shopping, volunteering. Both categories include the time spent travelling to perform those tasks (PUB19_52, p. 6).

In this extract, the term 'unpaid work' covers a variety of activities that can be thought of as essential for economic output, despite being positioned outside of the "standard definition of economic output" (PUB19_52, p. 6). This work here is conceptualised unequivocally outside of the definition of economic output. However, in the literature this work has been conceptualised as linked in the way that it lowers the cost of labour and subsidises the public sector (Antonopoulos 2008, p. 16). In contrast, the IMF predicates household tasks and reproductive work as "low-productivity" (PUB19_52, p.

4) activities, and positions these activities as oppositional or as a hindrance to economic growth:

> When women do not fully exploit their productivity potential by remaining outside of the workforce to perform relatively low-productivity household tasks, economic growth may be lower than otherwise (PUB19_52, p. 4).
>
> Note that while these women are not engaged in market work, most of them do unpaid work, typically as caregivers in their own home, even though their skills may be used more efficiently and productively outside the home (PUB17_34, p. 3).
>
> In this framework, women face various challenges to achieving their full potential throughout their lives. These include: (1) initial lower productivity (which reflects a wage differential at the beginning of their working life); (2) the costs of taking care of the home and family (representing a utility cost and financial cost for families when the women work); and (3) a tax system that penalizes the secondary earner (who is typically the female partner) (PUB20_56, p. 14).

In the above, care work is positioned as less valuable because it does not represent the *most efficient* use of human "productivity potential" (PUB19_52, p. 4). In the first extract, the use of the word "exploit" presupposes an understanding of women as potentially productive economic subjects. The binary of market and non-market is also presupposed and (re)produced through the use of the word "outside" to describe women's position in relation to the workforce. Rather than meaningfully contributing to the (re)production of the workforce, women are positioned as outside the workforce. They are also positioned in opposition to "economic growth," which is significant given the priority afforded to 'growth' in the IMF's discourse. In the second extract, emphasis is similarly given to market work which takes place outside of the home. Unpaid work and caregiving are represented as an inefficient and unproductive use of effort in the statement that these skills would be better used "outside the home." This representation of some activities as 'more productive' and other activities as 'less productive' is an example of how the logic of neoliberal capitalism permeates the ways that bodies are configured and how they interact with the social, political and economic world. This extract presupposes the normative goodness of productivity as a measurement against

which activities ought to be assessed. By doing so, activities engaged in out of care, obligation, social ties, intimacy, *inter alia*, are flattened and are categorically un-productive. This representation has important effects and implications for the different ways that relating and behaving are treated. In the final extract, 'low productivity,' which has been established to include care work, is positioned as a barrier to achieving women's "full potential." It also states that the tax system works in opposition to women's market work, presupposing her position as the "secondary earner" in the heterosexual nuclear family. Throughout these extracts, women are uniformly predicated as secondary, unproductive, un-skilled and in opposition to economic growth. Their "full potential" is represented as residing in their employment in the market, whereas non-market work is represented as a hindrance and barrier to this same flourishing.

Care is represented as an inconvenience in the pursuit of the IMF's mandate of economic growth and stability. However, this positioning fails to account for the fundamental importance of care, not only for the economy, but for human well-being, connection and happiness. As Kathleen Lynch (2007, p. 552) identifies, classical economics does not take into account "the reality of dependency for all human beings, both in childhood and at times of illness and infirmity." She continues, that "even when we are not in a state of strong dependency, we are relational beings, emotional as well as intellectual, social as well as individual" and that we "all have the capacity for intimacy, attachment and caring relationships" (Lynch 2007, p. 553). In fact, these bonds are what "bring meaning, warmth and joy to life," and to be deprived of "the capacity to develop such supportive affective relations" is an injustice and "serious human deprivation" (Lynch 2007, p. 553). In the economic discourses produced by the Fund, care and love are under-valued and sidelined; they are not treated as central human functions because they do not function to support economic growth, stability and productivity. This is evident in the above extract in the use of the word "exploit," which represents the body as an economic resource whose capacity for supporting growth and stability must be poured out and efficiently harnessed for the betterment of the nation. This framing of the exploitable body is in line with the disembodied and abstract *homo economicus* (see: Chapter Five), who is either devoid of feelings of care and love, or

who ought to harness these ‘un-productive’ feelings within the formal economy. Lynch makes the argument that care work is impossible to marketise, because “they have an other-centred dimension to their character;” marketising this would “undermin[e] their care or solidarity purposes” (Lynch 2007, p. 563). If we understand the care work which is undertaken in the extra-economic realm as other-oriented, it is clear that this logic is entirely incompatible with the neoliberal capitalist emphasis on the utility-maximising, rational and exploitable economic agent. The Fund’s discourse fails to account for those ways of relating and working which prioritise love and which may result in a “material net burden due to loss of earnings” (Lynch 2007, p. 564). The “intimate and inalienable quality” (Lynch 2007, p. 564) of care work is expressly depicted as negative in the Fund’s discourse, which arguably, makes possible the types of austerity policies which strain love labour.

As I discussed above, care work is fundamentally incompatible with the logics within which the Fund operates. Feminists have challenged how value is conceptualised as “worth, money, and utility” (Ozkazanc-Pan & Pullen 2020, p. 1) by pointing to the essential condition of life-making and care work. However, the neoliberal conceptualisation of value is (re)produced in the multiple ways that the Fund represents unpaid care work in comparison to paid work in the formal economy. In the extracts below, the well-established hierarchical binary of (under)development is used in order to promote paid work over care work.

> Unpaid work by women tends to decline with the level of economic development of a country… This reflects both a reduction and a redistribution of unpaid work. As economies get richer and female labor force participation rises, a larger share of tasks is traded in the marketplace instead of being performed at home (PUB19_52, p. 9).
>
> To increase the low rate of women’s labour force participation, fiscal policies could deal with the lack of support services to reduce women’s unpaid time burdens in the home and improve access to and the affordability of childcare and eldercare (PUB16_23, p. 31).
>
> This decline in unpaid work as countries become richer is explained by reductions in domestic chores. Women spend fewer hours on domestic

> chores as the economy becomes richer… a decline that is statistically and economically significant (PUB19_52, p. 9)

In these extracts, less care work is positioned as complementary to, or correlative with, the wealth of a nation. The working mother (see: Chapter Five) is positioned as hyper-visible here. However, in the first and second extract, the care work that the working mother is no longer carrying out has been reallocated to the market. The subject who takes up this reallocated care work is an absent presence in the Fund's discourse; they are named but not visualised or described. This absent presence is significant, since women carry out the majority of paid care and support work in the formal economy. In a report prepared by the Australian Government, National Skills Commission (2021, p. 95), it affirms that the 'care and support workforce' is predominantly (79%) made up of women. This is reflected in the global data collected by the ILO, which finds that women make up 97% of child care workers, 96% of midwifery professionals, 94% of domestic cleaners, 93% of early childhood educators and 90% of home-based personal care workers (Limani & Sodergren 2023). As I have noted throughout this section, care work is the fundamental condition of all human life. This is important to clarify, because this means that the need for care work does not disappear when economies 'advance' and get wealthier. Rather, it is reallocated to workers (often women) in the formal economy, who also remain under-valued and predicated as 'low-skilled' due to the caring element of their work. Care work or "love labor" struggles to be commodified, because you cannot condense the time carried out performing "quality time" (Lynch 2007, p. 566). Yet, later in the IMF publication discussed above, it explains that the "low-productivity tasks" (PUB19_52, p. 20) that women typically spend time on are undesirable. Tasks such as "fetching water or performing other domestic household tasks" are positioned as incompatible with the demands of efficiency and productivity (PUB19_52, p. 20). For this reason, the Fund endorses the development of "engines of liberation" (PUB19_52, p. 20; see also: PUB19_52, pp. 4-5), which would enable women to spend less time on these activities, or "reliev[ing] the burden of unpaid work" (PUB19_52, p. 20), and spend more time in formal work. In this representation of care work, the Fund continues to associate negative predicates with unpaid care work and positive predicates with paid work in the formal economy. The above publication also endorses "better access to affordable

quality childcare" in order to "free… up women's time for formal employment" (PUB19_52, p. 21). The Fund also mentions 'time' in the following extracts:

> It also discusses policy options to decrease the time women spend on unpaid work, enhance their employability and enable them to secure employment (PUB16_15, p. 2).
>
> [F]ocusing on freeing time for formal employment could include expanding the capacity and affordability of care services, policies and awareness campaigns, to break traditional views of gender-roles, targeted cash transfer policies, and other development initiatives (PUB16_15, p. 21).
>
> Care work takes up a significant amount of time in most countries, especially where infrastructure is poor and publicly provided services are limited or absent… The burden of care work is particularly acute in rural settings and in ageing societies (PUB19_46, p. 21).

Here, the imperative to marketise care work is clear. Arguably, the Fund presupposes the existence of 'low-skilled' workers who are more suitable to carry out care work within the formal economy in jobs like childcare or teaching. Further, the Fund also presupposes the existence of more qualified 'high-skilled' workers, who embody the 'Working Woman' of Chapter Five. The latter is positioned as overqualified for the type of work carried out in the home, which presupposes (and thus reproduces) the binary representation of unpaid care work as 'backwards' and low-skilled versus paid work in the formal economy as a marker of advancement, high-skill and development. This sentiment is clear in the following extract, in which care work is described as a burden that ought to be alleviated in order to allow women to perform 'income-generating activities:'

> [I]mproved access to water is correlated with a lower burden of unpaid nonmarket work, freeing up women's time to participate in income-generating activities (PUB20_56, p. 13).
>
> [T]he burden of unpaid care work disproportionately falls on women and girls. Women are overrepresented in the informal sector and underrepresented in leadership positions (PUB18_41, p. 4).

> Additionally, women get empowered as households receive more income. This could lead to a higher absolute and relative share of households' resources allocated to health and education (PUB18_37, p. 22).

> The disproportionate unpaid care work burden prevents women from fully being engaged in the labor market (PUB21_58, p. 3).

In the above extracts, the positioning of unpaid non-market work as a 'burden' and income-generating activities as 'freeing' and 'empowering' does important discursive work to sediment the binary between non-work (care) and work (in the formal economy). The word "burden" is used across multiple publications over time and is a foundational presupposition in the IMF's discourse. The words "empowerment" and "freeing" again appear in relation to work undertaken in the market. Through these words, the IMF's discourse creates presuppositional knowledge about how women's time ought to be used.[51] This binary framing of care work and market work is also (re)produced in the Fund's visual discourse. In Figure 6.5, the Fund describes reproductive work as "not just hard work" but as "often unpaid work," placing emphasis on the words *hard* and *unpaid*, by putting these words in bold and in a larger font. In Figure 6.6, the mundanity, difficulty and repetitive nature of reproductive work is visually represented through three images of different women cooking, cleaning and collecting water. In these three images, the women are depicted in long to mid-shots, looking away from the camera while they perform different reproductive activities. In these images, the women are not smiling while they carry out this work (in contrast to the office workers depicted in Figure 5.4), which could suggest difficulty, strain or dissatisfaction.

[51] As I have noted throughout this chapter, the IMF describes women as working, 'non-participating,' and as engaging in unpaid work (including care work and household chores). Yet the discourse does not mention time spent on *rest*. This is an important absence to highlight here when considering the knowledge that the Fund produces about how time is and should be used.

Figure 6.5: VID19_7.

Figure 6.6: VID19_7.

In the Fund's written discourse, they position reproductive work or "household responsibilities" as a form of "gender discrimination" (PUB16_30, p. 25). They write that "a lower burden from… household duties and less discrimination through social norms would also facilitate access to land, capital and other inputs" (PUB16_30, p. 25). It is undeniable that care work and reproductive work can be difficult, time-consuming and exhausting. However, the Fund's representation of paid work as empowering and freeing fails to acknowledge that paid work can be just as difficult, time-consuming and

exhausting as care work. Housework and reproductive work are framed as work done under coercion or as a result of discrimination, whereas work in the formal economy is framed as work done out of choice and as a marker of freedom from discrimination. In other words, the market is a realm of freedom, whereas the home is a realm of inhibition.

Similarly, having children and reproduction is represented as an interruption to paid employment. This framing operates on the presumption that uninterrupted and ongoing productivity is a desirable (or achievable) condition of formal employment. This framing presupposes that work in the formal economy is what people were born to do, with no other priority. It also renders invisible those people whose bodies do not permit the endless productivity demanded of the *homo economicus* or *femina economica.* Subjects who experience disability and illness are "banish[ed]... to invisibility and… irrelevance" (Hedva 2016, p. 3) in the discourses of the Fund. In the framework that the IMF has established thus far in its discourse, people with disabilities have futures which are unimaginable (Kafer 2013, p. 1), and if they are unable to work, they are unable to access 'empowerment' or to realise their 'full potential.' In the Fund's discussion of care work, it often speaks of the care work done *for* the elderly, children or the sick, but does not treat these groups as subjects themselves. In doing so, this discourse presupposes that the lives that have to be lived outside of market work are unworthy of elaboration. As Alison Kafer (2013, p. 3) writes, disability is often imagined out of the future, with common-sense presupposing that a "'good' future naturally and obviously depends upon the eradication of disability." The presupposed inevitability of employment in the formal economy, as well as the representation of 'interruptions' to paid work, functions according to this presupposition that disability does not exist in an ideal world. This is because the existence of people with disabilities challenges the monolithic conception of what human productivity and behaviour ought to look like. Disability has been conceptualised according to multiple 'models,'[52] and here I

[52] These models include the 'political/relational' model and the 'individual' model, also referred to as the medical model of disability (Kafer 2013, pp. 4-5). The 'political/relational' model of disability is the one I am most aligned with, as it attempts to dislodge the presumption of certainty and truth about the body, as well as the dependence on a fixed identity (Kafer 2013, p. 7). In contrast, the 'individual' or 'medical' model "frames atypical bodies and minds as deviant" and therefore requires medicalisation and medical intervention (Kafer 2013, p. 5). This leads to the assumption that it is the individual that needs correcting rather than the social conditions that limit the lives of people with disabilities. Another core insight that

understand disability as a condition which is not a static truth of the body but one which is socially and politically produced. The IMF plays a part in sidelining disability outside of the realm of imaginable economic futures. It does this by failing to conceptualise or articulate a place for sick and disabled subjects outside of those who are recipients of 'costly' and 'burdensome' care.

The Fund writes about unemployment benefits and the promotion of "re-entry into the labor market, *especially for women after interruptions due to childbirth and child-rearing"* (PUB21_62, p. 28, emphasis added). This representation of childbirth as an interruption to paid work obscures the way that reproduction of children itself sustains and (re)produces the existence of the economy, by supplying new (future) workers. Further, having children is positioned as suboptimal for women's career progression:

> Furthermore, when women leave the workforce, even for a limited amount of time, their careers are put on hold, which can affect their chance to be hired or promoted into senior leadership positions (PUB23_77, p. 4).
>
> They may also leave high-power career tracks to have children (PUB16_28, p. 10).
>
> In line with that, gender pay and promotion gaps emerge also due to the presence of children (PUB23_77, p. 4).

In the above extracts, children and career progression are positioned as mutually exclusive for women. In the first two extracts, women's careers are described with predicates such as "high-power" (PUB16_28, p. 10) and mention is made of "promot[ion]" (PUB23_77, p. 4), implying that careers 'uninterrupted' by children or burdens within the home can see women 'climbing the ladder' in the workplace and ultimately gaining power in their careers. In contrast, the third extract equates the presence of children with disadvantage through "gender pay and promotion gaps" (PUB23_77, p. 4). Care and reproductive work occupies an elusive position of absent presence in these extracts. When carried out it is represented as a hindrance, and in

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informs my understanding of disability is that sickness and wellness is not binary, and that vulnerability and fragility are conditions that bodies will all inevitably experience (Hedva 2016, p. 6).

order to be successful or powerful in the formal economy, it goes unmentioned. Elsewhere, the Fund does engage explicitly with the reality that care and reproductive work has to be carried out. In the below extracts, the IMF promotes the presence of childcare and daycares in order to get women to work:

> Supportive policies for working mothers, including daycares, are important to encourage female labor force participation (PUB16_15, p. 11)
>
> [W]hich show that better access to affordable quality childcare frees up women's time for formal employment (PUB19_52, p. 21).
>
> Dabla-Norris and Kochhar (2019) report that if childcare costs were to be cut by half, the number of young mothers in the labor market could increase by 10%, as women's unpaid work is largely spent on childcare (PUB23_77, p. 4).

In the above extracts, working mothers must minimise their reproductive work and obligations to their children in order to participate in the labour force. In the first two extracts, the Fund positions daycare as an enabler of women's participation in the labour force. It renders invisible the workers who carry out the reproductive work at the daycares it mentions, further invisibilising the reality that this care work must be performed by someone (often women, as noted earlier). In these extracts, the Fund promotes a distinctly marketised vision for the provision of care work by outsourcing and transforming the work performed in the home to a commodity or service that can be exchanged in the market. In the third extract, the Fund promotes lower costs and barriers to childcare for young mothers. The word "young" (PUB23_77, p. 4) suggests the recent birth of a child. By extension, this extract implies that new mothers should minimise the time spent conducting "unpaid work" on "childcare" (PUB23_77, p. 4) in order to return to the labour market. Primacy is given to time spent in their labour market, rather than the time spent nurturing for small children. The absent presence of the economy is evident here, in the way that the usefulness of time spent on an activity is measured by its proximity to the labour market. Childcare, for the Fund, ought to be performed in the market or by people who can no longer perform market-based activities. In the below extract, the Fund discusses the possibility of grandparents taking

up the responsibility of care work, so that women can return to work in contexts where childcare provision is limited:

> While childcare provision may be limited in both rural and urban areas, women in rural areas can rely on grandparents' support - an option that is not available in urban areas especially for migrants (PUB21_57, p. 9).

However, there is a clear contradiction in the presupposition that care work should be performed in the market. While the Fund argues that care work and childcare ought to be performed in the formal economy, they simultaneously position these workers as less-than. In Chapters Four and Five, I highlighted the visual markers of 'work' that the Fund deploys. These include button-down shirts, cities and offices (see: Figures 4.2, 4.5, 4.6, 4.8 and 5.4). However, these representations of 'work' render invisible the care work that women predominantly perform in daycares. In the below extract, for example, the Fund predicates care as a "burden" that could lead women to take up "home-based," "informal," and "low-paid" work (PUB21_57, p. 18). This negative positioning and devaluing of some formal work importantly suggest that work which is high-paid and conducted in certain spaces (i.e. offices) is more valuable or desirable.

> In addition, the care burden can lead women to concentrate in low-paid, informal, or home-based work as a means of balancing unpaid care work and paid employment, contributing to gender wage gaps (PUB21_57, p. 18).

Overall, the Fund struggles to reconcile the need for care work to be performed with its desire for formal, market-based work to be prioritised. The Fund promotes access to affordable daycare and childcare services, while simultaneously de-valuing the work of caring. This is a fundamental contradiction because it fails to account for the importance, centrality and inevitability of care and reproductive work. It positions care work performed by women as a marker of gender discrimination, gender pay gaps and stalled career growth. This negative representation of care work is feasible when endless economic growth and output is the metric through which human activity and relationships are measured. In the next section, I explore the ways that men's care work is represented as desirable in an effort to equalise the responsibilities of parents within the reproductive and productive realms. The Fund represents women as too caring and

men as not caring enough. The logic follows that in order to promote equality within the workplace, men need to care more in the home.

III. Men's care work

Alongside the hyper-visible Working Woman (see: Chapter Five), the Fund renders visible the caring father. The caring father is the complementary figure to the working woman, and makes possible the increase in her hours spent in the formal economy, by taking up responsibilities within the household. These two subjectivities, the working woman and the caring father, form the complementary halves of a cohesive and well-functioning household whole, which implicitly extends into the productive economy. Accordingly, in the Fund's discourse, well-functioning heterosexuality has positive outcomes (Berlant & Warner 1998, p. 548; Bedford 2007, p. 304). In this section, I highlight the ways that the Fund (re)produces an ideal form of caring masculinity, subverting gender roles so that the working woman can transform into the *femina economica*, and transcend 'traditional gender norms.' Although the representation of the caring father is supposed to represent a subversion of traditional gender roles, in this section I argue that it rather (re)produces the fundamental importance of heterosexuality and the binary gender order for capitalism. The Fund's discourse on care work pays significant attention to the gendered allocation of household responsibilities, interrogating "the prevailing gender gaps in time dedicated to paid and unpaid work" (PUB19_46, p. 22). They problematise the ways that these differential time allocations are dictated by particular "social norms and customs as they relate to the issue of care" and therefore seek to ask what "the role of men" (PUB19_46, p. 22) ought to be.

Firstly, I reflect on the ways that the Fund's representation of a caring masculinity here acts as an attempt to resist and reimagine hegemonic, globalised and transnational business masculinities. R.W. Connell and James Messerschmidt (2005, p. 832) define hegemonic masculinity as a normative expression of manhood: "embod[ying] the currently most honored way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it… ideologically legitimat[ing] the global subordination of women to men." Additionally, "complicit masculinity" is an expression of manhood

which does not necessarily align with hegemonic masculinity, but which still affords men the same benefits of patriarchy (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005, p. 832). Forms of hegemonic masculinities in global politics include colonial masculinities or masculinities of empire (Connell 2000). In globalisation and masculinity studies, this idea has been applied to identify an "emergence of globalizing masculinities" (Connell 1998, p. 3). The qualities attributed to this form of masculinity mirror that of the *homo economicus* (i.e. rational and utility-maximising), but take these traits further to include aggression, egoism, individualism, competition and ruthlessness (Acker 2004, p. 29). It also includes an absence of feeling for others, including feelings of responsibility (Connell 1998, p. 16). These traits are encouraged and (re)produced by "the ethos of the free market" and its "'win or die' environment" (Acker 2004, p. 29). Businessmen occupy a position of ostensible neutrality and rationality from the office spaces they function in, with bodies failing to appear as bodies, but rather appearing as numbers in books (Acker 2004, p. 31). This abstraction or "corporate non-responsibility" means that violence may not necessarily be enacted explicitly, but implicitly (Acker 2004, p. 31). Therefore, a particular expression of aggressive, neoliberal, transnational business masculinity is bound up with the economic success of corporations. As I identified in the preceding chapter, the critique of the disembodiedness and abstraction of the *homo economicus* or 'Davos Man' (Beneria 1999) has been widely advanced by feminists and has been acknowledged by the Fund. What follows in this section is a description of the IMF's attempt to redefine globalised masculinity to one that has a softer, caring disposition.

As I identified in Chapter Two, much has been written on a reckless and risky form of Wall Street masculinity, particularly after the GFC (Prügl 2012). Additionally, feminists have commented on the sexualisation of contemporary financial discourse, with tropes of "invasion, occupation and colonization" (Griffin 2013, p. 13) reading like a "rape script" (Gibson-Graham 1996, p. 121; see also: Bergeron 2001, p. 997). This script is clear in phrasing like "'capitalist penetration' [which] evokes an image of a rape that cannot be avoided or contested" (Bergeron 2001, p. 997). The apparent inevitability of capitalism's expansion into so-called "virgin territories" is also illustrative of this phenomenon (Griffin 2013, p. 13; see also: De Goede 2005). What emerges in the

discussion below of the Fund's representation of a caring masculinity is a stark counterpoint to this form of globalised, neoliberal hegemonic masculinity (see also: Hooper 2001). Rather than presuming a global gender order in which men work and women care, the IMF identifies and problematises the disparity between men and women's care work in the home. They write that:

> Women everywhere perform more unpaid work than men, and children and dependents are an important factor in defining their working arrangements, especially during their reproductive years (PUB21_62, p. 7).

In the above, women are positioned in close proximity to their children and dependents, whereas men are framed as less attached and further away to their children and dependents. The Fund attributes this to "the social role of women as caregiver," "especially in developing countries" (PUB21_62, p. 35), and to "women's higher level of readiness to engage in housework" (PUB22_66, p. 27). In PUB21_62, this problem is a result of norms, which means that it can change since norms are malleable. In PUB22_66, by contrast, there are biologically essentialist connotations of women's predisposition to *want* to engage in housework more than men. The Fund also represents women as "the primary child caregivers" (PUB21_62, p. 20). In terms of gender equality, "parenthood is the area with the most room for improvement… as women typically bear the bulk of household responsibilities" (PUB22_71, p. 13). For this reason, the Fund reveals a normative desire to equalise men and women not only within the productive economy, but within the reproductive economy, asking:

> What measures other than incentivized paternity leave can help make the father an equal partner in the household? (PUB21_62, p. 39).

The Fund also represents the caring father in its visual discourse alongside small children within the home, classroom and the playground. The father is depicted caring for and playing with young children, toddlers and babies in a way that the working woman seldom is. In doing so, the IMF attempts to model ideal expressions of femininity and masculinity; it is an effort to "shift… underlying gender norms about parenting" (PUB19_46, p. 10). This reflects the academic literature on motherhood,

fatherhood and care work which suggests that a more equal division of household labour depends on "the couple's ability to rework traditional expectations about masculine and feminine marital responsibilities," as well as the income earned by the mother (Sanchez & Thomson 1997, p. 750; see also: Ishii-Kuntz & Coltrane 1992; Yavorsky et al. 2015).

In a video titled 'Policies That Empower Women To Work Is Good Economics,'[53] the following four images are shown. Figure 6.7 shows a father looking at a computer screen in a close-up shot. His child's head is also visible; however, the child's face is obscured by the presence of the computer screen. It is unclear what the father and child are doing on the computer in this image (i.e. working, watching something, playing a game), but central to the image is the father's proximity to his child, his position at home and the absence of a woman or mother. This image of a father at home without his (presumably) female partner supports the Fund's message that fathers and men should care more. In Figure 6.8, a small child is shown at the bottom of a slide at a playground. A man, presumably the child's father, bends over and puts his hand on the child's stomach. The child is wearing a beanie with a blue whale on the front and a blue jacket, two items of clothing which may function to gender the child as a boy. This image takes the father and child outside of the home, which is also done in Figure 6.9, which depicts a man with dark skin in a light blue button-up shirt, beige pants and brown dress shoes teaching a class of small children who are sitting on the floor in a circle around him. He is reading off a tablet while his right hand is extended out to catch a stuffed animal that a child is giving him. In this vignette, there is an indication of the division of attention required to maintain children's engagement that we also saw in Figure 5.6, with Shah running through the streets, encumbered by her own bags and her child's bag. The left vignette of Figure 6.9 is the only image in the IMF's visual discourse where the *paid* care work of teaching and child care is depicted. Paid care work is typically a feminised space, which makes this depiction an important political choice. It may represent an attempt by the Fund to encourage men to take up women's work so that women are able to embody the competitive, high-achieving *homo economicus*. In the image on the right

[53] This is one of the only videos that depicts men's care work or the subject-position of 'father' in the Fund's visual discourse (to the exclusion of VID19_7 [Figure 6.11] and the homosexual fatherhood depicted in VID13_16 [Figures 6.3 and 6.4]).

of the split-screen of Figure 6.9, the man is in a different, striped button-up shirt. He is captured from a low angle, with a small girl on his shoulders with her arms and hands on his head. He is smiling and looking away from the camera while holding onto one of the child's legs. These two images together, put children at the centre of this man's work and home life. His daughter is wearing a pink shirt and blue denim overalls, and the woman to the right of the man is also dressed in pink, mirroring the gendered connotations of pink as a 'girl' colour and blue as a 'boy' colour. Lastly, Figure 6.10 has explicit messaging that supports the Fund's imperative to get men to care more, in order to get new mothers into work. In Figure 6.10, a man with light skin and a small baby are depicted in a mid-shot. The man cradles the back of the baby's head, holding them so that they are facing toward one another. The caption of this still is a shorter part of a broader message, which reads:

> In Germany, more new dads are using paternity leave, thanks to government policies that encourage them - helping new mothers become the working mothers they want to be (VID20_1).[54]

The image is an intimate one, as it seems to be occurring within the home. However, there remains some distance between the baby and the father, as he holds the baby away from his chest. These images of caring fathers represent a divergence from the way that women were represented in Chapter Five. In the images of working women there is predominantly an absence of children, in order to make the ladder-climbing of success in the workplace possible. The images analysed above constitute the other side of this ideal image of femininity: a caring masculinity and a reciprocal heterosexuality.

[54] This extract makes the same presupposition discussed in Chapter Five, that women have a desire to work in the formal economy.

Figure 6.7: VID20_1.

Figure 6.8: VID20_1.

Figure 6.9: VID20_1.

Figure 6.10: VID20_1.

In order to further investigate the ways that the Fund represents men's care work, I now turn to an analysis of its written discourse. To imagine a world of caring fathers and working mothers, the Fund presupposes a social unit made up of a heterosexual, monogamous couple who form the very basis of the household as a meaningful economic unit. The Fund writes that "marital status, single or married, is a very good proxy for female household responsibility" (PUB16_30, p. 10) and that "[e]ven in

double-earner households, women assume a greater share of care work and domestic chores" (PUB19_52, p. 5). These quotes presuppose that marriage and couplehood are the basis from which household responsibilities and care operate. They continue to centre heterosexuality, marriage and the couple form as natural and as not needing further elaboration or consideration. Further, the IMF's encouragement of men's care work throughout its written and visual publications reveals how the economic order has depended on binary gendered expressions. Despite the IMF's earlier emphasis on 'macro-critical' issues of gender, the attempt to transform men's role in the economy to a caring one points to the importance of gender expression, sexuality and sex for the functioning of a particular form of economic life. As Griffin (2007a, p. 220) writes, the heteronormativity of development institutions has the effect of "associat[ing] successful human behaviour almost exclusively with a gender identity embodied in dominant forms of heterosexual masculinity." In the Fund's discourse, this heterosexual masculinity is no longer an uncaring, rational, ambitious *homo economicus* who depends on the reproductive work of his partner within the home, but rather a form of heterosexual masculinity which supports the ambitions of his partner, and in doing so, takes up the reproductive and caring work that was once exclusively relegated to the figure of the mother, woman and wife. The Fund thus transforms men's caring into a matter of inquiry and intervention; this move is a testament to the central role of heterosexual masculinity and femininity in political economy. It does this in part by analysing quantitative measures of gendered time use in the home.

> Men increase both their domestic chores and care work in richer countries. On average, men in high-income countries double their amount of time spent on care work with respect to low and lower-middle income countries from 0.2 to 0.4 hours per day. They also increase the amount of time spent on domestic chores from 1.1 to 1.8 hours per day (PUB19_52, p. 10).

In the above examination of time use, men's increased time spent on domestic chores and care work is associated with wealth and advancement. The quantitative assessment of time use purports to create a science of efficient and advanced heterosexuality. What this quote obscures from view is the discursive work underpinning the presumption that the family unit consists of a man who works and a woman who cares (as discussed above). It intervenes into this taken-for-granted unit of analysis, attempting to disrupt

the binary gender order for women's benefit, while simultaneously reproducing the heterosexist and capitalist vision of how reproduction ought to be structured. It endorses this marginal gain for women and mothers within the family unit in order to promote their over-extension or "depletion" (Rai et al. 2014) in the formal economy. To encourage more caring fathers is to encourage a form of capitalism that marks "advanced economies" (PUB18_40, p. 16; PUB19_52, p. 14) and "richer countries" (PUB19_52, p. 10). As Rao (2020, p. 142) writes concerning the Bank, this reallocation of sharing responsibilities appears "unqualifiedly desirable," "an unimpeachably feminist goal." However, by championing this restructuring of household responsibilities, the IMF is transforming these feminist goals into goals that prioritise neoliberal values of economic growth and stability. It also presupposes and depends on a conservative logic of personal responsibility as a solution to gendered inequality that is endemic to neoliberal capitalism (Rao 2020, p. 143; N.J. Smith 2020, pp. 110-1). The Fund's goal presupposes a vision of 'advancement' which involves heterosexuality in the home, productivity in the workplace and economic growth for the nation. This is also done through subject positioning of women's unpaid work and economic development, such as in the following where the Fund writes:

> Women do significantly less unpaid work in societies where there is stronger equality in managing assets and where women's rights in marriage are stronger, conditional on the level of economic development (PUB19_52, p. 17).

In the above extract, women's increased labour force participation is positioned as complementary to, and a characteristic of, 'development' and 'wealth.' It is also positioned as complementary to strong rights for women in marriage. These rights are discussed elsewhere as a marker of "advanced economies," and are expressed through "greater parity between paternity/maternity leave" (PUB18_40, p. 16). The relationship between social norms and care work has been well-established in this thesis, as it is a dominant thread of discussion in the Fund's discourse. It has also been observed in work on the gender policy at the World Bank, with slight variations. Bedford (2007, p. 289) writes that the World Bank's articulation of a gender policy is restrained by a "pressure to frame gender policy as producing complementary sharing between men

and women;" an imperative I believe is similar in the Fund's discourse. However, the World Bank differs by representing poor men as "irresponsible" and out of line with the "model of normative couplehood considered empowering by the World Bank" (Bedford 2007, p. 301). The problematic, classist depiction of poor men as "violent, lazy, drunken problems suffering from wounded masculinity" (Bedford 2007, p. 304) is incompatible with the connotations of wealth and advancement associated with caring fatherhood and masculinity in the IMF's discourse. When discussing men's care work as an emergent change in the way that social life is configured, the Fund describes it as "a shift in mind-set" (PUB19_46, p. 13). The extract continues:

> [F]amilies now consider parental duties and care the equal responsibility of both parents. Fathers have formed better relationships with their children, and the old excuse that women cannot be hired or promoted because they will (all!) drop out of the labor market no longer holds water (PUB19_46, p. 13).

Throughout the Fund's discourse on the Heterosexual Nuclear Family, the way that families arrange care is treated as an object of inquiry. In order to transform policies to be more equitable, a marked change in fatherhood is necessary. The closeness of the father's relationship to his child becomes an object of interest for the Fund, as a measure of advancement. This is significant insofar as it abstracts human connection away from principles of care, relationality and reciprocity to logics of advancement, progress and efficiency. It brings the connection of the parent to their child to bear on the success and prosperity of women's careers. "Equal responsibilities" (PUB19_46, p. 13) in "double-earner households" (PUB19_52, p. 5) is the aspirational arrangement, and it has effects for the income of the national economy.

In order to catalyse this shift in social norms around parenting and caring, the Fund stresses the importance of a few policies. Firstly, the Fund encourages "greater parity between paternity and maternity leave" in order to "support a more rapid return to work among mothers and help shift underlying gender norms" (PUB18_41, p. 13; see also: VID18_9; PUB19_46, p. 10). This is communicated visually in Figure 6.11. In Figure 6.11, a family consisting of a father, mother and small child are gathered around a table. The father and the child are in the foreground. The child sits on their father's lap as they

both look at the laptop on the table. The mother is in the background, slightly blurred, looking down at the table. The caption at the bottom of the screen reads: "**Equality** in **pay** and **parental leave** can empower women to seek work" (VID19_7). In this image, the father's proximity to and engagement with the child is indicative of the increased caring responsibility that the IMF endorses. The father is represented as an active and engaged parent to his child, and the mother's distance from them similarly represents an ideal model of gender equal ways of conducting care within the home; a "redistribut[ion of] these tasks more equally between men and women" (PUB21_62, p. 29).

Figure 6.11: VID19_7.

Secondly, the Fund endorses the introduction of so-called "family-friendly" policies (PUB19_52, p. 19, 22; PUB19_46, p. 12; see also: PUB06_6, p. 1; PUB18_37, p. 8; PUB18_39, p. 24), encompassing shared parental leave and "universal childcare" (PUB19_46, p. 12). These 'family-friendly' policies are presented as disruptive, with a transformative potential: "if applied properly these policies have the potential to change the makeup - and the rules of the game - of both the public and private spheres" (PUB19_46, p. 12). Though transformation is promised, in this extract the natural order of neoliberal capitalism and the heterosexual configuration of the household is presupposed. This presupposition is clear given the unquestioned treatment of the existing household configuration when speaking of 'transformation.' This is a

discursive device that limits what ‘transformation’ of the “public and private spheres” may amount to, by implicitly demarcating boundaries around what the reader can imagine. This critique is reflected in the literature, where scholars have highlighted how development institutions, like the Fund, have not in fact transformed the rules of the game, but rather have adjusted the language of the game (see: Eisenstein 2009; Fraser 2009; McRobbie 2009; Tornhill 2016). One way that the IMF entrenches the current ‘rules of the game’ is by (re)producing heterosexuality as the central organising principle of reproduction and care. In other words, queer ways of organising life, love and care remain invisible as “sexual differences” are silenced and “living outside normative heterosexual frameworks [continue to be regarded] as marginal to our interests” (Roseneil 2004, p. 410). As the Fund puts it, ‘family-friendly’ policies are transformative in the way that they “enable women to participate in the labor market and public decision-making, while making space for men to share domestic responsibilities” (PUB19_46, p. 12). In this statement, both the fixity of the gender binary and the heterosexual arrangement of care and reproduction are presupposed. Heterosexuality is presumed to be the natural condition of social, political and economic life and it is further presupposed that adjusting the affordances provided to women to work while having children represents a ‘transformation.’ However, queer critique must intervene here to make clear the reciprocal and mutually reinforcing relationship of heterosexuality and capitalism, and to highlight the queer ways that care is and can be organised. Equitable heterosexuality is complementary with the conservative reformist agenda of the IMF and does not in fact represent the transformation that has been more meaningfully detailed elsewhere by critics of capitalism and of the binary gender order (see, for example: Federici 2004, 2020; Lewis 2022; N.J. Smith 2020).[55]

The IMF’s discourse also represents men’s care work as a ‘win-win’ for the economy, because of the “utility cost incurred by the family” “whenever women supply labor” (PUB19_44, p. 10). This publication continues by explaining that:

[55] Another example of a ‘family-friendly’ policy is “taxes that don’t penalize the secondary breadwinner” (VID18_9), which I discussed in the ‘household configuration’ section of this chapter.

> This cost relates to the difficulty in coordinating multiple household activities, such as home production, child/elderly care, and other unpaid work. For some countries, this cost can also be interpreted as social and cultural barriers for a woman and her family when she works outside the home (PUB19_44, p. 10).

In the above, the words 'difficulty,' 'cost,' and 'barriers' all predicate women's work in the formal labour force as a challenging, negative experience for the household. This is the tension that the IMF's discourse attempts to reconcile, while maintaining the "normativity of heterosexual culture," thereby continuing to (re)produce heterosexuality as the "privileged institutions of social reproduction, the accumulation and transfer of capital, and self development" (Berlant & Warner 1998, p. 553). The IMF advances a position that women ought to work in the formal economy; to convincingly make this case, however, it attempts to 'overcome' traditionally inscribed gender roles that have long been fundamental to the function of the economy. This reveals a presupposition that heterosexual ways of organising life, love and care are stable and natural – and that heterosexuality can be reformed to better support women. In doing so, the socially constructed nature of marriage and heterosexuality is obscured. Friedrich Engels (2021 [1884], p. 64; see also: Lewis 2022) has made this argument about marriage, connecting marriage to the development of the capitalist economic system. Engels (2021 [1884], p. 64) argues that marriage is "not in any way the fruit of individual sex-love" but rather is an organisation "of convenience." He continues "it was the first form of the family to be based, not on natural, but on economic conditions - on the victory of private property over primitive, natural communal property" (Engels 2021 [1884], p. 64). Marriage and the organisation of care around heterosexual monogamy is therefore unnatural and a consequence of economic conditions. Further, care and household activities are framed as only occurring within the heterosexual monogamous unit. The IMF attempts to materially recognise household activities and care as unavoidable and necessary. However, this recognition is only made in service of the "improved functioning of labor markets" (PUB19_46, p. 23). In the below extract, the Fund positions care in relation to "the market, the state, and the household" in a way to ensure that care is invested in for economic gain:

> At the community level, more research should look at the costs and benefits of greater access to care and improved functioning of labor markets. And at the macro level, we should calculate the benefits of investing in care in terms of the jobs and fiscal space created. It is only by making the economic costs and benefits of care provision more visible that we will be able to change the dialogue around investing in care, and around redistributing roles and responsibilities between the market, the state, and the household with the goal of supporting universal access to quality care (PUB19_46, p. 23).

The above encapsulates the IMF's position on care. It specifies that a clear, complementary positioning between care and the functioning of labour markets needs to be articulated in order for care to be perceived as a worthwhile investment. The IMF here establishes the terms through which all human behaviours must be expressed. Care must be transformed into a worthwhile investment and must not sacrifice or pose a barrier to economic growth and stability. Throughout its discourse, this is established through the association of care as 'traditional,' a 'cost' and 'barrier.' Care must relinquish to the terms of the market in order to be tenable. Flexibilisation is one of the solutions that the IMF proposes to the 'burden' of care. I now turn to this.

IV. Flexibilisation

Flexible work arrangements are framed as solutions to the problem of women's 'double-shift' and the 'burden' of care work in IMF discourse. In this section, I make the case that the flexibilisation imperative further blurs the line between productive work and reproductive work, placing pressure on women to constantly be operating in line with the efficiency, productivity and output logics of capitalism. This influences how work and care are organised and imagined. I argue that the promotion of flexibilisation reflects the absent presence of the economy that I have identified elsewhere in this thesis. It is a tool that allows the IMF to achieve their mandate while obscuring the unpaid (care) work that I have explored elsewhere in this chapter. In other words, flexibilisation is a means through which the central mandate of promoting economic participation for women can be achieved. The IMF endorses flexibilisation in many of its publications. For instance:

> Flexibility increases the probability of women being employed (PUB15_12, p. 18).
>
> Offering flexible work arrangements and breaking down the barriers between part-time and full-time work would also help (PUB15_9, p. 32).
>
> Digitalization would also help more workers to work from home while keeping in line with social distancing (PUB21_58, p. 35).

In the above, flexibility and digitalisation are predicated positively and positioned as complementary with women's employment. As I identified in Chapters Four and Five, women's employment is associated with 'empowerment.' In the above, the IMF extends this attribute or quality to flexibility and digitalisation – as an avenue to women's empowerment. In the final extract above, digitalisation and flexible working conditions are also discussed in reference to COVID-19, and the ways that it was compatible with the health advice of social distancing in 2021. Flexibilisation is predicated as an *opportunity* or *equaliser* for women, or for people who are unable to work. Represented here as an opportunity for women to access the empowerment of formal work, what remains unmentioned are the conditions of precarity that some flexible work entails (Cady 2013, p. 395). Increasingly precarious work conditions, including casual and flexible work arrangements may mean that workers do not have access to safeguards such as sick leave or a pension. Despite these risks, the IMF's discourse uses exclusively positive predicates when describing flexible work.

In its visual discourse, flexibilisation is referenced in VID19_7 and VID18_11. Figure 6.12 depicts an enlarged full moon in the centre of an orange sky floating over a cityscape. The caption at the bottom of the screen reads: "So can **flexible** work schedules," suggesting that working at night or after traditional work hours is a way for women to access formal work. The shift to night depicted through the presence of the moon, alongside the caption, suggests that working in the middle of the night, after presumably spending a whole day on care and unpaid work, is an empowering and desirable option for women to get into market work. Although the opportunity to work outside of traditional hours, for some, may be desirable, it also premised on the binary of non-work (i.e. care work) and paid work. It further entrenches the problems of the

'double-shift,' but rather inverts the order of tasks that women are undertaking (i.e. caring during the day and working through the evening) (Gregg 2008, p. 286). In the same video, the IMF promotes the use of technology for women's access to the 'gig economy' (see: Figure 6.13). In this split-screen visual, the left is a close-up of a phone screen showing a food delivery app (which appears to be Uber Eats). Despite the presence of this visual, there are no depictions of food delivery workers and also a marked absence of recognition of the poor conditions experienced by people working for Uber. For instance, drivers have reported issues with fatigue, ineligibility for workers compensation and problems with the expenses required to maintain their own vehicle (Hams 2025). Additionally, drivers have reported being unable to make ends meet, leading to working long hours and feeling unable to "live a normal life, like normal people" (Turnnidge 2025). These fundamental problems with Uber, and the reality of the long, fatigued hours of work remain markedly absent. Additionally, as Melissa Gregg (2008, p. 287) highlights, the 'freedom of choice' for women in the Global North to undertake flexible work depends on a relationship of dependence between other forms of work conducted by primarily Global South women. With reference to the information economy specifically, Gregg (2008, p. 295) writes that "the manual labour outsourced to the developing world and the mental labour of the West are fundamentally and ethically linked." Scholars have pointed out how the marketing of work-from-home arrangements are glamorised, particularly for the 'Creative Class,' with their "association with bohemian and romantic notions of the artisan… [and] the unique qualities of the entrepreneur" (Gregg 2008, p. 287; see also: McRobbie 1998, 2002, 2005). In Figure 6.13, this reimagining of the 'Working Woman' who works from home is compatible with this characterisation. This visual is a counterpoint to the visuals of the *femina economica* which appear in Chapters Four and Five, who are in office spaces, button-ups and other work clothes (i.e. blazers) (see: Figures 4.5, 4.6, 4.8, and 5.4). Rather, she is dressed more casually and appears to be pregnant, which none of the *femina economica* figures were.

Figure 6.12: VID19_7.

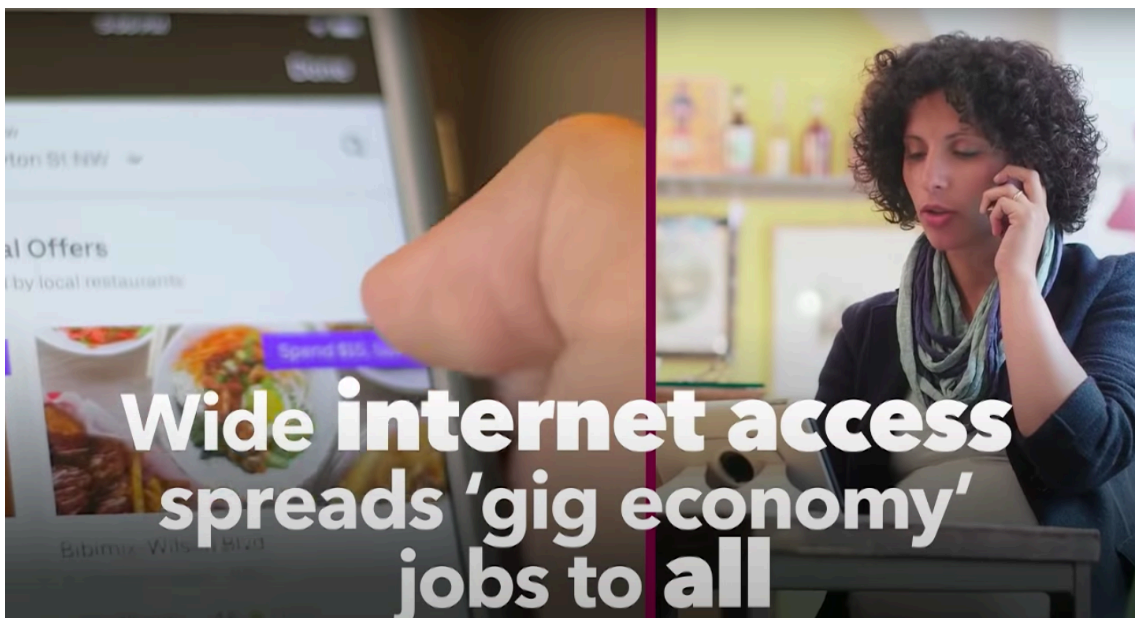

Figure 6.13: VID19_7.

Lastly, in Figure 6.14, 'flexible working conditions,' alongside childcare, equal treatment, public transport and teleworking are characterised as "bring[ing] progress." The positioning of teleworking and flexible working hours as 'progressive' indicates that, for the IMF, the working conditions characteristic of neoliberalism are desirable. This complementary subject positioning reveals the primacy and absent presence of economic growth and stability in the IMF's solutions to the 'burden' of care work and

the double-shift. The IMF represents flexibilisation as a tool for “redistribut[ing]” unpaid work between men and women:

> Flexible work arrangements also help redistribute unpaid work between men and women… In this respect, the government as well as businesses and trade unions can play a role in changing the organization of paid work to better balance work and family (PUB19_52, p. 24).

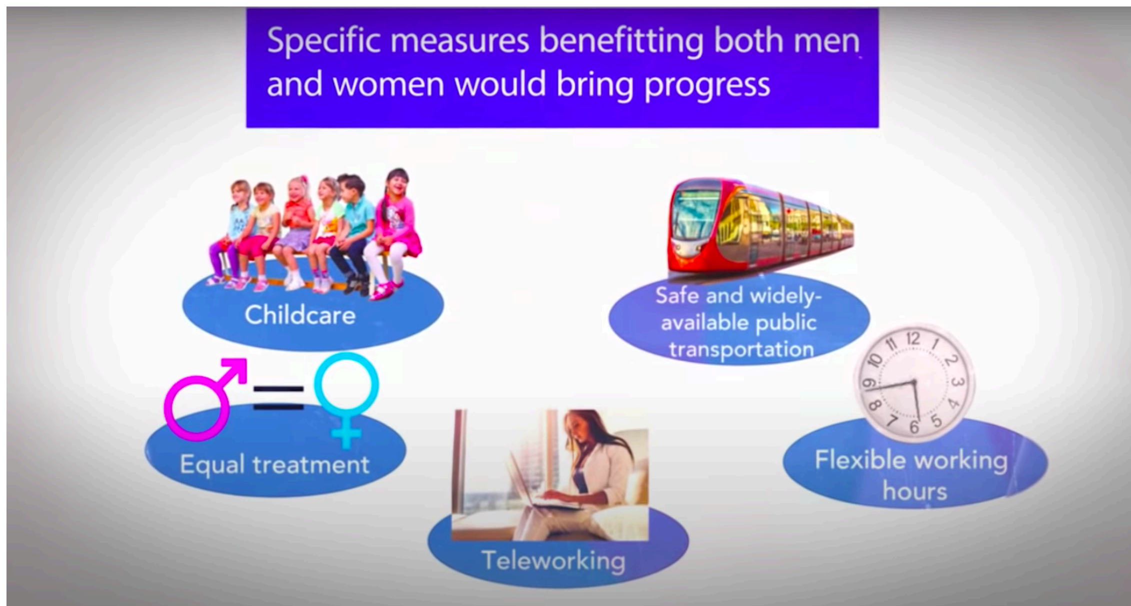

Figure 6.14: VID18_11.

Businesses are positioned alongside trade unions and governments, attributing them the same level of responsibility for (re)configuring the balance between work and family. In the IMF’s broader discourse, which attempts to promote a more gender-equal heterosexuality, flexible working hours are positioned as complementary to this goal. This is reflective of the general trend which has been recorded in news reporting on flexible work in the US, wherein flexibilisation was “linked to feminist goals by the ways that it allowed women to work, better their living conditions, and care for their families” (Cady 2013, p. 404). For the IMF, flexible work is similarly represented as complementary to feminist aims. As I identified earlier, flexible, casual or otherwise precarious work has numerous problems concerning security. Additionally, following the implementation of ‘flexible’ working conditions in the 1980s and 1990s, research revealed that women who took up the option of flexible work were often denied pay rises and penalised by their employer in other ways (Cady 2013, p. 407). Additionally,

women working flexibly often reported working more than 40 hours per week (Hochschild 1997). Despite being represented as an 'empowering' solution to the gendered distribution of care and formal work, flexibilisation poses its own issues. I close this chapter with this substantive section on flexibilisation to draw attention to the way that the IMF's 'feminist' solutions are compatible with neoliberal imperatives of economic growth, productivity and stability.

V. Conclusion

This chapter has explored the central presumption in IMF discourse that reproduction, care work, and intimacy take place in the Heterosexual Nuclear Family. To do so, I traced the spaces in which the Fund implicitly and explicitly defines the 'household,' pointing to its heterosexist foundations. The stability of the binary gender order and, relatedly, of the heterosexual matrix is the precursor for the IMF's production of knowledge about the 'household.' This presumption is important to highlight, because it has crucial effects for the ways that economic life is imagined. Heterosexuality and the nuclear family are key for the reproduction of life which supplies the market with workers. This way of organising economic life is then bound up with the presumption that women care, and men work. This binary organisation of care/work was explored in the second section of this chapter, wherein the IMF represents caring as burdensome and paid work as empowering. This section explored the way that feminised caring was discouraged in favour of masculinised work as an avenue to empowerment. Functioning similarly to the ideal subject-position of the Working Woman of Chapter Five, this discourse favours work, productivity and growth. The third section of this chapter explored the IMF's encouragement of men's caring work as a solution to the problem of women's 'double-shift.' I locate the emergence of this form of masculinity as an attempt to counter dominant forms of neoliberal masculinity that manifest as a result of the competitiveness and aggression of the free market. I argued that the IMF's discourse on men's care work is indicative of the importance of binary gender norms and roles for the economy, and the ways that the Fund intervenes in them to smooth out the functioning of capitalism. Despite the encouragement of a softer form of caring masculinity, the IMF requires the binary function of gender in order to make sense of and (re)produce

the capitalist economy. Similarly, in the last section of this chapter I discussed the Fund's focus on 'flexibilisation' as a way for women to balance work and caring. I critiqued this focus, arguing that flexibilisation is a way that the efficiency and productivity logic of capitalism bleeds into everyday, transforming the ways that we live. The next chapter develops this critique, by interrogating how the IMF implicitly and explicitly discusses (ab)normal sex. In this chapter I make the case that the IMF's discourse is heavily implicated in disciplining and regulating (un)acceptable forms of gendered and heterosexist behaviours compatible with the logic of capitalist production.

Chapter Seven: The Risky Sexual Subject

In this chapter, I map out the (re)production of a 'Risky Sexual Subject' in the IMF's discourse. This subject-position emerges in the margins of the IMF's discussion of acceptable (read: normal) sex and reproduction. I identify the subject-position of the Risky Sexual Subject in the IMF's discussion of fertility, maternal and child mortality, domestic and sexual violence, human capital, ageing and health and HIV/AIDs. All of these are represented within a matrix of productivity, output and economic growth. I also discuss the Fund's discourses on homosexuality, homonormativity and the absence of queerness.

Despite the prevalence of a Risky Sexual Subject in the IMF's written discourse, this subject-position is invisible within the visual discourse I analysed. Rather, I find that the homonormative gay subject dominates, which obfuscates the absence of a genuinely troubling and destabilising queerness. This is unsurprising because of the function of the hyper-visible and visible subject-positions; these are aspirational figures who comprise the normative heterosexual nuclear family discussed in the previous chapter. In this chapter, I therefore interrogate the ways that the Fund regulates bodies so that they are heterosexual (as well as heteronormative and homonormative) and squarely within the 'safety' of the binary gender order. In this chapter, I am guided by Michel Foucault (1978), Jasbir Puar (2007) and Achille Mbembe (2003) whose work is instructive to understand biopolitics, biopower and necropolitics. I argue that the IMF exerts power over matters of life and death through its regulatory and disciplining discourses on gender, sex and sexuality. Coinciding with the invisibility of queerness, I use Mbembe's (2003, p. 15) understanding of death as a "principle of excess - an anti-economy." Although Foucault (1978) and Mbembe (2003, p. 27) understand biopolitics and necropolitics in terms of the sovereign right to kill and maintain life (in that "sovereignty means the capacity to define who matters and who does not, who is *disposable* and who is not") this can also be applied to the discourse produced by the Fund, which functions as the form of diffuse and decentralised power that Foucault theorised (see: Chapter Three). In 2022, a Fund publication expressed that the desired outcome of legal regulation was the "exercise [of] control over certain behaviours,"

delimiting those behaviours which are "either permissible or impermissible" (PUB22_71, p. 17). This is an apt expression of the stake that the Fund has in encouraging certain types of behaviours over others. In this chapter, I make the case that permissible and impermissible sex is a central behavioural concern of the Fund. This has the effect of rendering 'queer' subjects abnormal, invisible and in need of correction, while normalising and naturalising heterosexuality, whiteness and able-bodiedness.

I. Fertility

In this section, I discuss the Fund's representation of fertility as a site of technical intervention within an economic matrix. The relationship between fertility and the economy is most commonly thought to emerge from Thomas Malthus' (1798) seminal essay entitled 'An essay on the principle of population, as it affects the future improvement of society.' A strong area of study has emerged which (re)produces the classist foci that emerged from Malthus' essay, and which interrogates the links between family choices and economic growth (see: Ashraf et al. 2013; Barro & Becker 1989; Becker 1992; Sobotka et al. 2011; Wang et al. 1994). Malthus' essay advocated for a 'scientific' treatment of population control and argued that removing public support for the poor amounted to a 'natural' check on population (Kaufman & Nelson 2012, p. 432). In other words, poverty ought to function to discourage marriage and procreation for lower class people. If they were to reproduce in lieu of the wealth and resources required to support the livelihood of their family, this should be thought of as an 'irrationality' which would "experience the 'positive check' of starvation… bring[ing] the natural balance back to order and reduce excess population" (Kaufman & Nelson 2012, p. 433). In contrast, feminist literature on fertility and its relationship to patriarchy[56] interrogates different questions about how or why fertility decisions are made (see: Folbre 1983; Malhotra et al. 1995; McDonald 2000; Torr & Short 2004). The latter group of scholars have critiqued how neo-classical or neo-Malthusian thinkers conceptualise the fertility decisions of the family unit, which is focused on the price or

[56] I understand patriarchy to refer to social institutions which privilege the power of men, and in which women are unable to adequately support themselves, therefore depending on male relatives for survival (Malhotra et al. 1995, p. 284).

cost of children (Folbre 1983, p. 267). This paradigm treats the family as a "static, unchanging institution, a decision-making black box" (Folbre 1983, p. 267). In this view, the neo-classical account does not consider how power manifests in the family, including processes of conflict, compromise, domination and resistance (Folbre 1983, p. 267). In the IMF's discourse, the neo-classical focus on the relationship between fertility and economic growth is central. In this section, I subject this focus to feminist, queer and decolonial scrutiny, attempting to challenge the problematic assumptions made by the Fund's discourse on population and fertility. I find that the IMF's discourses on fertility diverge into two distinct and contradictory arguments: fertility is associated with economic growth; and, fertility is associated with interruptions, delays and consequences for paid employment, which therefore compromises economic growth.

In the data corpus analysed for this research, 'fertility' first appears in the 2007 'Global Monitoring Report: Confronting the Challenges of Gender Equality and Fragile States,' in which it directly ties the ability to "regulate fertility" with "labor force participation and earnings," before moving on to claim that it is: "an indirect measure of the potential for women's economic empowerment" (PUB07_7, p. 124). In doing so, this publication brings fertility within the remit of the Fund's mandate by positioning it as a question of economic empowerment. In the below extract, the IMF explicitly writes that engagement in paid work and higher earnings tend to correlate with "women's ability to regulate fertility and choose desired family size:"

> *Modern contraceptive use.* This proposed indicator responds to the need to better measure women's ability to regulate fertility and choose desired family size. Since ability to regulate fertility is strongly linked to labor force participation and earnings, it also is an indirect measure of the potential for women's economic empowerment (PUB07_07, p. 124).

The publication also endorses that countries monitor the use of 'modern' contraceptives, recommending that "countries also monitor the percentage of women of reproductive age (and their sexual partners) who use modern contraceptives" (PUB07_7, p. 124). This claim presupposes a belief that fertility and reproduction is reasonably a site of state intervention in order to improve labour force participation, reflecting the

biopolitical impulse of the sovereign state to maintain and discipline life and how it is lived (Foucault 1978; Mbembe 2003, p. 27).

In publications released eight years later, in 2015, the IMF continues to maintain the connection between fertility and economic outcomes in saying that "fertility has been shown to significantly affect female labor force participation" (PUB15_10, p. 7), or that "high fertility is associated with more regular employment" (PUB15_11, p. 14). In a Working Paper, the authors write that: "higher fertility affects the incidence of regular female employment positively both in Asia and Nordics, while it affects non-regular employment negatively," concluding that "handouts of child money are counterproductive" (PUB15_11, p. 14). They continue that "increased FLFP [Female Labor Force Participation] does not translate into low fertility… [which is particularly noticeable in regular female employment (PUB15_11, p. 15). Here, the neo-classical or neo-Malthusian focus on the costs of having children is presumed to be the most central dimension of women's decision-making. This publication represents regular female employment as complementary with higher fertility in countries where this is desirable, namely Korea and Japan. Regular employment is represented as the best source of support for birthing and raising children: "Even in the Nordics, the negative impact of child benefits on non-regular employment outweighs the positive impact on regular employment" (PUB15_11, p. 15). This extract explicitly positions regular employment as a superior source of support than "non-regular employment" and "child benefits" provided by the state. Although this extract does not venture to make the explicitly classist and racist claims of Malthus' work, it does echo the sentiment that families should not be depending on "child benefits" or state support, but rather that women are best positioned to have children when their regular employment covers the cost of supporting a child. This publication is an outlier in the claims that it makes with respect to fertility and family planning. It contradicts the 2007 publication interrogated earlier, which endorses that states monitor contraceptive use and family planning. As I will explore later in this section, it is also inconsistent with claims made about fertility in Mali, wherein 'high fertility' is represented as a drain on the country's resources.

Further, this association of 'fertility' with the 'economy' or labour force participation is one which is circular. In the above quote, the IMF makes the claim that women are best supported by regular employment, and that, for this reason, their 'fertility levels' will not be affected by regular employment. High 'fertility levels,' in this context, offers benefits to the national economy by reproducing future workers, and by cultivating new 'human capital.' By extension, this discourse depends on the presupposition that female labour force participation is to be encouraged because of the benefits to the national economy (see: Chapters Four and Five). This logic is representative of the regulatory and disciplinary power of what Michelle Murphy (2017) termed 'the economization of life,' which depends on the existence of the 'national' economy. She writes that 'the economization of life' is a "regime of valuation" which "names the practices that differentially value and govern life in terms of their ability to foster the macroeconomy of the nation-state, such as life's ability to contribute to the gross domestic product (GDP) of the nation" (Murphy 2017, pp. 5-6). This is relevant for the IMF's classification of 'fertility' as a measurement of women's economic empowerment, because it creates legitimacy for the intervention of the international into the intimate lives of people's bodies, and wombs, in order to 'improve' the functioning of the economy. In the following extract, the 'economization of life' is evident through the listing of fertility alongside factors like inflation, foreign direct investment (FDI) and trade openness:

> We regress log of GDP per capita on: (i) female LFP, (ii) fertility, (iii) inflation, (iv) FDI, and (v) trade openness (PUB17_34, p. 19).[57]

The above extract presupposes that fertility, inflation, FDI and trade openness are similar in their importance to understand the macroeconomic impact of female LFP. In its discourses on 'fertility,' economic stability, growth and GDP are afforded unexplained priority. Within the IMF's focus on the macroeconomy, and larger questions of economic growth and stability, their discourse is concerned with questions of how to best regulate sex, birth, and work. These are embodied processes, yet the

[57] In this publication, the authors are attempting to determine the macroeconomic impact of increasing FLFP. They write: "we seek to provide a simple 'back-of-the-envelope' estimate of the potential economic impact of increasing female LFP, based on fixed effects regressions, and assuming no change in other variables they may affect GDP" (PUB17_34, p. 19).

IMF's discourse transforms them into disembodied and abstract ones through the use of technical language. This reveals that the binary framing of issues as *either* macro-economic *or* not macro-economic fails to capture how even the most 'scientific' of economic theories are abstracting from the most personal and embodied human experiences. For example, the predicate "past their *prime childbearing* years" is used to describe women "in their 40s and 50s," attaching a negative connotation to women's ageing as well as centralising women's connection to having children (PUB16_28, p. 9, emphasis added).

The Fund's discourse on fertility also presupposes that gender, sex, and (hetero)sexuality are aligned, specifically presupposing that the gender category (woman) maps onto those bodies that can carry pregnancies. The Fund also uses the predicates "non-pregnant" and "non-nursing" (PUB19_49, p. 18) to describe women, presuming again that the gender category 'women' maps onto bodies that can become pregnant, and which can nurse. The prefix 'non,' in the context of the quote, places emphasis on the condition of the working body. The extract reads: "[I]n Senegal, there are still restrictions that prevent non-pregnant, non-nursing women from performing the same job as men" (PUB19_49, p. 18). In line with the qualities of the aspiration figure of the 'Working Woman,' this extract presupposes that women who work are not pregnant and not nursing. Although these extracts regarding fertility appear across publications over time, it is significant to note that these publications do not advance a central position on fertility, work, female labour force participation and economic growth. In high-income national contexts, 'higher fertility' is presupposed as a positive for the national economy. In low-income national contexts, however, 'high fertility' is represented as draining the nation's resources.[58]

In a publication entitled 'Fragility, Demographics, Gender Inequality: Mali,' the author writes that "population growth [in Mali]... is among the highest in the world, weighing on already-limited resources" (PUB23_75, p. 5). Here, the fertility rate is represented as problematic for an 'already struggling' economy. The publication continues by

[58] This is an interesting contradiction that appears across these two publications, however this divergent position on fertility is not representative of the IMF's discourse. For the publication on high-income countries and fertility see: PUB15_11, pp. 14-5. For the publication on low-income countries and fertility see: PUB23_75, p. 5.

specifying that 'high population growth' "leads to pressures on the country's resources, including food supplies… a rise in unemployment, force[s] workers to take jobs in the informal sector… and increase the risk of social tensions" (PUB23_75, p. 5). Lastly, "a rise in the number of people relying on state support for basic needs will increase the dependency ratio and add to pressure on public finances" (PUB23_75, p. 5). In these quotes, the author positions high fertility in Mali in opposition to the stability of the state. Rather, 'highly fertile' mothers are positioned as causal factors for Mali's classification as a fragile state. This places emphasis on the individual women who have "six children" (PUB23_75, p. 5) and implies that state stability in Mali would be improved if women had fewer children. The connection between 'disadvantaged' economies and high fertility rates is made later in the same publication, writing:

> Economies and societies where women are most disadvantaged tend to have higher fertility rates, for example, with research showing that there is a close link between low education opportunities for women and the average number of children per female (The World Bank, 2018) (PUB23_75, p. 5).

The representation of mothers with multiple children 'draining' an 'already-struggling' and 'disadvantaged' nation's resources problematises her as an individual, rather than the structures in which she lives. These are structures which are, importantly, influenced by the IMF's policies which endorse minimising public spending. As documented in the literature, this shrinking of public spending disproportionately affects poor women with caring responsibilities (Chletsos & Sintos 2021; Sadasivam 1997; Sparr 1994). Yet, in the IMF's discourse, the problem is represented to be one of 'choice' and 'personal responsibility' (Kaufman & Nelson 2012, p. 430; Schram 2000, p. 27). In another extract, "high population growth" and "gender inequality" supposedly both "play… a role" in the "state of fragility" that Mali has been "trapped in" since 2012 (PUB23_75, p. 8). This discourse of 'high fertility' has similarities to representations of the 'welfare queen' who Cathy Cohen (1997, p. 455; see also: Hancock 2004; Schram 2000) describes as the "single mothers, teen mothers, and, primarily poor women of color dependent on state assistance" who endure "stigmatization and demonization." This stigmatisation and demonisation was, in the US context, a manifestation of colonial anxieties around proper and legitimate family structures (Cohen 1997, pp. 455-6). In the

Fund's context, this anxiety about young mothers, dependent on the resources of the state is expressed through the use of words like "trapped," "fragility" (PUB23_75, p. 8) and "weighing on already-limited resources" (PUB23_75, p. 5) invoking a sense of panic and scarcity, while simultaneously demonising childbirth as a strain on a precarious economic condition. In the Fund's emphasis on these logics of scarcity, it (re)produces the racist and classist logics of Malthus' work on populations, which did not appear in the publications analysed earlier on Nordic countries, Korea and Japan (PUB15_11). It is a rearticulation of the panic that "everything We have had to work hard for - property, the fruits of intellectual and physical labor, political power, survival itself - will fall to feckless Others through mere fecundity" (Kaufman & Nelson 2012, p. 443). Welfare and state support for mothers who are unable to work is represented as a threat to the stability of the nation, not just the economy. In this way, they are not a legible economic subject. They do not reflect the principles of efficiency, productivity, self-sufficiency and 'personal responsibility' of the *femina economica*, 'Third World girl' or 'Working Woman' more broadly. These aspirational subjects are all unified by their ability to transcend their disadvantage through innovation and entrepreneurship: they are ideal neoliberal economic subjects. In contrast, the mother of many children, is represented as abject, queer and illegible, since her decision-making does not map neatly on the presumed traits of the female economic subject established in Chapter Five. The 'highly fertile' mother can be understood as 'queer' in the sense that she is treated as an abnormality, failure or as lacking a 'successful' future (Edelman 2004; Kafer 2013; Vinson 2018).

This discourse disproportionately refers to poor women of colour, which reflects the patterns of the IMF's discourse analysed above. The women of Mali are represented differently to the women of "the Nordics" and "Japan and Korea" (PUB15_11, p. 15), and, although this is not explicitly racialised, it may depend on established cultural codes. For instance, Ange-Marie Hancock (2004) studies how 'the politics of disgust' frames the public identity of the 'welfare queen,' and how the 'face' of the welfare recipient in public knowledge is typically that of a black woman. The cultural code of the welfare queen has also been historically associated with individual "pathologies" as well as "allegations of the destructive nature of Negro family formations" (Cohen 1997,

p. 455). In Cohen's (1997, p. 458) article, she argues that it is not because of the "nonheterosexist behaviour" of the people in these family formations, but "rather [their] perceived nonnormative sexual behaviour." It is this nonnormative quality to sexual behaviour which queers the 'welfare queen.' The way that the IMF represents 'fertility' is compatible with what has been termed a "moral regime" (Alvarez & Marre 2022, p. 720), wherein respectable reproductive behaviour and practices are (re)produced, monitored and controlled through the establishment of social 'truths.' By naming 'high fertility' as the problem, the IMF represents the 'highly fertile' mother in Mali as immoral, irresponsible and as straining public resources. This deviant or 'queer' heterosexual figure is the opposite of the entrepreneurial 'Working Woman' discussed in Chapter Five.

Another deviant sexual subject that emerges in the Fund's discussion of fertility is the adolescent mother, who is represented in relation to the "adolescent fertility rate," "early childbearing" and "premature motherhood" (PUB20_54, p. 13). "Premature motherhood" or "adolescent fertility" is defined by the Fund as birth given by "women ages 15-19 years" (PUB20_54, p. 13). The Fund problematises early motherhood because of "detrimental health, economic, and social risks" as well as the prevention of "women from pursuing further education, and thus to obtain higher-skilled jobs" (PUB20_54, p. 13). The deviance of early motherhood is produced through its oppositional and conflictual relationship with women's labour force participation in high-skilled jobs. The relationship of the young mother to education is central in the Fund's discussion of this deviant subject. Across many publications, the Fund stresses the importance of education to women's development of 'human capital' (discussed in more detail later in this chapter) and in discouraging 'early motherhood.' It writes:

> Low adolescent fertility, a narrower marriage age gap (to proxy cultural norms and under-age marriage) and public spending on education are also linked to lower gender gaps in education (PUB18_38, p. 5).
>
> *Fertility and marriage gaps are closely related to gender gaps in education.* Higher fertility rates at the adolescent stage are strongly associated with wider gender gaps in education, reflecting girls dropping out from school to take care of their children (PUB18_38, p. 13).

> Separately, lower fertility rates have been associated with higher education levels for girls, higher female labor force participation, and higher savings (PUB18_40, p. 7).
>
> In particular, high adolescent fertility rates prevent girls from going to school thereby increasing gender gaps in education. Subsequently, these girls may remain out of the labor market altogether or enter the labor market with a low skill level, exacerbating gender gaps in economic participation and wages (PUB18_41, p. 9)

In the above, the IMF represents adolescent fertility in relation to the nation's "savings" and with the "labor force." It makes the connection that adolescent fertility has indirect but clear ramifications for the nation's gender (in)equality, as well as wealth. Throughout this discourse, it is presupposed that the central reason why "adolescent fertility" is problematic is because of the barriers it creates in accessing market-based work. In the final extract above, the predicate "low" is used to describe the skill level of girls who have children young. This depends on the presupposition that market work is more valuable than care work. Throughout these extracts, education is also focal, which reflects the IMF's larger imperative to cultivate human capital for the benefit of the national economy rather than a focus on the mental and physical wellbeing of girls and young women who are new mothers. Additionally, in the extracts above, the IMF (re)produces the cultural narrative around 'teen mothers' as a "coherent category of problem people" (Vinson 2018, p. ix). Like the cultural code of the 'welfare queen,' the 'teen mother' is associated with immorality, wrongness, and sexual abnormality (Vinson 2018, p. ix). For instance, the IMF writes that: "The combination of low education, gender roles, early pregnancy, and early marriage can create a poverty trap for women and girls" (PUB19_49, p. 14). The IMF's sentiment around teen mothers or early motherhood reproduces the common-sense that envelops, disciplines and silences these subjects, namely, early pregnancy as the beginning of a "tragic downfall" (Vinson 2018, p. 65). This discursive process of creating an abject and abnormal sexual subject in the teen mother is also racialised.

Racialised binaries of pre/modernity are used in the IMF's discourse on fertility. In the below extract, the predicate 'modern,' is used. 'Modern' has been established in the

literature as a novel, racially 'neutral,' shorthand for the old, Orientalist binary of civility/barbarity (Said 2003). In 2019, the IMF wrote that:

> Disseminating knowledge and creating an atmosphere where women learn and have access to family planning, sexual education, and modern contraceptives can pave the way to a healthier, more informed and more prosperous generation of women (PUB19_49, p. 24)

The above expresses an important goal, but it problematically ties family planning, sexual education, and modern contraceptives to the murky and undefined concept 'prosperity,' suggesting once again the centrality of economic outcomes in matters of reproductive health. In the above, the predicate "prosperous" is used to positively represent women who have fewer children or who otherwise spend more time on their formal employment. The concept of "prosperity" has been interrogated by many scholars, who have highlighted the ways that the concept has been bound up with neoliberal logics of constant growth and output (Jackson 2017, p. 79; Nierling 2012, p. 240). The linking of "prosperity" to growth in GDP has been identified as flawed, on the grounds that it is a "poor proxy" for people's life satisfaction and happiness (Jackson 2017, p. 85). Proponents of the 'degrowth' movement highlight that the pursuit of GDP growth is not merely abstract but is materially linked to ecological breakdown: "The preoccupation with GDP is a fetish that obscures this fact; it makes it seem as though growth is immaterial when in reality it is not" (Hickel 2021, p. 1106; see also: Kallis et al. 2012). Additionally, 'prosperous' conditions can also be extended to encompass non-paid work, which involves an interrogation of how value is currently presumed to be attributed to activities which generate income or economic value (Nierling 2012, p. 240). For this reason, the IMF's use of the word "prosperous" to describe the condition of 'modernity' is worth interrogation. In another extract, the concept of 'prosperity' resonates with freeing one's time from unpaid work within the home:

> Higher fertility is associated with more unpaid work. As shown in the regression results reported in Table 1, women with children spend 37 more minutes on unpaid work than women without children. The time spent on unpaid work increases by 12 minutes, on average, per child (PUB19_52, p. 17).

In the above, fewer children corresponds with more freedom from 'unpaid work,' forming part of the Fund's vision of prosperity through modern contraceptives - enabling a work life with minimum unpaid 'interruptions' (see: Chapter Six) within the home. In the above, women's unpaid care work continues to be negatively represented, while men's care work, as I explored in Chapter Six, is represented as a positive. For instance, the IMF encourages tax systems that deter "working parents" from having children to maintain "female labor supply" (PUB22_66, p. 12). This publication states that there is a "trade-off between employment and child bearing" (PUB22_66, p. 12) posing the same conflictual relationship identified in Chapter Six. In other extracts, the Fund veers closely to a conspiratorial tone when discussing "job-protected maternity leave," writing that:

> Extending job-protected maternity leave from one to two years is associated with a delay in women's return to work and potential fertility increases, without funding significant long-run earnings consequences due to these extended career interruptions (PUB17_34, p. 18).

> Bloom and others (2009) find that the number of births is significantly negatively related to women's labor supply, with each birth on average decreasing women's labor supply by almost two years during a woman's reproductive life (PUB18_38, p. 6).

In the above, the presupposition of women's appropriate place within the workforce is constructed using the words "delay," "consequences" and "interruptions" to describe childbirth and fertility. These words suggest that time spent away from the workplace should be treated as an aberration to the regular condition of perpetual productivity within the workplace. To have another child is transformed into a "delay" or "interruption" in returning to work, and is overshadowed by the possible "consequences" of higher earnings. In the first extract, one of these "consequences" is "potential fertility increases," meaning that extended maternity leave increases the 'risk' of a person having *another* child. In the second extract, comparably neutral terms are used, however it similarly transforms birth, parenting, new life and (often) recovery (from childbirth) into a condition of scarcity: the scarcity of limited labour supply.[59]

[59] This correlation is also made later in the same publication, when it writes: "fertility and social factors are significantly related to labor force participation gaps" (PUB18_38, p. 15).

This derives from the neoliberal logic that de-values activities that threaten economic growth, including reproduction, care, rest, and recovery.

Further, the IMF conflates “high fertility rates” with “unequal societies,” which “lead[s] to lower growth in GDP per capita” (PUB23_75, p. 6). By positioning “unequal societies” as those with “low access to family planning services and birth control” (PUB23_75, p. 6) the Fund echoes its earlier sentiment that inequality is partially related to ‘underdeveloped’ birth control and health systems. Overall, the Fund constructs both the young mother and the mother with many children as a deviant sexual subject. This deviance is produced because of the incompatibility of “high fertility” with the economic outcomes of the nation, including sustained labour force participation, gender equality and ‘state fragility.’ As Murphy (2017, p. 38) aptly identified, the prevalence of fertility as a variable of economic growth and prosperity is emblematic of the ways that a transition to considering demography hinges “economic futures on questions of sex.” In doing so, the IMF’s economic focus on sex transforms them into moral and therefore regulatory models for proper/deviant ways of being a sexual subject.

II. Maternal and child mortality

In this section, I continue to explore the discourse of the IMF as it pertains to mothers and children, but rather with a focus on death or ‘mortality.’ I find that the IMF transforms life and death into the quantitative measure of a maternal and “child mortality *goal*” (PUB07_7, p. 68 my emphasis), turning death into an indicator of a nation’s economic prosperity and development. For example, the Fund writes that “maternal mortality is a critical indicator of women’s advancement and well being” (PUB16_27, p. 9). The relationship of maternal and child mortality to under-development is a connection made in the Fund’s discourse, where they write that “ninety-nine percent of maternal deaths occur in the developing world” (PUB07_7, p. 72). In these extracts, the Fund constructs the ‘queer’ developing subject, who is closely proximate to death, a ‘failure’ in the scheme of a mortality goal (Edelman 2004). In these discourses, the IMF focuses heavily on ‘sex’ as a feature of child mortality. It

particularly is focused on sex ratios at birth, as well as prenatal sex selection. This is clear in the following extracts:

> Prenatal sex selection is one dimension of discrimination against girls that is not captured in under-five mortality (PUB07_7, p. 122).
>
> Sex ratios at birth and removing unwanted daughters in East Asia and South Asia (PUB07_7, p. 123).
>
> Sex ratios at birth have been excessively masculine in much of East Asia for decades compared with the 'normal' ratio of 104-06 males per 100 females in most populations (PUB07_7, p. 124).

What the above extracts reveal is the material ramifications of sex as a category and the preferential treatment of 'M' as a sex category. This is an important testament to the way that sex is transformed into gender before birth, and how this informs the expectations that surround a child's potential, personality, and interests. As Butler (2006, p. 190) says: "discrete genders are part of what 'humanizes' individuals within contemporary culture." In the first two extracts, the belief that sex and gender are uniform categories functions through the presupposition that sex selection correlates directly to the presence or absence of 'girls' and 'daughters.' In the second extract, the Fund illustrates (and condemns) the removal of daughters through the predicate 'unwanted.' It similarly condemns sex selection in the last extract through the predicate 'excessively' to describe the 'masculinity' of sex ratios at birth. It further remarks that this is out of line with the 'normal' sex ratio. This discussion is interesting because of the presupposition that is made about the existence of a 'normal' sex ratio, suggesting a naturalness or pre-determined condition of an almost equal divide between two sex categories, F and M. What is absent in this discussion is an articulation of those infants born in between these binary categories, eluding categorisation or naming. As I outlined in Chapter Three, although gender and sex appear binary, there is no 'natural' or 'pre-discursive' state in which sex appears on the body as binary, *either/or*. The invisibility of intersex,[60] gender-fluid and non-binary people here is an important discursive silence, and creates an aberrant subjectivity, those who fall outside of sex

[60] Intersex people are commonly understood to constitute 1.7% of the global population (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner n.d.).

categorisation. Outside of Western gender categorisations, many Indigenous communities recognise a spectrum of gendered identities, which do not map neatly onto these categorisations (Morgensen 2012). The elision of the existence of people in the middle, or entirely outside of, binary gender enables an easy and over-simplified account of the way that sex, gender and sexuality functions. This means that the Fund is not required to reckon with the ways that these categories fail to account for the multiplicity and diversity in experiences of sex and gender.

Further, the above extracts reveal the important relationship of ‘sex’ and the economy. As Foucault (1978, p. 24) writes, sex is not something that is “simply condemned or tolerated but managed, inserted into systems of utility, regulated for the greater good of all, made to function according to an optimum.” This insight was particularly apparent in the above discussion of fertility, but also appears in the way that the Fund measures and quantifies child mortality. Child death is represented through neoliberal terms of competition and progress. For instance, in 2007, a publication described “fast progress on child mortality in Eritrea” (PUB07_7, p. 72). Eleven years later, the Fund wrote that: “Rwanda has outperformed its counterparts in reducing maternal mortality rates… and this is associated with an increase in health expenditures as a share of GDP” (PUB18_41, p. 12). These extracts stress the urgency of reducing maternal and child mortality, which is important, however they do so by positioning mortality in terms of GDP growth. Additionally, it is represented in competitive terms through the use of the word “outperformed,” as well as the words “fast progress.” The use of economistic logics to understand death and its gendered patterns also appears in the following extract:

> Furthermore, decomposing the gender development and inequality indices and estimating the equations for each subcomponent indicate that FDI inflows affect particularly women’s life expectancy and maternal mortality ratio (PUB18_37, pp. 6-7).

Here, FDI is positioned as related to women’s life expectancy and the maternal mortality ratio. This representation is less common than those explored earlier, but is worth mentioning. Lastly, despite the prevalence of GDP in the Fund’s discourses on

maternal and child mortality, this is not the only way that it is represented. In 2013, a Fund publication wrote that reducing maternal and child mortality is constitutive of gender equality: “To bring about gender equality, policymakers need to focus on reducing excess mortality of girls and women” (PUB13_8, p. 23). However, this quote appears in a publication with the title ‘Women, Work and the Economy: Macroeconomic Gains from Gender Equity,’ which means that gender equality was being conceptualised in terms of the gains it can provide for macroeconomics. Similarly, in a 2020 publication entitled ‘Gender Inequality and Economic Growth: Evidence from Industry-Level Data,’ increased maternal and child mortality is tied to gender inequality and discrimination against women:

> The relative infant mortality ratio, which is the ratio of infant female mortality to infant male mortality, indicates gender inequality in infant health, where excess female infant mortality rates relative to male rates reflect the discriminatory treatment of women (PUB20_54, p. 13).

The IMF discusses sex, life, and death in its discourses on maternal and child mortality. Although there are some spaces in which maternal and child mortality are treated as issues of gender inequality and discrimination against women, the IMF predominantly discusses child and maternal mortality with reference to economic growth. It does this by transforming embodied experiences of sex, life and death within the neoliberal language of competition and progress. The gender binary is central in this discourse, and the existence of ‘queerness’ is invisible.

III. Domestic and sexual violence

The IMF’s engagement with gendered violence, including sexual and domestic violence, increased markedly in its discourses from 2019 to 2021. Similarly to the above discussion of maternal and child mortality, domestic and sexual violence is explained, in a cursory way, with reference to rights, liberty and well-being. In the following extracts, the IMF defines violence against women (VAW) and violence against women and girls (VAWG), delineating its multiple manifestations:

> Violence against women (VAW) can take many forms, including sexual harassment and assault, child marriage, female genital mutilation, forced sterilizations and the trafficking in women and girls. According to the World Health Organisation, intimate partner violence, however, is still the most common form of VAW, with about 35% of women globally having experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime by an intimate partner (PUB21_62, p. 12).
>
> VAW is a violation of woman's rights to life, health, liberty and security, among others. Domestic violence, in particular, predominantly affects women across the world. It can take the form of physical, sexual, verbal, or emotional abuse, reproductive coercion, as well as digital or financial abuse (PUB21_62, p. 12).

These definitions encompass the social, emotional and physical effects of gendered violence, as well as the multiple forms in which violence can manifest. In the second extract, gendered violence is problematised and assessed by emphasising the effects on women's rights. This focus also appears in a 2019 publication:

> Moreover, enforcing women's legal rights by combating domestic violence, sexual harassment and child marriage are important ways to improve women's life standards and break the cycle of gender inequality (PUB19_49, p. 24).

In the above, domestic violence is positioned as an issue of "legal rights" rather than the IMF's usual approach to representing 'gender issues' as 'economic issues.' Further, it is also positioned as an issue that diminishes the standard of living for women, which similarly pivots from the IMF's imperative to achieve economic growth and stability. However, this rights-based framework for understanding gendered violence lapses as the Fund continues, writing that violence "has a devastating impact on women's physical and mental health, leading to repercussions on *their performance in the workforce* and on *firm productivity*" (PUB21_62, p. 12, emphasis mine). This emphasis on the economic impact of gendered violence for productivity and development depends on the presupposition that productivity and endless efficiency is most important. The Fund writes that: "beyond the *moral imperative,* the findings highlight the importance of combating violence against women from an economic standpoint"

(PUB21_63, p. 0). This is in line with my findings from Chapter Four, that the Fund's limited institutional remit has consequences for the ways it represents social, moral and political issues as foremostly macroeconomic. The use of the word "beyond" in the above functions to shift the reader's focus from the morality of VAW to the economic impact of VAW. This shift is also clear in the following extract, wherein the Fund enumerates the "economic costs" of VAWG:

> Channels through which VAWG creates 'economic costs' include lower labor supply, reduced productivity per hour worked, less investment in human capital for both women and children, and possibly lower investment due to higher demand for health and judicial services. Domestic violence adversely affects companies, with costs associated with higher rates of absenteeism, staff turnover and presenteeism/reduced productivity, and the potential for reputational damage (PUB21_62, p. 3).
>
> The main channels identified in the literature through which VAWG potentially affects economic growth are through less hours worked (absenteeism), reduced productivity per hour worked (presenteeism), lower longer-term labor supply (effect going beyond immediate effect due to violence), less investment in human capital formation, and less investment in physical capital due to higher consumption of health and judicial services (PUB21_62, p. 5).

In the above, VAWG is problematic insofar as it produces negative economic consequences, with ramifications for human capital and therefore future growth and productivity. Domestic violence is also positioned as oppositional to the interests of companies, who suffer 'costs' due to VAWG. The use of word 'costs' here suggests that all behaviour can be thought of within a binary economic system of cost and benefit, wherein consistent gain is preferable, and cost minimised. The Fund brings VAWG into this framework by suggesting that VAWG represents a cost to businesses, firms and nations. Domestic violence is positioned as oppositional to the interests of companies and productivity. It is this positioning which negatively frames domestic violence, rather than the impacts on the victim of violence. Later, in the same publication, the Fund cites a study that quantifies the effects of VAWG, by placing monetary value on the following:

> [D]irect tangible costs (actual expenses, for example for health care), indirect tangible costs (lower earnings or profits for households and companies), direct intangible costs (e.g. pain and emotional stress) and indirect intangible costs (e.g. negative psychological effects on children who witness violence) (PUB21_62, p. 5).

In the above, the IMF represents the harms of domestic violence through the word 'costs.' Pain and emotional stress are transformed into a 'cost,' and negative psychological effects on children are represented as a 'cost.' This is compatible with the IMF's broader focus on economic growth. This is reflective of neoliberal approaches to temporality, which emphasise the responsibility of victims of violence to use their time productively (Rodier & Meagher 2014, p. 176). Neoliberal conceptualisations of time demand "constant achievement," and stress that time ought not to be wasted (Rodier & Meagher 2014, pp. 181-2). In the above, domestic violence is represented as a cost to time that should be spent on income and wealth generation. This representation focuses on the individual subject as a "microcosm of the free market" (Rodier & Meagher 2014, p. 182). However, there are alternative ways of representing VAWG outside of the logic of 'costs.' For instance, VAWG can be represented as an affront to personal safety, autonomy, agency and wellbeing or as a manifestation of broader patriarchal, racial or carceral systems that ought to be named and dismantled.[61] Instead, the Fund maintains the existing structure within which VAWG occurs, and suggests legal interventions to ensure that the costs on companies, manifesting as absenteeism, diminished productivity and reputational damage, are reduced. Neoliberal discourses of "self-help" depend on the presupposition that paid work, and wealth generation are spaces of 'empowerment,' or even 'self care' (Rodier & Meagher 2014, p. 191). The limitations of the Fund's engagement with VAWG are apparent in how it frames its questions about gendered violence. The questions asked by the Fund presuppose the centrality of economic measures for human behaviour, such as when it asks:

> How do protective laws against domestic violence, natural resources, decision-making power of women, and the business cycle affect the impact of VAWG on economic development? (PUB21_62, p. 4).

[61] There is a variety of feminist literature on VAWG, including anti-carceral feminism (see: Critical Resistance and Incite! 2003; Davis 2003; Davis et al. 2022; Gilmore 2007; Taylor 2018). This literature challenges carceral solutions to VAWG and highlights that carceral systems also cause gendered harms.

The IMF's focus on gender and domestic violence is limited to the question of how violence impacts economic growth and stability. Engagement in paid work when recovering as a victim of violence, however, is not 'empowering' or 'self-care.' In this section, I have highlighted the ways that the IMF represents VAWG as a 'cost' to companies and economic growth. This reflects the emphasis that the IMF's publications place on economic growth, above individual well-being, safety and recovery. Domestic and gendered violence is represented as an economic problem, which forecloses any consideration of individual, social and collective recovery and reparation.

IV. Human capital

The IMF's focus on economic growth and stability extends to an emphasis on 'human capital' in its written discourse. Human capital is "typically defined as the knowledge, skills, values, and health embodied in people that make them economically productive" (Murphy 2017, p. 115). A focus on the body as a site of investment and future potential embodies the concept of 'human capital,' shifting "the iconic economic subject from a worker or consumer to an entrepreneur whose body contain[s] an alterable set of assets and risks, a reknitting of *Homo economicus"* (Murphy 2017, p. 116). Investment, productivity and opportunity are central to human capital, particularly as they relate to children, who "become vessels of investment haunted by a condition of lack" (Murphy 2017, p. 117). 'Human capital' depends on futurity and success, and is an extension of the neoliberal imperative to 'invest' in children, and to 'invest,' particularly for women, in education and a career. In the IMF's discourse, children are represented as potential future growth. Various publications represent children in this way:

> [A]mong which the access to early child care services is one of the most important, not only for improving children's human capital, but also for contributing to their mothers' work-life balance (PUB16_29, p. 37).
>
> School dropouts have severe adverse implications for future human capital formation and, in turn, for productivity and lifetime earnings (PUB21_59, p. 12).

In the above, children's future potential for contributing to economic growth is represented through oppositional subject positioning. Access to early childcare services is positioned as complementary to the 'work-life balance' of mothers, and, in the second extract, school dropouts are positioned as oppositional with optimal earnings, productivity and human capital formation. In the first extract, the women who work at child care services are not afforded attention or ever explicitly named, and this could be because they do not conform to the entrepreneurial model of womanhood that the IMF endorses. Women undertaking care work are consistently under-valued in the IMF's discourse. For this reason, the women that undertake this work are "deemed disposable since they are neither considered strivers nor properly responsibilized" (Rottenberg 2017, p. 332). What marks women as 'human capital' is a neoliberal temporality, which Catherine Rottenberg (2017, p. 331) understands as a form of neoliberal governmentality or "technology of the self," to borrow from Foucault. The transformation of women and children into human capital requires a "careful sequencing of career and maternity and smart (self-)investments in the present to ensure enhanced returns in the future" (Rottenberg 2017, p. 332). This attention to the future, and the investments required to reap benefits and 'returns,' is reflected in the below extracts. The Fund reiterates its core presupposition that has been identified elsewhere in this thesis (see: Chapters Four and Five): women are more likely to spend their resources on their children's education. This is characteristic of the post-feminist period, wherein middle-class women attempt to 'have it all,' including a career and a family. However, in order to 'have it all,' women are required to follow a template for success. The Fund articulates this template for 'post-feminist' success, and positions women as drivers of the processes that foster future economic growth, writing:

> [W]omen are more likely to invest their resources in education and the health of their children, building human capital to fuel future growth (PUB20_54, p. 3).
>
> Returns to education are higher for women, who are also more likely to invest their resources in the education and health of their children, bolstering human capital for future economic growth (PUB22_66, p. 4).

Both women and children, in these extracts, are positioned as good for growth. This reiterates the dominant representation of women and children as potentially stabilising for the economy, and as an untapped resource. This representation depends on the presupposition of women as more caring and nurturing than men, manifest in their increased 'investment' in their children. In the post-feminist period, women are required to pace and invest appropriately into the future. This is not a product of the innate features of femininity, but rather a consequence of social, economic and political conditions which require women to make the "right choices" for the future of themselves and their families (McRobbie 2013, p. 119). The transformation of care for children into 'investment' for future growth in turn quantifies care into a measurable economic metric for success. In the below, students are transformed into "stock of human capital," a dehumanising descriptor that centralises how students can serve a nation's economy:

> We follow Barro (1991), among others, and use the teacher-student ratio in secondary education (a measure of the quality of education) as a proxy for the stock of human capital in a country (PUB20_54, p. 14).

In addition to representing children and students *vis-à-vis* their future growth potential, the Fund also describes women and gender inequality in this way. This is evident when the Fund explains that "gender inequality is likely to bias many human capital measures, as lower gender inequality leads to higher human capital stock" (PUB20_54, p. 14). In this extract, gender inequality is represented in opposition to economic outcomes like growth, stability and productivity. It also presupposes the importance and goodness of 'higher human capital stock,' which itself is a technical description for those skills that are fostered through education and work that might otherwise be described as contributing to personal, communal and social wellness and enrichment. The phrase 'human capital stock' rather implies a homogenous group with skill sets that are amenable to economic metrics for success. This is also evident in the below extract, which positions gender inequality as negatively impacting export diversification, human capital and efficient resource allocation:

> Another example shows that gender inequality is strongly and negatively associated with export diversification in low-income and developing

> countries as it can limit the level of human capital and thereby leads to an inefficient resource allocation (PUB21_62, p. 6).

The taken-for-granted nature of economic metrics for human behaviour in the Fund's discourse is clear. Gender inequality is not represented as a social, political or moral problem, but rather as an economic one. It presupposes that the most important (and thereby worth naming) effects are those which are economic. For example, in 2023, the Fund wrote that gender gaps in labour force participation:

> [H]urt a nation's human capital by reducing the pool of talent available… this inability for female human capital to accumulate property, stalls technology use and innovation… There is thus an economic benefit from diversity that is stronger than just the benefits resulting from having more workers (PUB23_77, p. 14).

In the above, the case for diversity is made in direct reference to the economic benefit it can yield, and by extension the ways that it is compatible with the accumulation of property. The productivity, efficiency and privatisation logic of neoliberalism permeates the way that the Fund writes about bodies, work and gender. This was also particularly clear in relation to its written discourse on domestic and sexual violence as detailed above, which the Fund ties to human capital by asking, in one publication: "Is there any evidence that VAWG affects labor supply and human capital?" (PUB21_63, p. 4). These discourses are underpinned by assumptions about individual responsibility for, and investment in, future economic gains. Productivity, efficiency and growth demand that bodies are configured in particular ways in order to 'succeed.' In the next section, I explore how the Fund's discourse problematises ageing and health issues as oppositional to the neoliberal logics which underpin the IMF's mandate of economic growth and stability.

V. Ageing and health

Health, ageing and (implicitly) death, feature in the IMF's discourse as an object of intervention. The inevitability of ageing is transformed into an economic 'problem' in the Fund's discourse. The Fund describes "the problem of population ageing" (PUB06_6, p. 4) as one which prompts concerns for the "serious challenges to raising

its output growth," "declining productivity growth," and "gender gaps in the labor market" (PUB16_28, p. vii). In this publication, the Fund is negatively representing population growth through the use of words like "problem" and "challenges," positioning these as problematic in relation to economic matters. In another publication, the "rapid ageing of the Chinese population" is discussed with respect to the "burden of elderly care" which "disproportionately fall[s] on women" and therefore hinders their "ability to productively participate in the labor market" (PUB21_57, p. 22). Here, the Fund uses the negative predicate "burden" to describe ageing, which devalues the necessary care to support people as they reach the end of their life. Although caring for an ageing loved one is difficult, the Fund suggests that it may be particularly problematic because it prevents women from working in the formal economy. The Fund, once again, suggests that the important care work conducted outside of the formal economy is not a legitimate or recognisable form of work and labour (see: Chapters Five and Six). It represents care work as an inhibitor to the *real* work that can be conducted in the formal economy. In doing so, the inevitability of ageing and the necessity of care provision is overlooked and actively treated as a problem. It is the unwaged condition of this care work, according to Federici (2004) which makes it possible to devalue the work of caring for the elderly at the end of their lives. However, caring for the elderly is conducted both in the formal economy and within the home. In this extract from the Fund, it seems to suggest that the waged condition of formal care work transforms the same labour into one more legitimate and less 'burdensome.' The waged condition of the same activity is the factor that transforms it into a legitimate way to work. The publication continues:

> The availability of low cost, high quality child and elderly care would lift the burden on women seeking employment and on firms that would have to pay a premium to hire women (PUB21_57, p. 22).

The IMF thus endorses the use of child and elderly care, while simultaneously discouraging the same women to enter into the field, or to get paid for the work that they are already doing, caring within the home. The pressure on women to remain, enter or 're-enter' the labour force is maintained in the Fund's discussion on the ageing population. It writes that:

> The female labor force participation rate has received considerable attention in recent years, not only as a potential source of faster growth, but also as a possible answer to the problem of population ageing (PUB06_6, p. 4).

"Female labor force participation" is thus represented as a way of mitigating the "decline in the working-age population and output in aging societies" (PUB21_62, p. 6). Women's participation in the labour force could "directly yield growth and stability gains by mitigating the impact of the declining labor force… [which] helps to ensure the stability of the pension system" (PUB18_40, p. 7; see also: PUB19_45, p. 4). In these extracts, the IMF depends on women to mitigate the adverse effects of what is a structural or policy problem. In another publication, a 'point of view' column written by Katrín Jakobsdóttir, former Prime Minister of Iceland, enunciates a position in stark contrast to the IMF's discourses and practices:

> On the other hand, social infrastructure is branded as expenses or operating costs, preferably the first in line to be cut. Yet these are the structures that sustain us from (before) birth and death and create the conditions that make life worthwhile (PUB19_46, p. 12).

In the above, Jakobsdóttir positions social infrastructure as complementary with quality of life. She implicitly critiques cuts in social spending and the way that it is positioned as an excess cost. On the cover of this particular publication, 'Women and Growth,' Jakobsdóttir's above discussion is framed as "[t]he secret of Iceland's success" (PUB19_46, cover page). Yet, it is well established that the IMF's policy conditionalities often require that recipient countries cut social spending in order to repay their debts to the Fund or to transfer into a form of neoliberal governance (Collier & Gunning 2001; Easterly 2005; Summers & Pritchett 1993). This is a contradiction that can be attributed to the external authorship of this segment, though its incongruency with the IMF's practices is of note. Four years later, the IMF discussed reliance on "state support for basic needs" by saying that an ageing population and their subsequent dependence on the state "will increase the dependency ratio and add to pressure on public finances" (PUB23_75, p. 5). This represents a divergence from the above extract, which positively described state support as a lifeline. Instead, the latter description

creates a sense of restriction and scarcity by using words such as "pressure" and "dependency." By representing state support for ageing populations using this language, the Fund obfuscates the important fact that they highlighted only four years earlier: that social infrastructure and state support "create the conditions that make life worthwhile" (PUB19_46, p. 12). Ageing is also bound up with health and the state provisioning of services which improve and support quality of life. Lastly, throughout its discourse on ageing and the elderly, the IMF treats elders as a monolithic, gender-less group in need of care. In contrast to the explicit gendering of the Working Woman and the caring father, the elderly are referred to as part of "aging societies" (PUB21_62, p. 6) and are seldom attributed a gender. This could be because of their presumed lack of sexual activity and inability to contribute to reproductive activities. For this reason, the elderly can be understood as a queer subject, in the sense that they presumably do not participate in the formal economy, heteronormative scripts of sexual and family life, reproductive activities and because they do not comply with neoliberal logics of productivity, efficiency and output.

The IMF also represents health in its discourses on gender by focusing on the gender gap between the health levels of men and women. The IMF represents 'health' within its broader focus on economic growth. In 2021, a publication wrote:

> The link between gender gaps in health and inclusive growth is clear. Healthy lives and wellbeing of both men and women is an essential component for achieving growth and sustainable development (SDG3). Biological factors and social norms affect the health status of women and men differently. Certain diseases affect exclusively men (prostate cancer) or women (cervical cancer) (PUB21_62, p. 11).

Here, the presupposition of gender as synonymous with sex is evident, as the Fund mentions 'gender gaps' before attributing these gaps in health to "biological factors." As I have discussed elsewhere (see: Chapter Three), gender and sex are separate (albeit connected) categories and treating them as synonymous may contribute to the sense that gender is both natural and pre-determined. It also risks entrenching these distinct analytical categories into a false uniformity within economic knowledge production.

The IMF discusses the social norms that may affect health later in the same publication by pointing to the:

> [F]act that women are more likely to care for sick family members, [which] may expose them to a heightened risk of exposure during outbreaks of infectious epidemic-prone diseases (e.g. Ebola, etc.). Pregnant women may be especially vulnerable (PUB21_62, p. 11).

In other extracts, the IMF reiterates and stresses the centrality of "new mothers" or "pregnant women" (PUB21_62, p. 11). In the above, pregnant women are described with the predicate 'vulnerable,' marking them as particularly in need of protection from disease. Although appearing in the Fund's written discourse, this emphasis can be thought of as a continuation of the established hyper-visibility of the Working Woman and Working Mother from Chapter Five. In an early publication on women and gender from 2003, the Fund writes about "invest[ing]" (PUB03_3, p. 18) in the health and education of women. In full, it writes:

> If a public priority is to improve the health and education of women in the region, public spending in these sectors, particularly education, should be more effectively allocated so governments and taxpayers can get a better return on their investment (PUB03_3, p. 18).

The use of the word investment here brings women's health and education into direct relationship with the economy. 'Investment' transforms health and education into an economic outcome, in contrast to alternative word choices which may have framed it as valuable for wellbeing or enjoyment. By subject positioning health and education in proximity to the economy, the IMF implicitly communicates that all human activity ought to be *economically beneficial*, a transaction that nurtures growth, productivity and stability. Education also appears in the following extracts, where the Fund positions higher education levels with better health, writing:

> Educated women are better informed about how to become and stay healthy and they have lower maternal mortality rates and lower rates of HIV/AIDs infection (PUB01_1, p. 18).

> [O]n the national level, higher female education levels are associated with lower fertility rates, better nutritional status of children, a lesser prevalence of female genital mutilation, and increased use of family planning and AIDs prevention (PUB01_1, p. 18).

The positioning of education and health as complementary functions here to make the case that these investments will provide return. 'Education' functions as an avenue for investment in the human capital of girls and women. It will, in turn, close the 'gender gap' and maintain economic growth and stability.

VI. HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS is not prevalent in the Fund's discourse, however it represents an interesting site of intervention for an IFI like the Fund to make. This is because a concern for HIV/AIDS goes alongside a focus on sex and sexuality. In discussions of HIV/AIDS, the Fund explicitly mentions words like heterosexuality, sexuality and "risky" (PUB07_7, p. 76) or "safe" (PUB16_29, p. 11) sex. In doing so, it articulates a binary of 'good' and 'bad' sex and constructs an aberrant sexual subject. This is a process that depends on and reproduces the identity of coherent and (il)legible subjects.

Homosexuality scarcely appears in the IMF's discussion of HIV/AIDS, although Rao (2015, p. 38) writes of the development industry more broadly that, "HIV/AIDS has been pivotal in forcing acknowledgement of the diversity of sexualities and prompting interventions targeted at communities deemed to be especially at risk." Although not engaged with specifically, the Fund adopts language that cloaks attempts to discuss sex outside of marriage and outside of heterosexuality. For example, in the following extract from 2007, the IMF uses the predicate "high-risk" to categorise a list of groups, which is the first act of naming homosexuality in its written discourse:

> Prevention efforts aimed at high-risk populations only reached an estimated 33 percent of commercial sex workers, 34 percent of prisoners, 9 percent of homosexuals and 8 percent of injecting drug users, far short of the coverage [of] over 60 percent that is needed for effective impact (PUB07_7, p. 76).

By listing these groups concurrently, it is implied that they share the predicate "high-risk" (PUB07_7, p. 76). It also positions homosexuality amongst these actions/outcomes which are represented as 'deviant.' Later, on the same page, the Fund uses the phrase "risky sex acts" (PUB07_7, p. 76). Here, "risky sex acts" functions as a signifier that unifies and identifies a group of otherwise disparate and distinct individuals. The transformation of sex acts to an identity is of interest for queer post-structuralist scholarship, which highlights that this is a process that takes place in discourse (see: Chapter Three). This discourse of risky sex is where the emergence of the Risky Sexual Subject in the Fund's discourse is most explicit. The Risky Sexual Subject is prone to disease, having sex outside of marriage and outside of monogamous heterosexual conjugal relationships. The Risky Sexual Subject may also be imprisoned or illegal, already deviant and aberrant. 'Risky sex' and the Risky Sexual Subject depend on a binary which is implicitly hierarchical, with the 'safe' or heterosexual and monogamous sexual subject positioned as desirable and normal. The IMF's interest in sex appears also when it writes that:

> Recent surveillance data from Uganda - one of the first of the above countries to show signs of declining prevalence - suggest that condom use has started to decline, numbers of sexual partners have increased and seroprevalence may again be increasing in some sites (PUB07_7, p. 75).

The above represents an interest in sex and sexual practices uncharacteristic of the rest of the publications I analysed. This could potentially be attributed to the fact that this 2007 publication was a co-authored piece with the World Bank, which has a markedly wider remit than the Fund, and which adopts a broader definition of development. In this publication, the IMF explicitly clarifies what characterises 'risky' sex. Here, it is the reduced use of condoms. However, throughout the rest of its publications, it depends on presupposition when it speaks of "risky" sex. This is evident in a publication released almost ten years later in 2016, wherein the IMF writes of exposure risk for HIV/AIDS, reflecting on 'safe' groups and 'high-risk' groups:

> The group determined that the risk of exposure is greater for housewives, especially for parents or wives of migrant workers, because they consider

> their sexual relations safe and secure, even though that may not be [sic] (PUB16_29, p. 11)

The above extract establishes that the usually 'safe' sex that housewives are having may not be safe if their partner is a migrant worker. As I identified earlier, the IMF depends on presupposition here, since it does not clarify how or why their "sexual relations" are "safe" and how or why they might not be. To make sense of this extract, the IMF is depending on shared background knowledge between the writer and the reader about the social categories 'migrant workers' and 'housewives.' The IMF presupposes that 'housewives' as a category are characteristically risk-averse, homely and heterosexual; the Fund presumes that housewives are uniform in their (implicitly safe) sexual practices. This aligns with shared cultural meaning about the housewife as compliant, subordinate and monogamous. In contrast, the Fund depends on the presupposition that migrant workers are duplicitous regarding their sexual activity and within their marriage. This reflects conservative tropes about migrant workers as associated with illegality, deviance and aberration. Both presuppositions (re)produce ideas about 'safe' and 'risky' sex by attributing housewives and migrant workers with these distinct qualities. The (re)production of these cultural codes problematically siloes these subjects into monolithic and homogenous groupings, and sediments meaning which may be more reflective of tropes about these groups rather than the lived experience of these subjects. In addition to the representations explored in this section, the IMF does engage in representation about gay couples and constructs a 'safe' sexual subject through endorsing a heterosexist or homonormative vision of the 'good life.' This is the subject of the following section.

VII. Homosexuality, homonormativity, and queerness

In this section, I discuss the absence of queerness in the IMF's written and visual discourse. Although homosexuality does appear in the IMF's discourse, I argue that queerness is invisible, because queerness represents a *failure* in orientation (Ahmed 2006, pp. 91-2; see also: Halberstam 2011), whereas the hyper-visible and visible subjectivities of the working mother and caring father (see: Chapters Five and Six) are representative of ideals of success: "success in a heteronormative, capitalist society

equates too easily to specific forms of reproductive maturity combined with wealth accumulation" (Halberstam 2011, p. 2). Queerness is associated with failure because queer subjects are assumed incapable of 'naturally' achieving the aims of romantic and sexual partnership: reproduction (Ahmed 2006, p. 91). Edelman (2004, p. 3) argues that the "Child remains the perpetual horizon of every acknowledged politics, the phantasmatic beneficiary of every political intervention." Queerness "is understood as bringing children and childhood to an end" (Edelman 2004, p. 19; see also: Chapter Three). It represents death in the social order, whereas heterosexuality represents the continuation and reproduction of this order. The IMF straightens out homosexuality by revering displays of homonormativity, showcasing the ways that LGBTQ+ people can adhere to normative heterosexual couplehood within the home, and the ways that they can be a productive citizen, in the formal economy. To illustrate this point, I will firstly turn to the IMF's visual discourse, wherein homosexuality is mentioned only in a 2013 video entitled 'It Gets Better.'

In this video, the IMF interviews gay and lesbian staff, narrating the stories of their sexualities through a structure of being different, living in denial, darkness, coming out at work, and IMF and the LGBT (Figures 7.1- 7.2; 7.7-7.8).

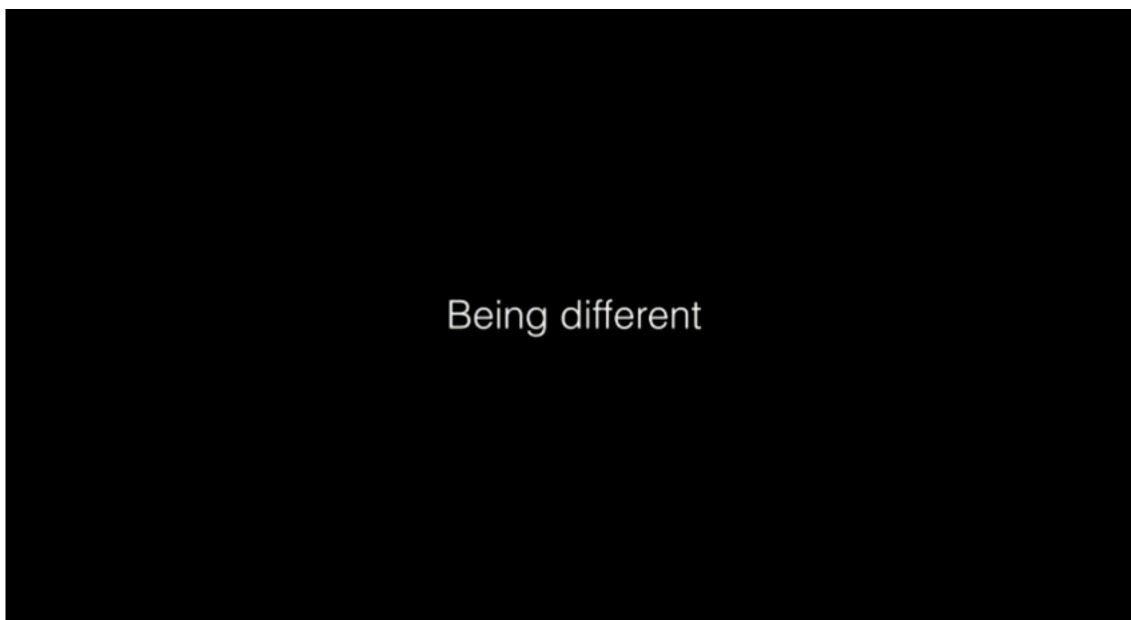

Figure 7.1: VID13_16.

Against a black screen, the white text reads “being different” as gay and lesbian staffers speak the following words:

> I realised I was different when, as early as age 3, which I know some people may find hard to accept, but I didn’t know I was gay, I knew I was different (VID13_16).

> I felt there was something very different when I was a teenager, like around 12-13, because I realised that I was attracted to men, and I couldn’t put any words on that. There wasn’t even a sexual connotation or whatever but it’s just like I didn’t understand what was going on (VID13_16).

In the above two extracts, which have been edited for clarity, two staffers express a feeling of difference in a confessional tone. This difference was not necessarily due to their sexual orientation, and they clarify that these feelings were not sexual, but rather a sense of feeling Other. One staffer adds the caveat that “there wasn’t even a sexual connotation,” perhaps distancing himself from the sexual perversion that has historically been associated with homosexuality. Both express confusion and disorientation from an early age, in childhood, in line with the dominant narrative that gay people are ‘born this way’ (Bennett 2014; Johnston 2015), with their homosexuality being a fact that is awaiting discovery and proclamation. The one lesbian staffer selected for the video reiterates these same sentiments, sharing that she was in Catholic school and felt unable to ‘claim’ this fact about herself. She similarly experienced a feeling of difference as a child, and states that there was a need to be *quiet:*

> I was in Catholic school and I knew then that I was gay but it took a long time to acknowledge it and own it, because in Haiti… there’s not a lot of awareness of LGBT issues. You don’t hear people talking about gays and lesbians in a very positive way so at a young age I knew, I was different and I better be quiet or else I’ll get a trouble (VID13_16).

This reflection then segues into the following visual, a black screen with white text reading: “living in denial” (Figure 7.2). In this section of the video, Fund staffers reflect on the suppression of their identity and their positioning within their social and cultural environment. Similarly to the above, a gay staffer states that:

> I think for a long time I denied it to myself because I grew up in an environment that was very conservative in the French Alps and I didn't know anyone that was like that and there was no visibility (VID13_16).

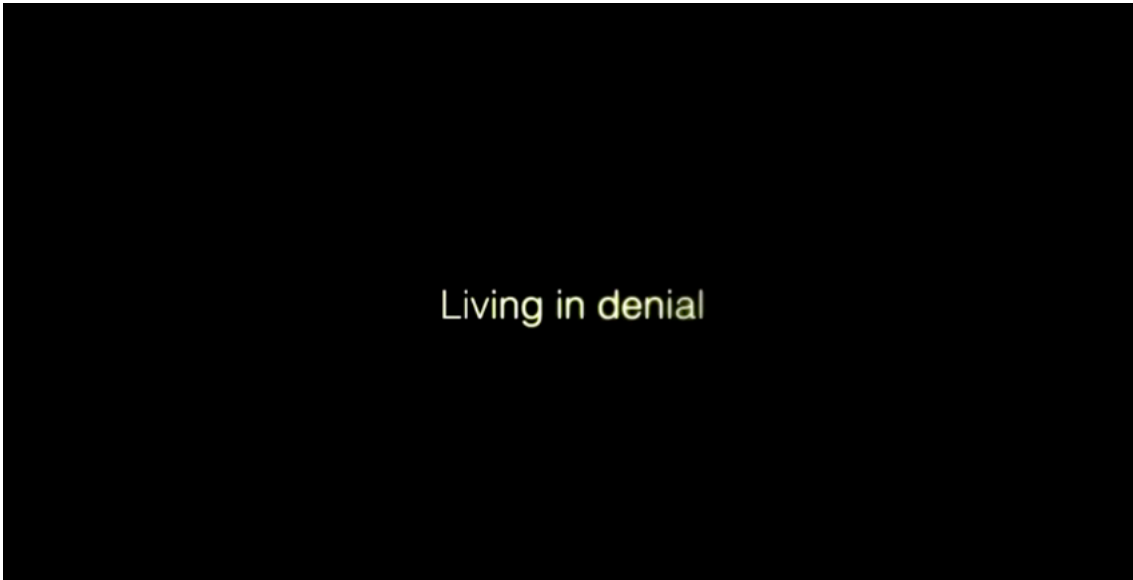

Figure 7.2: VID13_16.

In the above, this staffer describes not only concealing his sexuality from others, but also from concealing it from himself. He suggests that the invisibility of homosexual people in his conservative environment prevented a sense of self-recognition. While these staffers offer these intimate confessions, gentle piano plays in the background. The staffers declare their sexuality and their stories of pain, shame, secrecy and denial while filmed in close-up confessional shots, looking at the camera, their names and titles ("Senior Budget Officer," "Senior Economist," "Research Assistant" and "Division Chief" [VID13_16]) hovering beneath them alongside an IMF logo. These shots are interspersed with photos from their childhood, depicting the environments that they describe. The close-up shots as they discuss their sexuality (Figures 7.3-7.6) mirror directly the structure of Catholic confession that Foucault (1978, pp. 20-1) identified as crucial in the History of Sexuality, the 'incitement to discourse.' He wrote that, "not only will you confess to acts of contravening the law, but you will seem to transform your desire, your every desire, into discourse" (Foucault 1978, pp. 20-1). Indeed, the video's structure follows that of the Western narrative of homosexuality, as one of discovery and liberatory declaration, the pinnacle of which is 'coming out.'

Figure 7.3: VID13_16.

Figure 7.4: VID13_16.

Figure 7.5: VID13_16.

Figure 7.6: VID13_16.

Homosexuality is represented in opposition to family, culture, religion and work. This is significant because, as I will discuss, the Fund positions itself as a welcoming workplace for LGBTQ+ staff. A staffer discusses his feelings of unsafety in his childhood Church, saying:

> I remember being in church in high school and sitting in a congregation of over 1,500 people and the pastor pretty much saying, you know, gays are

> evil, Democrats are evil, John Kerry's evil and that's why our country is going to hell, and you know you're sitting there going ok well I think I'm gay and, statistically, I think there's other people in here that are like me... then you look over to your parents and they're sitting there in the same pew and they're feeling that pressure and of course they don't want that for their kid (VID13_16).

This extract precedes the image shown below (Figure 7.7), another black screen with white text reading 'darkness,' signalling a pivot in the Fund's narration of these stories. The staffers discuss their alienation, not having anyone to talk to and their "dark thoughts" (VID13_16). The speakers appear emotional, with their microphones picking up and magnifying every swallow and hesitation in their speech. This discussion of darkness quickly moves on to one of acceptance.

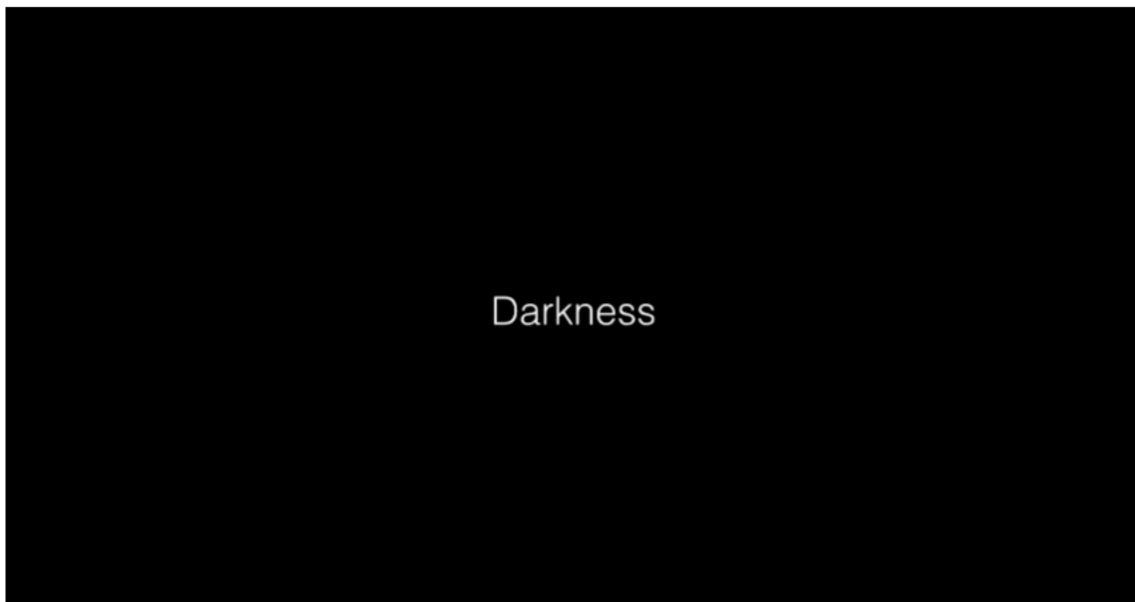

Figure 7.7: VID13_16.

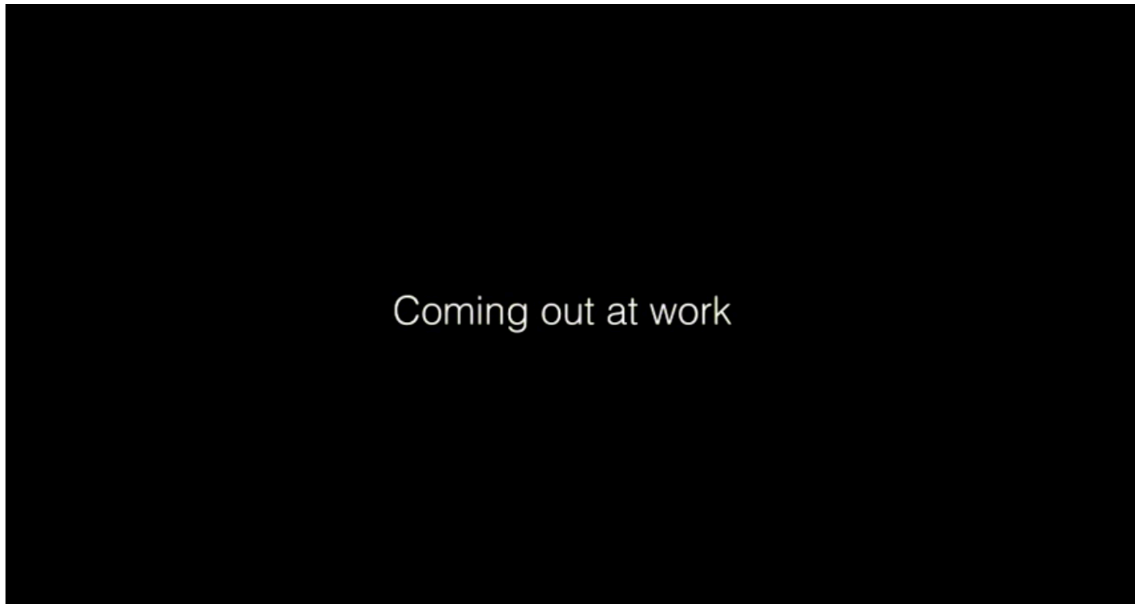

Figure 7.8: VID13_16.

The penultimate section of the video is titled ‘Coming out at work’ (Figure 7.8), which begins with the following reflection:

> I’ve been at the Fund for 12 years and for the majority of these 12 years I have not been out to most people I work with. Again, it’s because you are scared that you may not get… promoted… because maybe this person is homophobic (VID13_16).

As this staffer speaks, black and white clips of her walking through the lobby of the IMF building are shown. In a close up shot, she stands in front of an ‘International Monetary Fund’ sign plastered on the side of the building. The non-diegetic music is slow and melancholic, indicating to viewers how the scene ought to be experienced (see: Figures 7.9-7.10). The heavy use of the black and white filter, and the choice of slow, emotional music serves to create an atmosphere that captures the feeling of being an outsider at work. Yet, despite this fear of ‘being your true self’ at the Fund, another speaker continues that the IMF is *unlike* the aforementioned homophobic family members, cultures, religions, societies and individuals. The IMF is framed as a proponent of diversity, and as supportive of its LGBT staffers.[62] A gay staffer says:

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[62] It is important to note here that the Fund does not platform the stories of any transgender members of staff. Although the IMF uses the abbreviation ‘LGBT’ in this video, they do not mention transness, or bisexuality.

> We have so many different people from all over the world working here and their ideas of sexuality, of orientation, of how things are supposed to be, it's all very different. You have anything from progressive Western countries to traditional Eastern countries or African countries or Latin America. Everyone has a different perspective, and so the great thing about the Fund is that because there's so much diversity, there's less pressure on you whenever it's your difference… It's ok because almost everybody here has something different and that's what's kind of encouraging for people to really share who they are. And I think specifically for LGBT staff at the Fund it's much better than other workplaces (VID13_16).

This long statement serves to differentiate the Fund from earlier sources of homophobia (as discussed, these include family, religion, culture). Instead, the Fund represents itself as a safe place for LGBTQ+ people. As Rao (2015, p. 38) writes, the Fund's activist stance against homophobia in this instance obfuscates its role in the structures which incubate homophobic moral panics. The Fund achieves this by representing homosexuality as a phenomenon which is "merely cultural" (Butler 1998), and detached from the economic conditions that they cultivate in the contexts of their recipient countries. The Fund's separation of itself from the sources of homophobia means that it is "position[ed]... as external to the problem they seek to alleviate" thus casting itself as a "progressive force in a greater moral struggle" (Rao 2015, p. 38). This is incongruent with the concurrent economic conditions imposed on countries, such as Haiti. In 1986, Haiti suffered significantly from the IMF's policies, which ruined its agricultural sector (Rao 2015, p. 41), an effect which itself can create conditions where the sanctity of the heterosexual family and traditional values prevails in order to weather the storm of austerity. Further, the above statement draws explicitly on the civilised/barbarity binary of homonationalism (Puar 2007; Hoad 2000, p. 153) wherein state support for LGBT people is championed as a progressive position, and states that discriminate against LGBT people are characterised as barbaric, backwards and traditional.

Although it is undeniably important for the lives and rights of LGBTQ+ people to be protected and supported, these homonationalist depictions of 'backwards' states depend on racialised stereotypes developed during formal colonial periods and have been reworked to support a liberal agenda which itself can remain conservative. It does not offer LGBTQ+ people true liberation. Instead, it binds up their acceptability and

intelligibility with liberal and capitalist benchmarks of productivity, reproduction and normativity (Agathangelou 2013, p. 459). As I discussed in Chapter Six, with respect to the Fund's depiction of the gay family, the Fund does this in its particular vision of 'the good (gay) life.' The good (gay) life is one with "allegiance to the very form of the family," which is monogamous, reproductive, and which facilitates participation in the formal economy (Ahmed 2006, pp. 172-3). Another way it does this is through its optimistic vision for LGBTQ+ people who work at the Fund (i.e. "I think specifically for LGBT staff at the Fund it's much better than other workplaces" [VID13_16]), cementing the position it has reiterated across almost all its publications and videos: that work is liberatory. This is reiterated by former managing director, Christine Lagarde, who interjects at the end of the video to affirm that: "I heard the stories, and I can *understand* how lonely they must have felt" (VID13_16, emphasis added).

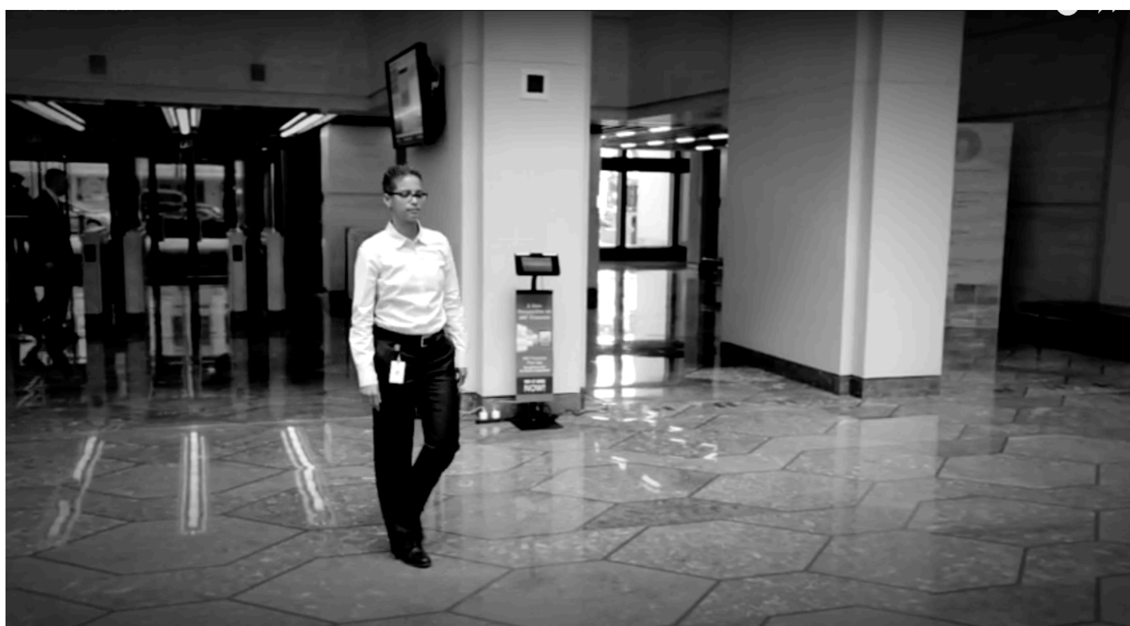

Figure 7.9: VID13_16.

Figure 7.10: VID13_16.

The ‘It Gets Better’ video is a rich source of contradiction. The particular expressions of homosexuality they represent are included because of their conformity with productive and reproductive expectations for human behaviour (i.e. monogamy, reproduction, work). I argue that this video is homonormative, since these subjects are visible because they do not question the legitimacy or power of prevailing institutions, norms and social orders. Rather, they actively engage in and sustain them. As Rao (2015, p. 40) writes, there is a stark “dissonance between the values that the individuals featured on the video seek to reclaim from their personal struggles, and those they promote through their work.” This dissonance is important to identify, since the messaging of the Fund’s visual discourse appears to function to absolve them from guilt and indictment. To revisit Achilleos-Sarll’s (2020) visibility spectrum, I place *queerness* at the point of invisibility. This is because the inclusion of homonormativity in this video serves to further alienate and render abject queerness, which keeps these subjectivities invisible, unthinkable, unlivable and illegitimate. It actually strengthens the binary between “legitimate and illegitimate lives” (Ahmed 2014, p. 150) by supporting a narrative of queer exceptionalism (Schotten 2016, pp. 3-4; see also: Puar 2013; Wahab 2021, p. 80). The moral of a story of queer exceptionalism is to promote the ‘normal’ traits of heterosexuality as accessible to people, such as LGBTQ+ people, formerly unable to access normality.

VIII. Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the invisible, queer 'Risky Sexual Subject,' which appears in the IMF's written discourse. I argue that the presence of gay subjects does not equate to the visibility of queerness, but rather that the IMF's discussion of gay subjects and gay sex further entrenches the existence of legible, safe and 'normal' sexual subjects, and the problem of 'risky' and queer sexual subjects.

I have interrogated the different spaces of the IMF's discourse wherein the body, embodiment, sex, sexuality and desire appear indirectly and directly. I traced the emergence of the 'Risky Sexual Subject' through the IMF's discourse on fertility. In this section, I highlight the ways that the Fund transforms childbirth, childbearing and care into an economic problem or 'burden,' particularly in Mali. In this discourse, an aberrant sexual subject emerges who has babies that necessitate reliance on state support. In the following section, I analysed the IMF's discourses on maternal and child mortality, focusing on the ways that minimising death is transformed by economistic logics of competition. This chapter also interrogated the IMF's discourses on human capital, and the 'technologies of the self,' involving careful self-investment and a focus on future individual and national success. The 'problem' of ageing and health was also examined, and reflected the IMF's broader problem with 'reconciling' care and work. I identified that the IMF's discourses on HIV/AIDS depended on presupposition of 'problem' and 'vulnerable' populations, in contrast to populations who have 'safe' sex. Lastly, I analysed the IMF's only visual discourse which represents gay subjects, and I argue that queerness is invisible in this discourse. Rather, the IMF promotes a homonormative gay subject, who is productive and reproductive. The IMF's imperative to maintain economic stability and growth underpins all of its discourses, even those which deal with the desires and vulnerabilities of bodies.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

This thesis has interrogated the discourses on gender and women produced by the IMF. These discourses emerged and proliferated in a period where 'post-feminist,' market feminism, and neoliberal feminism have over-powered the previously anti-capitalist ethos of feminist and queer critique (see: Chapters Two and Four). Despite increasing feminist and queer critiques of the IMF, particularly following the 'DSK affair,' the IMF has *prima facie* adopted a feminist approach in its discursive output. The tension between the IMF's new 'feminist face' (Prügl 2017) and its unwavering commitment to neoliberal logics of economic growth and stability was the starting point of my analysis. As a researcher, I undeniably hold numerous normative beliefs which have informed how this analysis has been undertaken. Firstly, this thesis has been driven by the ideological and conceptual work of feminist, queer and decolonial scholars, activists and thinkers, whose work points to the mutually constitutive relationship between gender, sex, sexuality, the heterosexual matrix, race and capitalism. It is for this reason that I have endeavoured to contribute to the field of queer political economy, in recognition that queer is not "merely cultural" (Butler 1998). Secondly, this analysis is underpinned by a belief that gender, sex, sexuality and race are not static, innate, true, natural or biological features of the body. Rather, I believe that these concepts have an unstable and messy relationship to the bodies that they purport to describe (see: Chapter Three). Lastly, I believe that there are better ways of structuring economic life than neoliberal capitalism and the nation-state form. This belief has motivated my analysis in the way that it has made me attentive to discursive processes which naturalise or presuppose the existence of neoliberal capitalism and the IMF itself. Although this thesis has not dealt with human research subjects, it is one which I have given careful ethical consideration to. Throughout this thesis, I have examined the discursive processes which naturalise and stabilise the binary gender order and neoliberal capitalism through the IMF's discourses, in order to 'queer from below' (Haritaworn 2008) and contribute to work which supports the expansion of economic, social and political possibilities. This chapter firstly provides an overview of the key findings of this research, before discussing the contribution and significance of these findings and

the research. I offer some potential avenues for research on this topic, and conclude with some final remarks.

I. Key findings

In this section, I explain the key finding(s) of this research, and how these findings respond to the research question articulated at the outset of this thesis:

> *How does the IMF's discourse about women and gender (re)produce the stability of a binary gender order and with what effects?*

This thesis finds that the IMF's discourse on gender and women depends on the presumed stability of the binary gender order in its imperative to achieve economic stability and growth: a stable economy needs a stable gender order. The IMF (re)produces the coherence and stability of the binary gender order through three primary subject-positions, which are the subject of Chapters Five, Six and Seven. The relative strength or weakness of each figure on the visibility spectrum, from invisibility to hyper-visibility, reveals the desirability of each subject-position for the IMF's core project of maintaining economic growth and stability, established in Chapter Four.

In Chapter Four, I found that the institutional parameters of the IMF's mandate limits the Fund's feminism, and positions it as secondary to, or as a means to achieving, its primary goals of achieving economic growth and stability. Specifically, the IMF's discourse on women and gender is constrained by the Fund's core activities, as outlined in its mandate: surveillance, lending and capacity development (PUB22_67, p. 8). The absence-presence of the economy throughout the IMF's visual discourse is reflective of how economic growth and stability are treated as the explicit and implicit standards against which all policies and subjects are measured against. The IMF's discourse co-opts the rhetoric of feminist activist movements, including 'empowerment,' 'diversity,' and 'equality.' It subsumes these terms into a conservative, neoliberal political project which offers no challenge to the economic conditions and system that the IMF (re)produces. In this chapter, I also discussed how the binary gender order and binary logics of (under)development underpin the IMF's discourse on gender and women. The foundational assumptions that the Fund's discourse makes regarding

gender, sex, sexuality and race, as well as the conservative parameters of its approach to 'gender mainstreaming' form the backdrop against which the three subject-positions identified in this thesis emerge. I will now turn to an explanation of these three subject-positions.

Firstly, the IMF's discourses (re)produce the hyper-visible subject-position of the 'Working Woman.' As I explored in Chapter Five, the hyper-visibility of the 'Working Woman' marks her as an aspirational figure, and she is predicated by qualities that are compatible with the IMF's logics of productivity, efficiency, growth, and stability. The IMF represents the 'Working Woman' as an untapped resource for economic stability and growth, as well as a potential economic agent. Moving beyond the masculinist, ethnocentric *homo economicus* or 'Davos man,' the IMF presents the 'Working Woman' as a novel *femina economica*, which is a distinctly feminine economic subject. The 'Working Woman' or *femina economica* combines feminine traits such as maternal instinct, care and level-headedness with the traditional traits of the *homo economicus*, including utility-maximisation, productivity and efficiency. In doing so, the IMF stabilises the binary gender order by articulating behavioural differences in binary terms. Rather than endorsing a transformative vision of the gender and economic order, the IMF presupposes that labour force participation is a marker of progressiveness and empowerment for women; the telos of the IMF's feminist rhetoric on 'gender gaps,' 'gender mainstreaming,' and 'gender diversity.'[63] Accordingly, I find that the 'Working Woman' is represented in the binary and racialised terms of (under)development. In doing so, the IMF positions itself and its policy prescriptions as inherently progressive, as capitalism and the market are positioned as synonymous with development in contrast to the under-development of non-market activities. This is done through the repeated sentiment that "policies that empower women to work is good economics" (VID20_1).

The visible 'Heterosexual Nuclear Family' explored in Chapter Six is a cornerstone of the IMF's knowledge production on gender and women. The stability and coherence of the binary gender order is presupposed in the IMF's discourse where the household is

[63] See: Chapter Four.

explicitly (and implicitly) defined as comprising a man and a woman, and their two children. In this chapter, I find that the IMF presupposes that monogamous heterosexuality is the central site for intimacy, reproduction and care. Further, I find that care work and paid work are represented in the binary terms of burdensome/empowering. Negative predicates, such as 'burden,' are used to position care as fundamentally disempowering, and as a relation that women are 'trapped in.' In contrast, paid market work is represented as a space where women can achieve their 'full potential' and 'empower' themselves to flourish. Throughout the IMF's discourse, the necessity of care and love labour is treated as a 'barrier' to economic growth and stability. As a consequence, the IMF reproduces the abstract, disembodied, and unembedded economic subject, who does not require the life-sustaining work of care and reproduction. Another way that the IMF entrenches heterosexuality and the binary order in its discourse is through the visible 'caring father.' The 'caring father' and the 'Working Woman' form the complementary halves of a cohesive and well-functioning household whole. Rather than offering a transformation of gender relations, I find that this discourse reproduces the centrality of the 'Heterosexual Nuclear Family.' Lastly, the primacy of economistic logics of productivity and efficiency underpin the IMF's insistence that flexible work is a solution to the care 'barrier.' In the multiple areas identified in Chapter Six, the heterosexual matrix and the binary gender order are uninterrogated, and presented as natural or common-sense.

The presumption of heterosexual couplehood, comprising a working mother and caring father, simultaneously produces invisible, unnamed subjects. In Chapter Seven, I find that the invisible subject-position of the 'Risky Sexual Subject' fundamentally challenges the IMF's vision of an orderly, heterosexual economic order. I identify the 'Risky Sexual Subject' in the written discourses on fertility, maternal and child mortality, life expectancy, health and HIV/AIDS. However, this subject is invisible in the IMF's visual discourse. The 'Risky Sexual Subject' comprises the sex workers, criminals, injecting drug users, (teen) mothers on welfare and otherwise queer subjects. They are treated as a monolithic 'problem' group, who have sex outside of heterosexual monogamy, or not for reproductive purposes. The marginalisation of these subjects reveals the IMF's implication in the (re)production of sexual subjects whose intimacy is

compatible with economic growth and stability. Although the IMF does represent some gay subjects, I argue that these subjects are homonormative, or in line with a heterosexist, neoliberal vision for social, economic and political life. These subjects prioritise reproduction as well as market work, which are aspirations that the IMF endorses because of the benefit provided to economic growth and stability. 'Queerness' is invisible, because 'queerness' refers to 'failure' in orientation, and a 'failure' to achieve normality.

In the IMF's discourse on gender and women, the stability of the binary gender order functions as a pre-discursive 'fact' of the body, with significant political effects. The representations I have analysed here presume the 'realness' of binary gender and the 'natural fact' of heterosexuality, which in turn structure economic knowledge production. This is a circular process. By producing knowledge about the economy which presumes binary gender and the 'natural fact' of heterosexuality, the IMF's discursive output renders invisible the subjects whose bodies and relationships do not align with these fictions. Additionally, it forecloses the possibilities of arranging economic life, intimacy, reproduction and care in alternative ways. The discursive and material are not binary and separate. Rather, the discursive constitution of gender, sex, sexuality and race through the IMF's neoliberal mandate simultaneously produces an economy which valorises a heterosexual, monogamous, able-bodied and ethnocentric subject, while invisibilising queer, disabled and racial 'Others.'

II. Contribution and significance of the thesis

a. Contribution(s) of the thesis

This research has been enriched by and is indebted to the works of feminist, queer and decolonial scholars and activists in IR and IPE. In this thesis, I have endeavoured to meaningfully contribute to this literature in order to better understand how capitalism, binary gender, heterosexuality and race function and manifest in discourse. I see this thesis making two important contributions to IPE and IR, which I will explore in this section.

The first contribution that this thesis makes is through the application of queer theory to a novel empirical context. As I identified in Chapter Two, there is abundant literature which subjects the IMF's sister institution, the World Bank, to queer discourse analysis. This literature pays attention to the way that binary gender, heterosexuality and race underpin and are (re)produced by the discourses of the Bank. This literature establishes the importance of interrogating the common-sense that is stabilised through the discourses of international institutions. However, it does not account for the unique parameters of the IMF's mandate, and how this may shape, influence and curtail the IMF's discourses on gender and women (Griffin 2009, p. 8). In this thesis, I have contributed to knowledge by gathering and analysing a unique data corpus of 93 IMF written and visual publications on gender and women since 2001 to 2023. This is a data corpus which has never been studied together before. Due to the novelty of what has been referred to as the IMF's 'gender turn' (Coburn 2019), this thesis offers a timely contribution to scholarship.

The second contribution I make in this thesis is methodological. In Chapter Three, and throughout the analytical chapters of this thesis, I develop and apply a methodological toolkit for visual and written discourse analysis within queer political economy. The analytical tools I use have been developed in the work of scholars of the global politics of visual representation (see: Achilleos-Sarll 2020; Berger 2009; Bleiker 2001, 2015, 2018; Bleiker & Kay 2007; Cooper-Cunningham 2019; Griffin 2016; Wilson 2011). It is also rooted in a post-structuralist ontological and epistemological belief that the 'real' world does not exist 'out there' to be exposed through rigorous scientific discovery (Shepherd 2008, 2015). The methodological toolkit consisted of analytical techniques developed by Achilleos-Sarll (2020) to analyse the visual. The 'visibility spectrum' comprises four central points: *hyper-visibility*, *visibility*, *absent presence*, and *invisibility* (Achilleos-Sarll 2020, p. 1644). This gradient of (in)visibility provides a way to conceptualise and analyse the different functions of how a subject appears as (in)visible in text. The methodological toolkit developed in this thesis also consisted of Doty's (1993) analytical techniques, developed for analysing written discourse: *presupposition, predication,* and *subject positioning.* Although these analytical techniques are pre-established within the literature, this thesis extends their use beyond *either*

analysing written discourse *or* analysing visual discourse. These techniques are deployed concurrently. The visibility spectrum helps make sense of written discourse, and Doty's (1993) analytical techniques also enrich the visual analysis. In doing this, I have developed and deployed a unique methodological toolkit for discourse analysis of the visual and the written. Finally, these techniques are used in this thesis to be attentive to how sex, gender, sexuality, race and the heterosexual matrix are stabilised in discourse, and with what effects. This thesis therefore contributes to queer political economy literature through the development of a methodological toolkit that is attentive to how visual and written discourses stabilise and (re)produce sex, gender, (hetero)sexuality and race.

b. The significance of the research in a time of 'post-feminist,' anti-trans neoliberal politics

The two contributions that this research makes are particularly timely in a climate of 'post-feminist' politics (Elias 2013; Federici 2020; Fraser 2009; Hawkesworth 2004; McRobbie 2009; Thompson 2008; on 'market feminism' see: Kantola & Squires 2012), which is marked by a neoliberal and masculinist conception of what 'empowerment' of women looks like. This research articulates a detailed account of the discursive power of (post-)feminisms which work within neoliberal, imperial capitalism. This research challenges the normalising, homogenising and 'colour-blind' politics of neoliberal capitalism. It is an urgent task to destabilise the neoliberal discourses which naturalise and (re)produce gendered and racialised violence. Rather than constituting "The End of History," (Fukuyama 2006) or the approach to which "There Is No Alternative," the thesis presented here resists the political project of "capitalist realism" (Fisher 2009). It does so by pointing to the spaces of discontinuity, misalignment and instability that neoliberal, capitalist discourses negotiate and attempt to conceal.

To articulate a position *against* anti-queer and anti-trans politics is also a significant component of this doctoral project, given the rise of Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminists (TERFs) (Butler 2024; Lewis 2025; Lewis & Seresin 2022) and anti-trans politics in the United Kingdom (UK) and United States at the time of writing. In April

of 2025, the UK Supreme Court significantly curtailed legal protections to trans women, men and non-binary people when it ruled that the meaning of 'sex' is limited to biological sex with respect to the *Equality Act 2010* (UK) (House of Commons Library 2025). This was the product of advocacy by a group of TERF activists, emboldened by a perceived need to solidify and naturalise the boundaries around sex, gender and sexuality. Further, upon re-election for a second term, Donald Trump passed an Executive Order entitled 'Defending Women From Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government' (The White House 2025). This Order seeks to retrench a biologically essentialist view of gender and sex. It articulates a position that it is "ideologues" who "deny the biological reality of sex" (The White House 2025, para. 2). Both moves represent a fear-based politics against the possibilities for life outside of binary sex, gender and heterosexuality, which I resist. I view these acts as a testament to the foundational instabilities and incoherences on which biologically essentialist conceptions of binary sex and gender rest. I disentangle these processes of naturalisation and instead recognise the multiplicity and fluidity of sex, gender and sexuality. This thesis responds to a climate of anxious and violent attempts to preserve the binary gender order and points to an alternative way of living, a life outside of neoliberal capitalism and beyond the gender binary.

III. Avenues for future research

This research has made an important contribution to the literature. In undertaking this work, however, I am aware of the future avenues that research in queer political economy can take to further develop the insights of this thesis. In this section, I highlight some possible avenues for future research on gender, sexuality, race and the IMF within queer political economy.

Firstly, future research may wish to expand the data corpus of this thesis and extend analysis to include the social media output of the IMF on issues of gender and women. The IMF's proliferation of discourses on gender and women are not limited to the publications and videos I have analysed here, but extend to posts made on X (see: Coburn 2019), Facebook, Instagram and Threads. The use of social media platforms is

theoretically interesting,[64] and scholars with skills in social media analysis may be interested in how the Fund uses these platforms. Similarly, future research may endeavour to analyse the written publications and videos of the IMF as they continue to be published. This thesis depended on a dataset of IMF publications from 2001 to July 2023. Since July 2023, the IMF has continued to publish on gender and women, and these discursive outputs are worthy of further interrogation.

Secondly, future research may deploy different methodological tools to understand how the IMF's focus on 'gender diversity,' 'gender equality' and closing 'gender gaps' manifests in its staffing practices. Throughout the discourses analysed in this thesis, the IMF explicitly committed to addressing the 'gender gap' in leadership positions. Although I maintain that this is a conservative commitment, I am interested in future research analysing whether there has been change in the demographic of people holding leadership positions within the IMF. Similarly, future research may endeavour to track how the principles of the 'Strategy Toward Mainstreaming Gender' (PUB22_67; see: Chapter Four) are manifesting in policy practices of the Fund in recipient countries.

Lastly, future research may explore the gendered effects of the IMF's structural adjustment policies during its 'gender turn.' Throughout this research, I was curious whether there was any documented improvement to the gendered harms and effects of structural adjustment that had been documented by feminist scholars of debt and restructuring (see: Chapter Two). Though my intuition is that the IMF's 'gender turn' has had minimal positive effects for women and other marginalised groups in recipient countries, it would be worthwhile to subject this to scholarly analysis.

[64] The IMF's use of social media platforms to distribute knowledge is interesting given that it is a non-traditional way of communicating political information (Bode 2016). In contrast, traditional forms of political communication may include through the news, or publications similar to the ones I have analysed in this thesis. The extension of this knowledge into social media may access new groups of people, who perhaps do not often engage in traditional methods for taking in political information (Bode 2016, p. 28).

IV. Final remarks

This thesis has interrogated how gender, sex, sexuality, race and the heterosexual matrix are stabilised and (re)produced in the IMF's discourses on gender and women. The queer feminist post-structuralist approach to discourse and visual analysis taken in this thesis has helped reveal that economic knowledge depends on common-sense about gender, sex, sexuality and race in order to make sense of economic 'growth' and 'stability.' Gender, sex, sexuality, and race are not exterior to political economy; they are not secondary concerns. Rather, this research reveals that they fundamentally underpin and shape how the IMF represents economic stability and growth. This has material effects. Stabilising and (re)producing common-sense about gender, sex, sexuality and race make them appear natural, true and innate. The messiness, inconsistencies, incoherence and aberrance which characterises bodies and their relationship to the labels imposed on them is therefore concealed. This research has confirmed that discursive sites wherein categories such as 'women,' 'men' and 'the family' are treated as monolithic, universal and/or singular are not neutral, but rather are exercising power.

In examining the IMF's discourses on gender and women, this research is not merely interested in critique, but is focused on the possibilities which exist beyond the ways that gender, sex, sexuality and race are limited and demarcated in discourse. Bodies cannot be accurately contained in and described by the binary gender order, sexuality categories or race categories. The history of these concepts illustrates that each attempt to naturalise, stabilise and entrench these systems of classification is done so with a political purpose. This research has examined the connection between gender, sex, sexuality, race and capitalism in order to highlight the ways that the IMF is implicated in, and has an interest in, the expression of a binary gender order. The classificatory systems used by the IMF are harnessed as part of their mandate of achieving economic growth and stability, transforming human bodies into economic agents. In order to begin to imagine possibilities for alternative ways of living, we need to subject those systems which appear 'natural' to closer scrutiny.

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Appendices

I. Publications contained on the 'Gender and the IMF' page

#	Code	Title	Year	Author	Type
1	**PUB01_1**	The Gender Gap in Education in Eritrea in 1991-98: A Missed Opportunity?	2001	Zuzana Brixiová, Aleš Bulíř, and Joshua Comenetz	Working Paper
2	**PUB03_2**	Gender-Responsive Government Budgeting	2003	Feridoun Sarraf	Working Paper
3	**PUB03_3**	The Effects of Fiscal Policies on the Economic Development of Women in the Middle East and North Africa	2003	Nicole Laframboise and Tea Trumbic	Working Paper
4	**PUB06_4**	Gender and Its Relevance to Macroeconomic Policy: A Survey	2006	Janet G. Stotsky	Working Paper
5	**PUB06_5**	Gender Budgeting	2006	Janet G. Stotsky	Working Paper
6	**PUB06_6**	Why Are Women Working So Much More in Canada? An International Perspective	2006	Evridiki Tsounta	Working Paper
7	**PUB07_7**	Global Monitoring Report 2007: Confronting the Challenges of Gender Equality and Fragile States	2007	World Bank and International Monetary Fund	Global Monitorin g Report
8	**PUB13_8**	Women, Work and the Economy	2013	Katrin Elborgh-Woytek, Monique Newiak, Kalpana Kochhar, Stefania	Staff Discussion Note

				Fabrizio, Kangni Kpodar, Philippe Wingender, Benedict Clements, and Gerd Schwartz	
9	**PUB15_9**	Catalyst for Change: Empowering Women and Tackling Income Inequality	2015	Christian Gonzales, Sonali Jain-Chandra, Kalpana Kochhar, Monique Newiak, and Tlek Zeinullayev	Staff Discussion Note
10	**PUB15_10**	Fair Play: More Equal Laws Boost Female Labor Force Participation	2015	Christian Gonzales, Sonali Jain-Chandra, Kalpana Kochhar, and Monique Newiak	Staff Discussion Note
11	**PUB15_11**	What Can Boost Female Labor Force Participation in Asia?	2015	Yuko Kinoshita and Fang Guo	Working Paper
12	**PUB15_12**	Women Workers in India: Why So Few Among So Many?	2015	Sonali Das, Sonali Jain-Chandra, Kalpana Kochhar, and Naresh Kumar	Working Paper
13	**PUB16_13**	Asia: A Survey of Gender Budgeting Efforts	2016	Lekha Chakraborty	Working Paper
14	**PUB16_14**	Caribbean and Pacific Islands: A Survey of Gender Budgeting Efforts	2016	Tamoya A.L. Christie and Dhanaraj Thakur	Working Paper
15	**PUB16_15**	Demographic Dividends, Gender Equality, and Economic Growth: The Case of Cabo Verde	2016	Heloisa Marone	Working Paper
16	**PUB16_16**	Europe: A Survey of Gender Budgeting Efforts	2016	Sheila Quinn	Working Paper

17	**PUB16_17**	Gender Budgeting: Fiscal Context and Current Outcomes	2016	Janet G. Stotsky	Working Paper
18	**PUB16_18**	Gender Diversity in Senior Positions and Firm Performance: Evidence from Europe	2016	Lone Christiansen, Huidan Lin, Joana Pereira, Petia Topalova, and Rima Turk	Working Paper
19	**PUB16_19**	Gender Equality and Economic Diversification	2016	Romina Kazandjian, Lisa Kolovich, Kalpana Kochhar, and Monique Newiak	Working Paper
20	**PUB16_20**	Individual Choice or Policies? Drivers of Female Employment in Europe	2016	Lone Christiansen, Huidan Lin, Joana Pereira, Petia Topalova, and Rima Turk	Working Paper
21	**PUB16_21**	Inequality, Gender Gaps and Economic Growth: Comparative Evidence for Sub-Saharan Africa	2016	Dalia Hakura, Mumtaz Hussain, Monique Newiak, Vimal Thakoor, and Fan Yang	Working Paper
22	**PUB16_22**	Macroeconomic Impacts of Gender Inequality and Informality in India	2016	Purva Khera	Working Paper
23	**PUB16_23**	Middle East and Central Asia: A Survey of Gender Budgeting Efforts	2016	Lisa Kolovich and Sakina Shibuya	Working Paper
24	**PUB16_24**	Gender Diversity in the Executive Board - Draft Report of the Executive Board to the Board of Governors	2016	Ms. Kapwepwe and Mr. Sterland	Report
25	**PUB16_25**	Sub-Saharan Africa: A	2016	Janet G. Stotsky,	Working

		Survey of Gender Budgeting Efforts		Lisa Kolovich, and Suhaib Kebhaj	Paper
26	**PUB16_26**	The Influence of Gender Budgeting in Indian States on Gender Inequality and Fiscal Spending	2016	Janet G. Stotsky and Asad Zaman	Working Paper
27	**PUB16_27**	Trends in Gender Equality and Women's Advancement	2016	Janet G. Stotsky, Sakina Shibuya, Lisa Kolovich, and Suhaib Kebhaj	Working Paper
28	**PUB16_28**	Unlocking Female Employment Potential in Europe	2016	Lone Christiansen, Huidan Lin, Joana Pereira, Petia Topalova, Rima Turk, and Petya Koeva Brooks	European Departme nt and Strategy, Policy, and Review Departme nt
29	**PUB16_29**	Western Hemisphere: A Survey of Gender Budgeting Efforts	2016	Lucía Pérez Fragoso and Corina Rodríguez Enríquez	Working Paper
30	**PUB16_30**	Women's Opportunities and Challenges in Sub-Saharan African Job Markets	2016	Christine Dieterich, Anni Huang, and Alun Thomas	Working Paper
31	**PUB17_31**	Banking on Women Leaders: A Case for More?	2017	Ratna Sahay, Martin Čihák, Papa N'Diaye, Adolfo Barajas, Annette Kyobe, Srobona Mitra, Yen Nian Mooi, and Seyed Reza Yousefi	Working Paper
32	**PUB17_32**	Gender Budgeting in G7 Countries	2017	Sanjeev Gupta et al.	Report

33	**PUB17_33**	Women Are Key for Future Growth: Evidence from Canada	2017	Bengt Petersson, Rodrigo Mariscal, and Kotaro Ishi	Working Paper
34	**PUB17_34**	Women at Work in Latin America and the Caribbean	2017	Natalija Novta and Joyce Cheng Wong	Working Paper
35	**PUB18_35**	Closing Gender Gaps in India: Does Increasing Womens' Access to Finance Help?	2018	Purva Khera	Working Paper
36	**PUB18_36**	Economic Gains from Gender Inclusion: New Mechanisms, New Evidence	2018	J.D. Ostry, J. Alvarez, R. Espinoza, and C. Papageorgiou	Staff Discussion Note
37	**PUB18_37**	Foreign Direct Investment and Women Empowerment: New Evidence on Developing Countries	2018	Rasmane Ouedraogo and Elodie Marlet	Working Paper
38	**PUB18_38**	Gender Equality: Which Policies Have the Biggest Bang for the Buck?	2018	Sonali Jain-Chandra, Kalpana Kochhar, Monique Newiak, Yang Yang, and Edda Zoli	Working Paper
39	**PUB18_39**	Gender, Technology and the Future of Work	2018	Mariya Brussevich, Era Dabla-Norris, Christine Kamunge, Pooja Karnane, Salma Khalid, and Kalpana Kochhar	Staff Discussion Note
40	**PUB18_40**	How to Operationalize Gender Issues in Country Work	2018	Lone Christiansen et al.	Report
41	**PUB18_41**	Pursuing Women's	2018	Stefania Fabrizio	Backgroun

		Economic Empowerment		et al.	d Note
42	**PUB18_42**	What is Driving Women's Financial Inclusion Across Countries?	2018	Corinne Deléchat, Monique Newiak, Rui Xu, Fan Yang, and Göksu Aslan	Working Paper
43	**PUB18_43**	Women in Finance: A Case for Closing Gaps	2018	Ratna Sahay, Martin Čihák, and other IMF Staff	Staff Discussion Note
44	**PUB19_44**	A Quantitative Analysis of Female Employment in Senegal	2019	Vivian Malta, Angelica Martínez Leyva, Marina M. Tavares	Working Paper
45	**PUB19_45**	Countercyclical Fiscal Policy and Gender Employment Gap: Evidence from the G-7 Countries	2019	Bernardin Akitoby, Jiro Honda, and Hiroaki Miyamoto	Working Paper
46	**PUB19_46**	Finance and Development: Women and Growth	2019	International Monetary Fund	Finance and Developm ent
47	**PUB19_47**	Gender Equality and Electoral Violence in Africa: Unlocking the Peacemaking Potential of Women	2019	Rasmane Ouedraogo and Idrissa Ouedraogo	Working Paper
48	**PUB19_48**	Guilt, Gender, and Work-Life Balance in Japan: A Choice Experiment	2019	Chie Aoyagi and Alistair Munro	Working Paper
49	**PUB19_49**	Informality and Gender Gaps Going Hand in Hand	2019	Vivian Malta, Lisa Kolovich, Angelica Martínez Leyva, and Marina Mendes Tavares	Working Paper

50	**PUB19_50**	Is Technology Widening the Gender Gap? Automation and the Future of Female Employment	2019	Mariya Brussevich, Era Dabla-Norris, and Salma Khalid	Working Paper
51	**PUB19_51**	Gender Diversity in the Executive Board - Progress Report of the Executive Board to the Board of Governors	2019	Working Group on Gender Diversity	Report
52	**PUB19_52**	Reducing and Redistributing Unpaid Work: Stronger Policies to Support Gender Equality	2019	Cristian Alonso, Mariya Brussevich, Era Dabla-Norris, Yuko Kinoshita, and Kalpana Kochhar	Working Paper
53	**PUB20_53**	COVID-19 Pandemic: Asymmetric Effects across Gender and Age	2020	Francesca Caselli, Francesco Grigoli, Damiano Sandri, and Antonio Spilimbergo	Working Paper
54	**PUB20_54**	Gender Inequality and Economic Growth: Evidence from Industry-Level Data	2020	Ata Can Bertay, Ljubica Dordevic, and Can Sever	Working Paper
55	**PUB20_55**	Gender Diversity in the Executive Board - Progress Report of the Executive Board to the Board of Governors	2020	Working Group on Gender Diversity	Report
56	**PUB20_56**	Women in the Labor Force: The Role of Fiscal Policies	2020	Stefania Fabrizio, Anna Fruttero, Daniel Gurara, Lisa Kolovich, Vivian Malta, Marina M. Tavares, and Nino	Staff Discussion Note

				Tchelishvili	
57	**PUB21_57**	China’s Rebalancing and Gender Inequality	2021	Mariya Brussevich, Era Dabla-Norris, and Bin Grace Li	Working Paper
58	**PUB21_58**	Effects of COVID-19 on Regional and Gender Equality in Sub-Saharan Africa: Evidence from Nigeria and Ethiopia	2021	Chie Aoyagi	Working Paper
59	**PUB21_59**	Epidemics, Gender, and Human Capital in Developing Countries	2021	Stefania Fabrizio, Diego B.P. Gomes, Carine Meyimdjui, and Marina M. Tavares	Working Paper
60	**PUB21_60**	Gender and Employment in the COVID-19 Recession: Evidence on “She-cessions”	2021	John Bluedorn, Francesca Caselli, Niels-Jakob Hansen, Ippei Shibata, and Marina M. Tavares	Working Paper
61	**PUB21_61**	Gender Budgeting in G20 Countries	2021	Virginia Alonso-Albarran, Teresa Curristine, Gemma Preston, Alberto Soler, Nino Tchelishvili, and Sureni Weerathunga	Working Paper
62	**PUB21_62**	Gender Equality and Inclusive Growth	2021	Raquel Fernández, Asel Isakova, Francesco Luna, and Barbara Rambousek	Working Paper

63	**PUB21_63**	The Heavy Economic Toll of Gender-based Violence: Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa	2021	Rasmane Ouedraogo and David Stenzel	Working Paper
64	**PUB22_64**	Are Low-Skill Women Being Left Behind? Labor Market Evidence from the UK	2022	Era Dabla-Norris, Carlo Pizzinelli, and Jay Rappaport	Working Paper
65	**PUB22_65**	Fintech, Female Employment, and Gender Inequality	2022	Boileau Loko and Yuanchen Yang	Working Paper
66	**PUB22_66**	Gendered Taxes: The Interaction of Tax Policy with Gender Equality	2022	Maria Coelho, Aieshwarya Davis, Alexander Klemm, and Carolina Osorio Buitron	Working Paper
67	**PUB22_67**	IMF Strategy Towards Mainstreaming Gender	2022	Ratna Sahay et al.	Policy Paper
68	**PUB22_68**	Legal Gender Equality as a Catalyst for Convergence	2022	Can Sever	Working Paper
69	**PUB22_69**	Gender Diversity in the Executive Board - Report of the Executive Board to the Board of Governors	2022	Working Group on Gender Diversity	Report
70	**PUB22_70**	Tackling Gender Inequality: Definitions, Trends, and Policy Designs	2022	Baoping Shang	Working Paper
71	**PUB22_71**	Tackling Legal Impediments to Women's Economic Empowerment	2022	Katherine Christopherson, Audrey Yiadom, Juliet Johnson, Francisca Fernando, Hanan Yazid and Clara Thiemann	Working Paper

72	**PUB22_72**	Women in Fintech: As Leaders and Users	2022	Purva Khera, Sumiko Ogawa, Ratna Sahay and Mahima Vasishth	Working Paper
73	**PUB23_73**	A New Growth Engine for Japan: Women in STEM Fields: Japan	2023	Rui Xu	Selected Issues Paper
74	**PUB23_74**	Digitalization and Gender Equality in Political Leadership in Sub-Saharan Africa	2023	Diego B.P. Gomes and Carine Meyimdjui	Working Paper
75	**PUB23_75**	Fragility, Demographics, Gender Inequality: Mali	2023	Luc Tucker	Selected Issues Paper
76	**PUB23_76**	Macroeconomic Gains from Closing Gender Educational Gaps in Niger: Niger	2023	Rasmane Ouedraogo and Diego Gomes	Selected Issues Paper
77	**PUB23_77**	Who are Central Banks? Gender, Human Resources, and Central Banking	2023	Mariarosaria Comunale, Petra de Bruxelles, Kalpana Kochhar, Juliette Raskauskas, and D. Filiz Unsal	Working Paper

II. IMF YouTube videos

#	Code	Title	Year	Length
1	**VID20_1**	Policies That Empower Women To Work Is Good Economics	2020	2:28
2	**VID20_2**	Youth Rising - India	2020	0:55
3	**VID20_3**	Youth Rising - Uganda	2020	0:57
4	**VID20_4**	Youth Voice: Estefani Adriano of Brazil on her Future	2020	3:56

5	**VID20_5**	Youth Voice: Song Hye Rin of South Korea on her Future	2020	3:08
6	**VID20_6**	Youth Voice: Rebka Feleke of Ethiopia on her Future	2020	2:33
7	**VID19_7**	Women and Unpaid Work	2019	0:56
8	**VID19_8**	IMF Research on Women and Work	2019	1:59
9	**VID18_9**	Analyze This! Empowering Women	2018	2:30
10	**VID19_10**	Women and Economic Growth	2019	3:04
11	**VID18_11**	Women Empowerment in Algeria	2018	1:02
12	**VID18_12**	Mariam's Story: Breaking the Glass Ceiling in Rwanda	2018	4:00
13	**VID18_13**	Gender Equality in Rwanda	2018	4:53
14	**VID20_14**	In Her Words - Kristalina Georgieva	2020	32:21
15	**VID21_15**	The Age of Womenomics: A Conversation with Kristalina Georgieva and Janet Yellen	2021	42:10
16	**VID13_16**	It Gets Better	2013	12:39