Emotional Labour: A Case of Gender Specific Exploitation

Imagine a heterosexual couple, Tim and Lisa. Tim is socialized as a man and has learned that men are neither supposed to show emotions nor to care a lot about them. Lisa, in turn, is socialized as a woman and has learned that it is her job to take care of the people around her and to be emotionally available. Consequently, Lisa generally initiates the conversation when it comes to talking about feelings in their relationship and makes sure to create a space where Tim feels comfortable. Tim enjoys Lisa's care and benefits from having conversations about feelings - he realizes that the relationship is more honest, more intense and closer as a result and he also finds it therapeutic to talk about his own feelings. He does, however, not think it is his 'job' to start the conversation or to try to become more emotionally aware. Feelings, after all, are better left to women. Lisa is annoyed at the lack of reciprocity, but finds it hard to stop providing the emotional labour, as she takes it to be important for the functioning of the relationship. I think in this example Lisa is exploited in a *gender specific* way. The aim of this paper is to make this intuition plausible.

While it is uncontroversial that women are exploited,[1] it is necessary to clarify what it means for them to be exploited in *a gender specific way*. On my account, women are exploited in a gender specific way i) if they are exploited *in virtue of their social position as women;* and ii) if the *object* of exploitation, the good that is transferred, is in a *specific way linked to gender* and therefore not adequately valued. This understanding differentiates between cases where women are exploited *in virtue of their gender specific position* and cases where women are exploited *in a gender specific way*. The former covers cases where women are economically exploited in virtue of their gender. But my interest is in the latter, where both the enabling

[1] Feminists have long pointed out the exploitation of women's reproductive labour, c.f. Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James (1972); Silvia Federici (1975); and Nancy Fraser (2014), women's exploitation within traditional marriage, c.f. Susan Okin (1989, p. 136), or their exploitation in intimate partnerships, c.f. Ruth Sample (2003, p. 97). Others have focused on women's exploitation in the global sphere of production, c.f. Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003), or Maria Mies (1998).

conditions as well as the object of exploitation are linked to gender. The type of exploitation I am interested in pushes beyond women's economic exploitation.

Dominant accounts of exploitation fail to capture this form of exploitation. First, in focusing their analysis on the terms of the transaction, *transactional accounts* exclude structurally embedded vulnerabilities, such as those created by gender. Marxist structural accounts on the other hand take into account the structural background of exploitation, but focus predominantly on the exploitation that women suffer *as workers*. They thereby become prone to the old Marxist feminist charge of prioritizing class over gender.[2] Second, both transactional- and Marxist accounts tend to focus on commodity exploitation and thereby use the concept primarily to assess the fairness of market transactions.[3] In this paper I will challenge both accounts for being too narrow. In this I join feminist writers as well as critical race theorists who have pointed out that the focus of dominant accounts of exploitation leaves important instances of gender- and racial exploitation unexplained.[4]

What is at stake in arguing for a gender specific conception of exploitation? I will argue that a gender specific account will add two things to our understanding of gender injustice: First, it provides an instrument to analyse how hierarchical gender relations are sustained and reproduced and it points to a specific type of political response. Second, the concept of exploitation picks out a specific wrong that occurs even when both parties consent to and benefit from an exchange. A gender specific conception allows to critically evaluate gender relations, such as intimate relationships, that are often taken to be immune from injustice.

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[2] The focus on class has been critiqued by Heidi Hartmann (1979); Iris Marion Young (1990); and Nancy Holmstrom (2002) among others.

[3] Exemptions can be found in Ruth Sample's (2003) and Robert Goodin's (1987, p. 166) accounts. I will discuss them in more detail in the last section.

[4] See for instance Iris Marion Young (1990); Ann Ferguson (1989); Al Szymanski (1985); Himani Bannerji (1995); or Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003).

My argument proceeds in four steps. First, I argue that dominant accounts of exploitation are unable to accommodate gender specific forms of exploitation. Second, I use the case of emotional labour to illustrate a form of gender specific exploitation. Third, I draw theoretical lessons from the case of emotional labour for an account of exploitation that is sensitive to gender specific exploitation. And finally I provide a positive account of gender specific exploitation and indicate the implications of this account.

Critique of dominant accounts of exploitation

It is relatively uncontroversial to say that the core of exploitation involves some form of unfair benefitting, yet there is disagreement about different conceptions of exploitation. In what follows I distinguish between two groups of dominant accounts: Transactional- and structural accounts. In the group of transactional accounts I will further differentiate micro-level- from integrationist accounts. This separation tracks how these accounts integrate structural considerations and hence their sensitivity to the structural aspect that gender introduces. I will then show why dominant accounts are unable to accommodate gender specific forms of exploitation.

Transactional accounts of exploitation

There are two types of transactional accounts of exploitation, micro-level accounts and integrationist accounts.

Micro-level accounts of exploitation understand the wrong of exploitation as transaction-specific. Whether a transaction counts as exploitative solely depends on the terms of the transaction. As Matt Zwolinski (2007, p. 711) argues, '[w]hat makes an action exploitative, on that analysis, is that it involves some actual or threatened violation of the rights of the exploitee by the exploiter'. Accordingly, someone is exploited when another party takes advantage of her in a way that violates her rights. On a micro-level perspective the moral evalu-

ation of the terms of the transaction requires no reference to the ex-ante position of the parties. It is irrelevant whether the transacting party is wealthy, which gender she has or whether she is in some way structurally disadvantaged.[5] The only relevant moral consideration is whether the way in which the parties interact violates some moral standard internal to the transaction.

Integrationist accounts of exploitation share with micro-level accounts the focus on specific transactions in their analysis of exploitation. Contrary to proponents of a micro-level perspective, however, they allow for a broader range of moral considerations to enter the analysis. They take into account some structural background conditions that affect the ex-ante positions of the agents respectively. According to Alan Wertheimer (1999, p. 230), exploitation occurs when one party to the transaction pays a price that deviates from a hypothetical fair market price. The hypothetical fair market price is a price that an 'informed and unpressured buyer would receive from an informed and unpressured seller'. In tying exploitation to a hypothetically fair market price, Wertheimer integrates considerations of background justice, namely a specific idea about how markets should ideally be organized, which includes implicit assumptions about the institutions supporting such markets. Integrationist accounts generally analyse specific transactions with regard to the way in which the price that is paid in these transactions deviates from a price that would be paid had there not been some obstruction in the bargaining power of the participating parties. This need not necessarily be spelled out with reference to market norms. Hillel Steiner (1984), for instance, suggests a rights-based account of exploitation. Accordingly, exploitation occurs when one party gains more from an interaction

[5] Zwolinski (2012, p.155) claims that considerations of background structures should play ‚fairly little' role in the correct understanding of exploitation. Similarly, Alan Wertheimer (1999, p. 216) argues that in analysing a transaction between two parties we should 'deliberately abstract from certain elements of their background structure'. While Wertheimer describes his account as a micro-level account, his hypothetical fair market price is in fact constructed with reference to a competitive market and hence to a system of rules, institutions, norms and practices. I will therefore classify Wertheimer's account as an integrationist account.

and another party gains less than each would have were it not for the existence of a prior rights violation. A third group of integrationist accounts spells out exploitation with reference to vulnerability. Accordingly, exploitation consists in taking advantage of the vulnerability of another person. According to Ruth Sample (2003), A exploits B if A takes advantage of B in a way that neglects what is necessary for B's wellbeing or flourishing, or if A takes advantage of a prior injustice done to B. In a similar way, Robert Goodin (1987, p. 184) argues that exploitation entails 'playing for advantage in situations when it is inappropriate to do so', where it is inappropriate to play for advantage when the other person is vulnerable to you.

Structural accounts of exploitation

Contrary to micro-level accounts and integrationist accounts, *structural accounts of exploitation* move away from a transaction-specific analysis of exploitation. They understand exploitation as a systematic relationship between two groups that is embedded in the structure of society. This focus can be found in particular in Marxist accounts of exploitation. According to Marx ([1867], 1990, p. 326), exploitation consists in the capitalist appropriation of surplus value from the workers. In a capitalist system the workers produce value above the value needed to sustain their labour power. Exploitation is then defined in terms of the workers' relation to the process of production. Marx's fundamental insight is that exploitation needs to be understood as a systematic relationship between two groups, capitalists and workers, that is structurally embedded in the capitalist economy of society. While many reject the core of Marx's theory of exploitation, the labour theory of value, the structural understanding of exploitation has been preserved.[6] Accordingly, exploitation is understood as an unequal transfer of labour between two groups that are structurally related through their positions within the relations of production.

[6] See for instance Cohen (1989, pp. 233–4), who rejects the labour theory of value as the core of exploitation.

Two challenges to dominant accounts

In what follows I will show why dominant accounts of exploitation have difficulties to make sense of gender specific forms of exploitation. First, they are insufficiently sensitive to the gender specific structural conditions that enable, sustain and reproduce exploitation. Second, they focus primarily on commodity exchanges. They thereby overlook other forms of non-commodity exploitation that are in a specific way linked to gender.

Insensitivity to the structural aspect of gender exploitation

It is easy to see why micro-level accounts have difficulties to say anything about structural forms of exploitation. In deliberately abstracting from the background conditions under which exploitation occurs, micro-level accounts are unable to account for the way in which often-informal processes bring members of specific groups in a position where they become exploitable. Take the gender pay gap. While a micro-level perspective can capture cases of outright discrimination where a right to equal pay for equal work (assuming the existence of such a right) is violated, it cannot speak to the more subtle forms through which the gender pay gap materializes. Women face informal barriers to climbing up the career ladder and to having access to higher paid jobs. These include stereotypical male leadership roles, male bonding and an environment that is often hostile to women. They are structurally vulnerable to being disadvantaged in the workplace. A micro-level perspective is silent on these less visible, informal structures that enable, sustain and reproduce exploitation.

Against this, micro level proponents could point out that there is an important difference between exploitation and the conditions enabling exploitation. Perhaps the concept of exploitation is simply not suitable to analyse structural relations, such as gender relations. This is not to say that these relations are just, but that there is a difference between a generally just society and exploitation as a micro-level wrong. In response, it is important to point out that the challenge is not that a micro-level perspective should equate exploitation with background

injustice. Instead, the claim is that micro-perspectives are insensitive to the way in which the exploiting party takes advantage of existing vulnerabilities of another party. In allowing only a narrow range of moral considerations to enter the analysis, they fail to identify some cases as exploitative.

While integrationist accounts have more resources to include considerations about the respective ex-ante positions of the transacting parties, these considerations are still too limited. Take the focus on market-based vulnerability and vulnerability due to a prior rights violation first. Spelling out vulnerability merely as market-based vulnerability overlooks that the way in which markets are structured is itself morally problematic. Markets are tied to the background structure of society. They reflect the values, norms, institutions and practices of society and thereby place different values on different types of occupations. At the same time, market participants participate in the market out of their respective structural positions, e.g. as men and women. A hypothetical market price that excludes structural, gender specific vulnerabilities will systematically leave out exploitative transactions. An integrationist account that is tied to a structure of rights faces similar problems. While it can identify exploitative relations where a prior rights violation has brought one party in a position where she becomes vulnerable to exploitation, it cannot accommodate gender related processes that often work in a much more subtle and informal way. Vulnerability-based accounts fare best with integrating a wider range of vulnerabilities. Yet, neither Sample nor Goodin provide us with a gender specific account of vulnerability and hence miss the specific way in which gender makes women vulnerable to exploitation.

In short, while integrationist accounts include certain types of background considerations, their focus is too narrow. Taking seriously the notion of vulnerability in their own analysis would require including a wider range of factors that bring people in a position of vulnerabil-

ity. I now turn to structural accounts to discuss whether they fare better in accommodating gender specific exploitation.

While structural accounts of exploitation focus on the structurally embedded relations between two groups, these relations are usually spelled out in terms of class relations between capitalists and workers. This, however, overlooks the way in which gender intersects with class and only explains women's role with regard to their position within the relations of production. If the categories of analysis are understood in gender-neutral terms, they will not be useful for understanding the specific ways in which women's exploitation differs from the general exploitation of workers under capitalism. Heidi Hartmann (1979, p. 8) therefore argues that Marxism's reliance on class as the explaining variable is 'sex blind'. According to Hartmann, the analysis of class says little about 'why particular people fill particular places'. The specific division of labour across society, in which women take up tasks related to housework and care work, cannot be explained by Marxist theories of exploitation alone. A Marxist analysis that solely focuses on class as the explaining variable, fails to take into account how different forms of difference structure the relations between men and women and how exploitation takes different forms as a result.

Focus on commodity exploitation

The second way in which dominant accounts of exploitation fall short of accounting for gender specific exploitation is their focus on commodity exploitation. As Robert Goodin (1986, p.166) notes, a theory of exploitation should not be parasitic 'upon a theory about the creation and distribution of valued commodities'. While Goodin's account of exploitation provides a notable exemption to the general focus on commodity exploitation, it too does not give us a good understanding of what it means to exploit outside of a market setting, as I will turn to argue in a moment. The general focus on commodity exploitation means that the analysis of exploitation focuses on exchanges in goods that are in principle quantifiable and to which a

price can be attached. Take Wertheimer's account of the hypothetical fair market price. Here the baseline for determining whether someone is exploited is whether the price that is paid for a good deviates from a hypothetical fair market price. Similarly, Marxist theories focus on commodity exploitation, in particular the labour commodity.

This focus on commodity exploitation, however, overlooks exploitative exchanges that occur outside of a market setting and that often are exploitative precisely because of the way in which the goods that are exchanged are valued. Take the well-established feminist critique of the division between (men's) productive labour, which can be exploited by capital and (women's) unproductive labour, which cannot be exploited. As feminists pointed out, the assumption that women's labour in the household cannot be exploited because it happens outside of the market, served to hide from view the uncompensated labour of women.[7] Now, those who think that exploitation only refers to commodities could respond that it was simply a mistake that women's unpaid labour in the household was not treated as a commodity. After all, reproductive labour is a necessary condition for the workings of capitalism.[8] The feminist struggles around the wages for housework reflect the underlying idea of understanding housework as a marketable good. Yet, this still maintains the assumption that only goods that are in principle commodifiable can be exploited and thereby overlooks that exploitation can happen precisely when the good in question is inherently non-commodifiable, as I will show in my discussion of emotional labour. The idea of gender specific exploitation therefore pushes beyond the claim that women are exploited in their reproductive labour.

Both Sample (2003) and Goodin (1987, p. 166) have developed accounts of exploitation that focus on non-commodity exploitation. Yet, they are silent on the specific good that is exploit-

[7] These arguments featured prominently in the debates around 'Wages for Housework'. See for instance Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James (1972); Silvia Federici (1975).
[8] Nancy Fraser (2014, p. 61) calls this the social reproduction of capitalism, namely 'the forms of provisioning, care-giving and interaction that produce and maintain social bonds'.

ed. While Sample's analysis allows for a better understanding of the conditions that make someone exploitable, it does not provide criteria for analysing the *contents* of the exchange. Her analysis does not tell us anything about the specific good that the exploiter receives in virtue of the vulnerability of the exploitee. Goodin (2010, p. 119) provides an analysis with regard to women's care labour in the household. Accordingly, this labour should not be valued solely 'under the measuring rod of money', as this metrics both miscounts and mischaracterizes the specific value of this work. The specificity of caring labour lies in it being an investment that is not easily transferable. He does not, however, say more about what exactly it means to untie the value of care work from its exchange value. And consequently, how care-work can be valued in a non-exploitative way. I will come back to this point in the last section.

In sum: A focus on commodity exploitation overlooks the exploitation that happens outside of the market. I will now turn to illustrate gender specific exploitation with the example of emotional labour.

Emotional labour

The term *emotional labour* was coined by Arlie Hochschild. According to Hochschild (1985, p.7), emotional labour

> requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outer countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others (…). This kind of labor calls for a coordination of mind and feeling, and it sometimes draws on a source of self that we honor as deep and integral to our individuality.

This definition explains the core of emotional labour: it is done for the benefit of others and it requires coordinating one's emotions to create a specific state of feeling in the other. Hochschild uses the example of flight attendants to illustrate this. Flight attendants have to cater to their clients' needs with an accommodating smile and a sympathetic appearance to

make the clients feel good and safe, no matter how tired they feel or how badly they are treated by some of their passengers.

While Hochschild's definition of emotional labour is useful, contrary to Hochschild, I want to focus on emotional labour outside of the market.[9] I believe that women who provide emotional labour in the market are also exploited in a gender specific way, in addition to being exploited as workers.[10] Yet, the gender specific aspect of exploitation can be illustrated more clearly in cases outside of the market. I will therefore focus on the type of emotional labour that is characterized by the following aspects: i) it is performed in the private sphere; ii) the general aim of this form of emotional labour is to produce wellbeing or comfort. I am interested in the following cases that require a significant degree of emotional labour: Emotional labour performed in friendships, romantic relationships and family relationships. In all of these relations, emotional labour plays a crucial role. It involves listening to the other's worries, sensing that something is going on and providing space for the other to talk about it, keeping in touch, remembering important things in the other's life etc. The currency of this type of emotional labour includes care, respect, attention, affection or empathy. Importantly, emotional labour is not necessarily unpleasant or exhausting. In fact, it can also be rewarding and energizing. The crucial point is that social relations in the form just described require emotional labour to function. I will now show why this type of emotional labour provides a good example to illustrate gender specific exploitation. This is in particular for two reasons. First,

[9] Hochschild calls emotional labour performed in the private sphere *emotion work*. There is an important difference between the commodified management of feelings in the market and the management of feelings in the private sphere. These dynamics might differ for instance with regard to the degree of alienation associated with the management of feelings in both spheres. Yet, as the logic underlying the way in which emotional labour is valued both in the private and in the public sphere is similar, I will use the term emotional labour to also cover the private sphere. In this I also follow other feminists who write about the concept of emotional labour.

[10] A good example is the care sector where nurses in addition to their technical tasks need to expend emotional labour to make their patients feel secure and relaxed.

women overwhelmingly perform tasks that involve emotional labour. Second, emotional labour is valued in a specific way.

Emotional labour is clearly distributed along the lines of gender. An OECD study (2014, p. 2) found that women in Europe spend on average two and a half hours more on unpaid care work per day than men. Similarly, in her study of employed married parents Rebecca Erickson (2005) found that wives report performing disproportionally more activities aimed at the enhancement of their partners' wellbeing and the provision of emotional support within the family.[11] This unequal distribution rests on specific gender assumptions. Emotional labour is seen as something that women do because they are naturally suited to it. They are considered to be more empathetic and more caring, to want to create a harmonious environment, and to be good with children, the sick and the elderly. The assumption that women are naturally good at providing emotional labour means that women, more often than men, take up tasks that involve emotional labour, both in the private and the public sphere.[12] Now, while we should be sceptical about the way in which this distribution comes about, one might think that there is nothing problematic with the distribution *as such,* as long as women are properly compensated for the amount of emotional labour they expend.

Yet, in addition to being mainly performed by women, emotional labour is also often not adequately valued. First, assumptions about gender lead to a form of naturalization of emotional labour as something that does not appear as labour in the first place. The very meaning that is attached to emotional labour, namely that it is an activity that women just do out of their natural way of being, prevents it from being seen as something that requires energy and time. Emotional labour is thereby effectively made invisible and devalued by the underlying as-

[11] The unequal distribution of emotional labour also comes out clearly in jobs involving emotional labour in the market. For instance, in Germany 80% of nurses are women. The percentage of women among kindergarteners is even higher, at more than 90%. Statistics are from the *Institut für Arbeitsmarkt und Berufsforschung*, 2011.

[12] This is not to say that men never perform disproportionate amounts of emotional labour. But they are not structurally positioned to do so.

sumptions about femininity. Second, because emotional labour often takes place outside of the realm of markets and is hence not valued in terms of its exchange value, it is not seen as something that can be exploited in the first place. The underlying assumption seems to be that because emotional labour can also be intrinsically pleasurable and rewarding, it therefore cannot be exploited. As Nancy Folbre (1995, p. 74) noted, the idea is that, 'if caring is its own reward it need not command an economic return'. Or, for that matter, any return at all. Yet, it does not follow that if something is intrinsically pleasurable, it therefore cannot be exploited. Many people in academia love their jobs and are intrinsically motivated by their work. It is plausible, though, to imagine that some of them, in particular non-tenured faculty, are exploited when they enter insecure and badly paid contracts. Similarly, it is mistaken to think that emotional labour, because it can also be intrinsically pleasurable, need not be compensated or reciprocated. In fact, the exploitation of emotional labour will often take place precisely in the realm that, due to specific gendered assumptions, is taken to be immune from exploitation. Women are structurally placed to expend more emotional labour than men and their expenditure of emotional labour is taken for granted and not, or not adequately, compensated. This facilitates an unequal transfer of emotional labour from women to men, as I will outline now:

First, emotional labour brings about a *time benefit*. The fact that women disproportionally to men take up tasks that involve emotional labour inside and outside of the workplace means that in both cases men are released to do tasks and activities that might be more interesting or more fun. In addition, it also serves to free up men to perform tasks that allow them more rapid career advancement. Take the example of academia, where female researchers disproportionally to their male counterparts perform emotional labour in their jobs. This includes listening and advising students on personal insecurities, or giving pep-talks to their male colleagues. This requires time and energy that men simply do not have to expend as much as women. Iris Marion Young (1990, p. 51) makes this point by arguing that

> women undergo specific forms of gender exploitation in which their energies and powers are expended, often unnoticed and unacknowledged, usually to benefit men by *releasing them for more important and creative work*, enhancing their status or the environment around them, or providing them with *sexual and emotional service*.[13]

Young's claim also points to a second benefit, namely the provision of emotional service. Women who disproportionally expend emotional labour bring about an *emotional benefit*. Being cared for, being listened to, being supported in one's projects, all these things create a feeling of wellbeing and ease in the recipients of emotional labour. This has led Ann Ferguson (1989, pp. 130–136) to talk about emotional care giving as a form of 'surplus nurturance', where men's privileged position in the affective sphere allows them to extract more emotional labour than they give in return. I will expand on this point in the next section.

Third, closely connected to the emotional benefit, emotional labour also brings about a *status benefit*. Giving attention to and caring about the other person's projects and ideas involves emotional labour. According to Sandra Bartky (1997, p. 284), caregiving entails 'an affirmation of male importance that is unreciprocated'. In disproportionally caring about men's projects and in often granting them more importance than their own, women confirm and enhance men's status.

The two aspects of emotional labour, first that it is seen as 'women's labour' and as a result mainly performed by women, and second, that it creates an unequal benefit provide a good starting point for thinking about gender specific exploitation.

Theoretical insights from the exchange of emotional labour

I will now provide a theoretical grounding that will bring me in a position to develop a framework for a positive account of gender specific exploitation in the last section.

[13] Emphasis mine.

Structural background conditions of the exchange of emotional labour

One feature that makes the exchange of emotional labour specific to gender are the structurally embedded gender roles that make women vulnerable to disproportionally taking up emotional labour and to not being adequately compensated for it. The claim that women's disproportionate expenditure of emotional labour results from specific gender roles is grounded in theories about the construction of gender. Simone de Beauvoir (1973, p. 301) famously claimed, '[o]ne is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.' The central idea that gender is socially constructed, has been spelled out in different theories.[14] I will here follow Sally Haslanger (2000, p. 38) in her understanding of gender 'in terms of women's subordinate position in systems of male dominance.'[15] This materially grounded analysis of gender allows for an integration of the exchange of emotional labour into theories of exploitation.

Haslanger defines gender in terms of i) how one is socially positioned ii) within a broader context of hierarchical relations and iii) the ascription of a social position is based on observed or imagined bodily markers of sexual difference. i) The social position is constituted by legal, social and economical structures, behaviour, attitudes and expectations of others towards the subject that is so positioned. Accordingly, social positions are structurally embedded. ii) These social positions are structured hierarchically such that one group, namely women, occupies a subordinate position vis-à-vis another group, namely men. The hierarchy of social positions constitutes a structurally embedded power relation between men and women. iii) The social position is an interpretation of observed or imagined biological difference

[14] Judith Butler (1990), for instance, thinks of gender as an act of performance. According to Natalie Stoljar (1995) gender is a 'cluster concept,' where certain resemblance relations hold between entities of particular kinds.

[15] It is important to note that Haslanger's analysis of gender has been criticised for being trans-exclusive (see for instance Katharine Jenkins (2016)). I do not aim to enter this controversy here, as I think my argument does not need to embrace any of the controversial implications. I am interested in identifying particular gendered social positions within hierarchical gender relations. Nothing hinges on whether we call those who occupy these positions 'women'. We therefore do not need to understand Haslanger's definition as a categorization of what it is to be a woman.

between men and women with regard to their reproductive functions. The central point in Haslanger's analysis is that women are socially constructed as women based on the interpretation of their reproductive roles and as a result are positioned as a subordinated group. In virtue of this social position, as I will turn to argue now, women are structurally vulnerable to being exploited.

Generally speaking, the notion of vulnerability describes a situation where an agent suffers from a diminished capacity to protect herself against a threat to a constitutive feature of her flourishing.[1617] A vulnerable agent is hence at risk of being harmed in some relevant way. Gender specific vulnerability is inherently structural, both in its causes and in its effects. To say that the causes are structural is to say that they are embedded in the 'unquestioned norms, habits, and symbols, in the assumptions underlying institutional rules and the collective consequences of following these rules' (Young, 1990, p. 41). These norms, rules and institutions both enable and constrain actors, as they determine the range of options available to them given their social positions. Gender specific vulnerability is the result of specific social processes that are part of the everyday lives of members of a society.[18]

To say that the effects of vulnerability are structural is to say that they affect individuals in virtue of their social positions. It therefore might be the case that some individuals within a given group are more vulnerable than others and that some are even able to escape vulnerability altogether. Importantly, this will depend on how gender intersects with race, class, ability or sexuality. In sum, women are structurally vulnerable in virtue of their social position within a patriarchal society. Their social position makes them vulnerable to exploitation insofar as

[16] In this understanding I follow Robert Goodin (1986, p. 112).
[17] There are different ways to spell out what a *constitutive feature of human flourishing is*. I am not committed to any specific interpretation here.
[18] I use the term *structural vulnerability* to signal that this type of vulnerability is a social vulnerability that is created and upheld by agents.

the structure of the social position is such that they optimize by accepting conditions of exchange that are disadvantageous to them.

Let me now integrate this analysis with the exchange of emotional labour. I argued that women disproportionally expend emotional labour as they are socially positioned as care-givers. This is not to say that all women are in any context and at any time positioned as care-givers, as this will crucially depend on how gender intersects with race, class, ability, age or sexuality.[19] Yet, the important point is that *when* women are so positioned, this position comes with certain norms of femininity that allow women to successfully navigate their ascribed positions. These norms include in particular the construction of women as emotional, nurturing, altruistic and caring. And this is indeed what many women learn from early childhood onwards. They are socialized into providing emotional support, empathy and care for others. Girls learn that they have to be nice, pleasing and caring; that ultimately they are the ones responsible for taking up the emotional work when required. Boys are usually held up to different standards, including that they are better at technical things, more practical etc. To deviate from given gender roles still bears costs. A woman who refuses to act nicely and to be emotionally available risks being called out or being disliked for it to a much higher degree than men do. Similarly, a woman who does not want to take up caring tasks is often seen as heartless and cold. As a result these norms work both as expectations and material constraints that are externally placed on women and in form of internalized attitudes and norms according to which women navigate their social position. Consequently, to succeed at their ascribed roles, women optimize by expending disproportionate amounts of emotional labour. Given that under patriarchy gender relations are hierarchical, the value assigned to the social roles

[19] It is important to note that roles of women as care-givers are just a specific example of how structural vulnerability plays out. Kimberly Crenshaw's (1989, p. 156) seminal critique of a single-axis framework of discrimination shows how different forms of discrimination intersect. Since black women have traditionally worked outside the home, the particular notion that comes with women as housewives and care-givers, falls short of the complexity of black women's experiences as workers and heads of the household.

and to the acts and tasks that constitute them is lower than the value assigned to social positions occupied by men.

In sum, in contexts where women are socially positioned as care-givers, women are structurally vulnerable to a) disproportionally taking up emotional labour and b) to not being adequately compensated for it. The material analysis of gender provides an understanding of the exchange of emotional labour that explains women's vulnerability to being exploited in terms of their position within hierarchical gender relations. Similar to workers under capitalism, in virtue of their social position women optimize by providing uncompensated emotional labour. From the above, we can derive one desideratum that an account of exploitation needs to fulfil to be sensitive to gender specific exploitation:

I. An account of exploitation needs to take into account the structural, gender specific vulnerability against which the exchange occurs

Nature of emotional labour

The second feature that makes the exchange of emotional labour specific to gender is the particular nature of the good that is exchanged. In general, an analysis about exploitation needs to give an account of the object of exploitation, hence the good that is exchanged between the exploited party and the exploiter. Emotional labour is a specific good, as its value is not generally determined in terms of its exchange value.[20] Take love as an example. If I tell you that I love you, and you offer me a thousand euros in return, you seem to have crucially misunderstood what I am offering you. In offering me money in return for my love you do not express proper value for the good 'love' and thereby misperceive the social relation of the good. You treat as a market relation, what is inherently a non-market relation.

[20] This is not to say that emotional labour cannot be commodified. Emotional labour can take place both in the private and the market sphere. But I believe that when emotional labour is considered merely as a commodity something important gets lost, as will become clear in what follows.

But, what type of social relation constitutes emotional labour? We value emotional labour as an integral part of relationships that we find intrinsically valuable, such as friendships. But, which norms govern the way in which we realize the value of emotional labour? To answer this question, we need to look at the way in which emotional labour is connected to the female gender. There is a non-accidental connection between emotional labour and gender, insofar as the tasks associated with emotional labour are fulfilled by women as a requirement of their social position as care-givers. Tasks that involve caring and loving tend to be seen as part of women's nature and are hence naturalized as something inherently female. Emotional labour as a result is taken to be women's labour.

Importantly, this means that the social meaning of emotional labour varies according to the context in which it is performed and crucially, according to *who performs it*. Emotional labour performed by men is often seen as something supererogatory, for which men should receive praise and admiration.[21] On the contrary, emotional labour performed by women is usually taken for granted and naturalized, as it is seen in accordance with female roles, and the norms, expectations and rules governing these roles. This has important implications for the way in which emotional labour is valued.

According to Elizabeth Anderson (1993, p. 12), 'I am capable of valuing something in a particular way only in a social setting that upholds norms for that mode of valuation'. What it means to value something, and how one adequately expresses one's valuing, is dependent on the social relations within which we stand vis-à-vis particular goods. And it is dependent on the way in which practices of valuation are structured generally. Therefore, how emotional labour is valued depends on norms that govern the social relation of emotional labour specifically and the social practices of valuation generally. In a patriarchal society, these norms are

[21] One implication of this is that on my account of gender specific exploitation, men will not be exploited in a gender specific way, when they are expending disproportionate amounts of emotional labour. I will discuss this point in more detail in the last section when I consider potential objections.

determined by specific assumptions about gender roles. Male gender roles and tasks associated with them tend to be valued higher, while this is the opposite for tasks that are ascribed to female gender roles. But it is not only the case that roles are differentially valued, the dominant group also determines *what it means to value* something in the first place. Hierarchical gender relations determine both *which* value should be ascribed and *how* that value is ascribed. If, however, a social setting does not uphold norms that allow for a proper mode of valuation, it will be hard to express the value of a good adequately. Imagine a society where the only mode of expressing value for goods is monetary valuation. If, for instance, the value of love can only be expressed in monetary terms, this society lacks tools for capturing the very nature of love and consequently for valuing it adequately.

Subsequently, emotional labour can only be valued adequately in a social system that upholds norms of valuation that capture the specific nature of emotional labour. The valuation of emotional labour is, however, deeply embedded in gender norms. For instance, the characterisation of women's labour as 'labours of love' (Kittay, 1999) that is naturalized as something that does not require energy or any particular skills justifies assigning to it lower value than the productive tasks that men perform.

The problem is not only, however, that emotional labour is excluded from the realm of productive tasks and consequently not valued in market terms. The problem is also that it is valued *in the wrong way*. It would not do to bring emotional labour into the sphere of productive activities, for instance in the way second wave feminists demanded in the struggle around wages for household labour. We need a different mode of valuation. This idea is grounded in Anderson's value pluralism. In her words (Anderson, 1993, p. xiii),

> 'if different spheres of social life, such as the market, the family, and the state, are structured by norms that express fundamentally different ways of valuing people and things, then there can be some ways to value people and things that can't be expressed through market norms. We have to govern their production, circulation and enjoyment through the norms of other social spheres to value them adequately.'

Therefore, to make sense of gender specific exploitation, an account of exploitation needs to fulfil a second desideratum:

II. It needs to account for the gender specific nature and the mode of valuation of the good that is exploited

Proposal for modification of dominant accounts

I spelled out two desiderata that an account of exploitation needs to meet in order to be sensitive to forms of gender specific exploitation. I will close this paper with a proposal about how an account of exploitation can meet these two desiderata.

Desideratum: Sensitivity to gender specific vulnerability

To account for the structural gender specific vulnerability, an account of exploitation needs to integrate the specific social relationship between the exploiting and the exploited party. This means, an account of exploitation needs to integrate both the outcome and the process that brings it about. The central question is, what type of relationship enables exploitation and how is this relation sustained? To answer this question, an account of exploitation needs to be tied to an analysis of power. To capture the way in which gender relations are structurally embedded, the analysis of power needs to entail an analysis of the way in which power operates through social positions. Nicholas Vrousalis (2016, 2013) has offered such an account. The rough outline of his account entails two necessary conditions for exploitation that are jointly sufficient:

i. A has power over B in virtue of her position within the relations of production

ii. A uses her power over B in a specific way to gain a benefit

This analysis provides an understanding of exploitation that captures the specific power relation in which A and B stand in virtue of their social positions.

While Vrousalis' concern is primarily with social positions within the relations of production, we can apply this analysis to gender relations.[22] Accordingly, A exploits B if

i. A has power over B in virtue of A's social position *within a system of hierarchical gender relations*

ii. A takes advantage of her power over B *in a gender specific way* to gain a benefit

To analyse exploitation in terms of A's power over B can accommodate the structural, gender specific vulnerability. Yet, for the analysis to accommodate the second aspect of gender specific exploitation, something is missing. I will turn to what this is now.

Desideratum: Gender specific nature of the good

How can an account of exploitation include the specific nature of the good? First, it is important to note that the specific nature of the good requires a different mode of valuation, as I argued in the last section. This poses a challenge to accounts of exploitation to specify a baseline according to which the exchange turns into exploitation. One advantage of focusing on commodity exploitation is that the goods that are exchanged are quantifiable. An exchange turns into an exploitative exchange when someone receives more and another party less of a good according to some specified baseline (e.g. spelled out in terms of surplus labour or in terms of market prices). The crucial question is: When is the expenditure of a specific good, such as emotional labour, undervalued in a way that turns the interaction into an act of exploitation? This question piggybacks on the answer to the prior question of the adequate mode of valuation of emotional labour. In the last section I have suggested that we need to follow Anderson in her value pluralism to capture the nature of emotional labour. Understanding the

[22] Federica Gregoratto (2017) develops an account of romantic exploitation that uses Vrousalis' theory as a starting point. She argues that women are vulnerable in romantic relationships due to 'asymmetrical, impairing love practices', in which women altruistically provide loving care. These practices empower men, at the same time that they suppress and suffocate women's love power.

appropriate mode of valuation for a given good requires a detailed analysis of the social practice of valuing. While a comprehensive analysis of this is beyond the scope of this paper, I think that it is still possible to provide an answer to the first question, by outlining the structure of a lack of proper valuation.

The second condition for gender specific exploitation is that A takes advantage of her power over B *in a specific way* to gain a benefit. A takes advantage in a specific way when she fails to value the good that B provides adequately. I suggest that A fails to value the good adequately if:

ii.1. A does not use the *appropriate mode* of valuation, or

ii.2. A does not use *any or insufficient* valuation due to the naturalization of B's contribution

In the first case, A values B's provision of a certain good that benefits A, but does so in a way that fails to recognize the proper value of the good, e.g. by offering money for love. In the second case, A fails to see the very necessity of valuing B's provision as a result of a naturalization of B's contribution.

This leaves us with the following necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for gender specific exploitation:

i. A has power over B in virtue of A's social position within a system of hierarchical gender relations

ii. A takes advantage of her power over B in a gender specific way to gain a benefit, where taking advantage *in a gender specific way* is understood as either…

… not using the *appropriate* mode of valuation

… not using *any* or *insufficient* valuation due to the naturalization of B's contribution

…for the good received.

While this provides the structure of a gender specific account of exploitation, we still need to plug in a plausible theory about the different modes of valuation.

Implications

What follows from arguing for a gender specific account of exploitation? First, a gender specific account of exploitation can make sense of the ways in which hierarchical gender relations are sustained and reproduced. In spending disproportionate amounts of emotional labour without adequate valuation, women confirm their social position as care-givers and the lower value associated with this position. At the same time, the benefit of emotional labour sustains the power that men enjoy in virtue of their social position. Men are able to and *continue to be able to* use their time not expending emotional labour, to having their status confirmed and their wellbeing taken care of. A gender specific account of exploitation shows how hierarchical gender relations are stabilized, which in turn enable exploitation. This adds to our understanding of gender injustice more generally by providing us with a tool to analyse the way in which hierarchical gender relations continue to exist.

Second, a gender specific account of exploitation points to specific measures to overcome gender specific exploitation. Given that gender specific exploitation works through structurally embedded gender roles, actions to overcome it need to be directed at structures rather than individual wrongdoing. A comprehensive analysis of how exactly structural change of this type can be brought about is beyond the scope of this paper. Yet, I suggest that it will require a form of political responsibility in Iris Young's sense that is directed at changing the 'un-

questioned norms, habits and symbols (…)' which structure gender relations.[23] It will require organizing with others to raise awareness about the way in which the expenditure of emotional labour is distributed and the way in which emotional labour is valued, and how this is grounded in specific gender roles. Changing social norms will also require changing the material conditions related to them. This means in particular to reorganize the framework within which emotional labour occurs. For instance, how can we create space to talk about feelings within a partnership without this being the primary responsibility of one partner? How can we organize tasks of emotional labour, such as remembering birthdays, checking in with friends and relatives etc. in a more equal way? On a broader level, this also requires thinking about the policy implications. For instance, how can childcare or care for the elderly be structured in a way that better allows for an equal distribution of emotional labour? In short, ending gender specific exploitation requires changing the underlying structurally embedded gender roles.

Objections

Before I conclude, I want to consider two possible objections. First, one might wonder whether, on this understanding, all labour performed by women is exploited in a gender specific way. Given that we live under patriarchy, women's labour will always be valued according to their gender. In response, it is important to stress the difference between exploiting women *in virtue of their gender specific position* and exploiting them *in a gender specific way*. Take the following example. A female lawyer is paid less than her male colleague even though she occupies the same position and has the same qualifications. The woman is exploited in virtue of her gender specific position. The employer takes advantage of the norms, constraints and expectations that are associated with her being positioned as a woman. Now take emotional labour. It is not only the case that emotional labour is not valued adequately *when* women

[23] Young (2011, p. 96) develops a social connection model to conceptualize responsibility for structural injustice. Accordingly, 'being responsible in relation to structural injustice means that one has an obligation to join with others who share that responsibility in order to transform the structural processes to make their outcomes less unjust'.

perform it, but precisely *because* it is seen as a woman's task. In this case the exploitation consists in both taking advantage of women's social positions *and* doing so by failing to adequately value the good that women provide. Saying that there are cases where women are exploited *in a gender specific way* rather than *in virtue of their gender* does not make any evaluative claims about whether one form of exploitation is worse than the other. Instead, the distinction plays out with regards to how different forms of exploitation should be addressed. As I argued above, gender specific exploitation requires collective action to change social norms. While changing social norms might be important to address different forms of exploitation, it is not clear that this will be the primary focus for all forms of exploitation. For instance, tackling economic exploitation might require a higher degree of state intervention, e.g. better labour laws or, more radically, a change of property- and ownership structures. Which responses exploitation warrants will crucially depend on the type of vulnerability that is exploited and the way in which the advantage taking takes place.

Second, someone might object that on my account men can also be exploited in a gender specific way in situations, in which they disproportionally expend emotional labour; for instance, when a female partner suffers from a mental illness and requires more care from her male partner. In response I want to point out two things: First, while this might constitute a micro-unfairness, in these cases the disproportionate expenditure of emotional labour is not structurally sustained through specific gender roles. Second, the social meaning of emotional labour changes depending on whom performs it. While it is seen as a 'labour of love' if women perform it, it tends to be valued differently when men do it, as I argued in the section on 'The Nature of Emotional Labour'.

Conclusion

I started this paper with the claim that Lisa is exploited in a gender specific way. Lisa is exploited in a gender specific way, because she is socially positioned as a woman within hierar-

chical gender relations and the good that she provides, emotional labour, is in a specific way tied to gender. As a result, Tim does not value it adequately. My aim in this paper has been to broaden the focus of dominant accounts of exploitation to make sense of cases, such as the relationship between Lisa and Tim. Why does it matter whether we call this an instance of gender specific exploitation? Exploitation provides a sharp tool for critique. Seeing the provision of tasks that provide the glue for social interactions through the lenses of exploitation theory lends the feminist slogan that 'the personal is political' a renewed importance. A concept of exploitation that is sensitive to gender specific forms of exploitation can accommodate the personal within hierarchical gender relations, at the same time that it explains their continuing existence.

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