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Critical Practices

Thesis Paper

Biometrics, Dualities, and Fluid Identities:

Decentralized Response towards Modern Normalization of Biopower

Introduction

On Jun. 16th and 17th 2021, the state of Maine officially passed a statewide legislation banning the use of facial recognition technology by government officials and employees, which will be going into effect at the start of October. As stated in L.D. 1585 from the 130th Maine Legislature, it is "An Act to Increase Privacy and Security by Regulating the Use of Facial Surveillance Systems by Departments, Public Employees and Public Officials", and was "unanimously approved by the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, followed by unanimous approval in the Maine House and Senate" (Bryant). The reason for this ban is that in recent years, facial recognition technology is widely adopted in all kinds of public spaces, but is also infamously known for posing strong threats towards issues regarding civil rights and civil liberties. It not only infringes on personal privacy by giving rise to government surveillance, but also contains algorithms that are highly biased towards race and gender minorities. It is especially dangerous when combined with the current policing regime in the US using it to identify criminals and create risk profiles, since "the burdens of facial recognition are not borne equally, as black and brown communities - especially Muslim and immigrant communities - are already targets of discriminatory government surveillance. Making matters worse, face

surveillance algorithms tend to have more difficulty accurately analyzing the faces of darker-skinned people, women, the elderly and children." (Beyea)

While the detailed mechanisms of facial recognition bias would be examined in more detail in later sections of this paper, the above case study on facial recognition technology does paint an accurate picture of our biopolitical reality existing ubiquitously in contemporary life. We are facing a reality where not only the face but the entire human body gradually loses its active autonomies but becomes a subject of gaze from multiple social faculties, and the forms of control are performed directly to the "body" itself as the subject inseparable to the nature of the human species and our identities. Categorized by what Foucault called the "biopolitics" of life, the modern human body is reborn into a defamiliarized incarnate social entity that embodies an ecology of different kinds of augmentations, not only from law enforcement but other common social faculties such as the pharmaceutical, genetic, commercial, media-representational, and digital sectors. With movements towards surveillance capitalism, this ecology of biological, chemical, political, and digital augmentations on bodies are realizing what Foucault characterized as "control at a distance", making the human body codified, moded, and replicated into an entity that feels estranged from ourselves but a commodity belonging to society.

In order to establish context, this paper will firstly focus on the mechanisms and stakes of biopolitical control over face, body and population that creates normalized bodies and identities. Specifically, I will elaborate on the contemporary definition of identity in this reality, and how biopolitics induces and creates a modern milieu of identity dualities by using this false dichotomy in its assumption separating "the social" from "the natural and the bio" as a political tool. From the lens of how biopolitical mechanisms create a "fake" and social state of the body that does not feel like belonging, I will first establish an account of genealogy on biopolitics and

its discourses on the historical and critical pathway from Capitalism to "Pharmacopornographic Techno-Biocapitalism", and eventually how this relationship complicates moving towards the digital. Then in the next section, I will look at some of the real stakes of this biopolitical power. I will explain why biopolitical power matters to our current society by taking a close examination specifically on facial recognition technology. The section will focus on analyzing how its current built-in algorithms create all kinds of normalizations, carrying existing biases into how the marginalized bodies are socially being seen, and thus creating social hierarchies. At last, it will end with a response and a connection made with the first section on how the constructed dualities had created a collectively induced state of constantly being and feeling like a minority, brought by the interconnectedness within the digital age and a sense of "identity overload".

Responding to the context above, the final section of my paper will focus on proposing a concept of "fluid identities" as a decentralized design intervention interrogating the modern normalization of biopower. I intend to question the idea of whether a person's identity is meant to embrace singularity and discuss the social implication of identities if it becomes fluid in the everyday exchange of life, as well as the capacity and effect of a human body becoming malleable. Using the lens of design fiction, how can fluid identities be used as a socially recognized body-based interface intervening in how bodies are seen, in order to interrogate existing biometric systems of normalization? In this section, I will first look at fluid identities as a way of countering normalization using existing lenses of disidentification, plasticity, glitch feminism, as well as the larger ontological concept of opacity recognizing identities as "fragmented yet authentic" and "incomplete but sufficient". Then I will switch focus to foresee a radically decentralized and situationist society using expressive non-utilitarian identification systems, recognizing fluidity as an official state. What if the human body or face can be used as a

mediating fluid-space and a new form of social ID bridging the dualities between the self and social identities?

Eventually, a more fundamental issue this essay looks at is the Marxist sense of alienation upon one's constructed identity from that of "oneself", which is especially true facing our current reality. A larger issue I tried to grasp and clarify is a sense of dualities between the Freudian ego and superego, which exists existentially and ubiquitously within the modern milieu, permeating into the mundaneness of everyday life. Looking at the European discourses on modern post-Enlightenment philosophy, the duality of identities had been dealt with from time to time starting from the Marxist sense of labor alienation to the existentialist struggle within *The Stranger* by Albert Camus. As we enter the digital age, the gap is only getting larger. Since this notion is so fundamentally rooted in society as one stumbles upon the modern way of everyday living, I want to argue that it is largely inflicted by biopolitics and its permeation to the human soul as "a prison of the body" (Foucault); and if we look at its implication more carefully, we might be able to come up with some new findings and perspectives. As Alexander Galloway illustrated in his book *The Interface Effect*, "interface emerges from incompatibility" (Galloway), it is my intention to speculative a disruptive, provocative, and whimsical response using fluid identities as forms of new interfaces interrogating the incompatibility between the gap or duality of identities - between the personal and the social, the physical and the digital, the humanistic and the posthuman digital-biopolitical. While this is a large topic at hand, I will attempt to interrogate ways for human beings to regain their personal right to bodies. This right is described by Foucault as follows - "The right to life, to one's body, to health, to happiness, to the satisfaction of needs and, beyond all the oppression or 'alienation', the 'right' to rediscover what

one is and all that one can be, this 'right'...was the political response to all these new procedures

of power." (Foucault)

Section 1

From Capitalism to Pharmacopornographic Bio-Capitalism: A Genealogy

As a ubiquitous phenomenon, people from all over the world seem to be more or less unsatisfied with the bodies that they were born with. Some are using caffeinated and protein-powdered synthetic drugs and food to make their bodies energized in order to respond to a toxic work schedule; others are going through plastic surgeries plus utilizing face filters to fit into the mainstream beauty standard and attract more internet followers. While the examples vary from person to person, the process of changing natural bodies to fit into a normalized societal image is largely similar. What's interesting to me is that regardless of how painful or costly the whole process is, people seem to go with it not from explicit external force but from personal will. Then how did these ideas of body normalization penetrate through the human psyche, and how did the body itself, instead of other entities, become the modern subject of gaze? The following section will use a historical and theoretical lens to argue that biopolitics is essentially a form of indirect and invisible control in a non-authoritarian but democratic society that perfectly responds to modernity, using implicit mechanisms to target bodies as subjects of the optimally desired carrier for modern normalization of power. It is part of modern governmentality, as we transform from traditional subjects under the rules of a "Leviathan" to modern consumer-citizens and decision-makers, that natural identity and socio-political identity become inseparable, and that duality is not an effect but a known biopolitical assumption in the first place.

In order to establish the discourse of biopolitics around the basic construct of "identity", it is important to first clearly define the dimensions of identity that will be used in this essay. The common perception holds that identity is inseparable from the condition of the physical body as

a first premise. Under this narrative, there is an inevitable dichotomy under biopolitics' interference that "identity" is perceived as two-fold - a natural identity, which is the state of the body that one is born with; and a social identity, which is the state of the body after societal constructs. This is a commonly-held view exemplified by Agamben's definition of *corpus* and his separation between natural life and political life in his book *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*: "Corpus is a two-faced being, the bearer both of subjection to sovereign power and of individual liberties." (Agamben) However, responding to that, this essay is intended to challenge this notion of identity and argue that this dichotomy of "natural versus societal" is falsely constructed; and it is, in fact, not an effect of biopolitics but is an assumption used in the first place as a biopolitical tool. Instead, this essay holds that identity is capable of self-autonomy and individual agencies, and there is no dichotomous relationship between natural versus social but simply a matter of how much self-autonomy is being used. As stated by Hannah Arendt as part of the human condition, "the paradoxical condition of a living being that, though itself part of the world of appearances, is in possession of a faculty, the ability to think, that permits the mind to withdraw from the world without ever being able to leave it or transcend it" (Arendt). This quality of self-transcendence is central to any construction of identity in that there is a part of human identity that is capable of being free from external control, and it is a faculty that is complex enough that goes beyond the natural vessels of the biological body and its surrounding environments. Therefore, this essay holds that this form of human transcendence and self-agency is the true definition behind the "natural" state of identity or equivalent. However, the biopolitical nature in our society interferes with this kind of self-autonomy, and thus creating body normalizations and dualities that seem to call for a diverge from nature but are actually

demolishing self agencies. Instead, we are punished for this self-autonomy, for returning back to nature and not seeking enhancements.

Then what exactly is this new biopolitical environment that demolishes agencies, and how is duality falsely created? The term "biopolitics" or "biopower" is defined by Foucault in his *Security, Territory, Population* lecture at the Collège de France - "The basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power". (Foucault) This term is ultimately inseparable from theories of democracy in a fundamental way due to the following reason: Under biopolitics, there rises a new form of political control, from classic authoritarian punishment to modern discipline, where the manifestation of political power often goes beyond direct exertions of forces but focusing on the efficient distribution of larger-scale security mechanisms. In his work *Panopticism*, Foucault described this new governmentality clearly under the use of a panopticon allegory. Instead of a dark underground dungeon, the modern prison is bright and transparent; Instead of having prison guards directly monitoring the door, the modern prison has a central tower in the middle and cells surrounding it, where there may or may not be people inside. "The inmate will constantly have before his eyes the central tower … but he must never know whether he is being looked at". (Foucault) The panopticon allegory implies that modern power has no materialization - it is no longer articulated, specific, or confrontational; but efficiently distributed, automized, and dis-individualized. This power mechanism goes beyond direct ways and explicit models of surveillance but resides in institutionalizations to produce societal norms and ideologies.

However, democracy does not necessarily mean decentralization, and along the progress, this democratized but somewhat power-infused conflicted reality can be seen historically in the discourse of biopolitics, using personal dualities as a known assumption in all kinds of societal

normalizations. The origin of biopolitics is inseparable from the capitalist mode of production, and this is well articulated in the Marxist theory of alienated labor as an early form of description towards dualities. As labor is interpreted as an extension of the human body, the labor production of industrial assembly lines dehumanizes the body through mechanisms of estranged labor central to the working class. The mass production and replication of commodities make everyday labor a repetitive process; Workers produce products without actually familiarizing themselves with the product they are producing. This process is described by Marx as the "devaluation of humans" - "The alienation from the self is a consequence of being a mechanistic part of a social class, the condition of which estranges a person from their humanity." (Marx) Under this capitalist mode of production defined by Marx, workers are producing the consciousness belonging to another social class that it does not relate to, and this becomes an everyday embodied process. The estrangement from bodies, following a sense of false consciousness in labor, starts to establish the first manifestation towards the duality of identities between the personal and the social self as the capitalist mode of working takes over post-Enlightenment life.

Following this foundation, biopolitics gradually went beyond assembly lines and became a wider phenomenon, making use of identity dualities and carrying them forward. As we see, during his time, Foucault's illustration of "biopower" took its concept indispensable from this theory of capitalist alienation, but he didn't fully update it in terms of capitalism's later movement towards the period of "late capitalism" we call today. Later studies by Negri and Hardt on Foucault recognized general patterns in his discourse where capitalism was no longer used solely in describing an economic condition or a mode of production originally defined by Marx. Instead, it became a globalized phenomenon diffused and dispersed throughout society's variety of functions, including knowledge, information, symbols, communication, and social

relations. (Karakilic) This is the moment when biopolitics and capitalism effectively fuse together and become indispensable; the moment explaining how the body officially becomes a carrier and medium for all kinds of late-capitalist interference; the moment when dualities are inflicted not only on labor but on life itself. The fusion of capitalism and biopower ensures security by realizing ways of forming interdependent relations in various functions of society on a large-scale population - when school systems and prisons resemble each other; when offices look like clinics; and etc. Normalized images of identities were seen to be creating fixed perceptions in different social places - people expect certain images of what a "basic" office worker, student, or parent looks like, etc.; the attempt of fitting into a social role becomes a performance. The moment when biopower situated seamlessly onto the course of capitalism was when "the mainspring of production is no longer situated in companies but is 'in society as a whole, the quality of the population, cooperation, conventions, training, forms of organization that hybridize the market, the firm and society.'" (Preciado) When these lines among different places in society were blurred, identities became blurred and mixed-up as well. The social roles of identity became one's responsibility to carry on and forward.

Furthermore, this integration of capitalism and biopolitics provided political tools shifting the late direction of capitalism away from an economy of production to an economy of invention. The effect of dualities is no longer an induced state but becomes a matter of design. According to Preciado, we are facing "a new cartography of the transformations in industrial production during the previous century". (Preciado) As industrialization and globalization rise, biopolitics becomes a powerful large-scale tool aligning economic production and social ideologies, parallelizing identity and communications. The political tool in the modern procedures of power becomes a "political ideology", and biopolitics is being used to ensure that this ideology can be

passed along exactly towards individual bodies through a line of social sectors. Because of this, individuals are willingly invited by society to re-identify themselves, aligning with this ideology in order to participate in essential social functions and succeed in society. The first step is exactly through the transitions of bodies away from the natural state and towards the path of the synthetic as it provides more space for human intervention when there are no existing confinements from nature itself. This is the larger societal reason why late capitalism is foreseeing a rise especially in the industries of pharmaceutics, genetics, and biology. An example of this would be the use of gender binary normalization as a way of easier political management. As a result, normalized images of "sexually-healthy males and females" are produced in films and TVs, Instagram images, pornography, along with a fantasy of idealized body image reachable through consumer products and services. Various kinds of drugs and chemicals were no longer extracted from natural resources but became the subject of design to induce an ideal body state. Tattooing and piercing, as ways of body modifications, became forms of trendy personal expressions. Synthetic meat was forcibly injected into the global circulation of economy and consumer cultures. The biopolitical discourse on capitalism has arrived at a new age defined by Preciado as "pharmacopornographic bio-capitalism" categorized by "the 'invention' of the biochemical notion of the hormone and the pharmaceutical development of synthetic molecules for commercial uses". (Preciado) This updated capitalism changed the original Marxist sense of production and is dependent on an economy of invention - an invention of chemicals, ideas, and new bio-forms. This invention-economy accelerates the inevitable dualities of human identities, because everything is somewhat "fake". Eventually, the falling-apart from "nature" circles back from one's inability to identify with the authentic self that is autonomously produced. People tend to linger upon an artificial identity - through drug enhancements, plastic surgeries, genetic

modifications, or future paths of inventions that we have not foreseen. When fakeness is ubiquitous, authenticity becomes its antithesis - a forced dichotomy.

Biopolitics and Digital Dualities

Adding on to that and pushing it forward, the final period I wanted to include in this genealogy of biopolitics is the integration of digital technologies. The existence of the digital complicates the original idea of duality between the personal and the social by adding a third space into the picture - the internet and the technology mediations. The term "biocapitalism" is firstly updated to "techno-biocapitalism" by the introduction of a cyborg figure by Donna Haraway as she foresees the means of control exerted on bodies in the lens of a posthuman biopolitical species as an updated form of digital dualities. Haraway articulated, "Foucault's biopolitics is a flaccid premonition of cyborg politics, a very open field". (Haraway) As her own response, the cyborg figure is either a passive receiver of biopolitical power or an active new ideology produced for liberation. It is "a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction." (Haraway) This description observes the same logic with the existence of the internet, as both have the capacity to be either a space for radical self-expression or collective and invisible reinforcement of centralized political systems. Therefore, I would argue that the central idea behind the cyborg is its artificiality and interconnectedness by use of the mechanical and the digital. The replacement of certain body parts by artificial mechanics is an extreme version of the Preciado sense of plastic surgery and body modifications, away from the physical construction of "the natural and the bio" and leaving the space for more design imaginations. Adding on to that layer, there is another implication on the interconnectedness brought by the modern development of the internet as it connected the

population together. As the population is the basic subject of biopolitical control, the links and inter-checks between individuals can be seen as an entirety, and the cyborg is the incarnate figure rising from this connected whole. The creation of this half-fiction figure, despite its intentional techno-utopic critique on the normativity of gender or fixed identities, is an interrogation directly towards the politics of identities existing under the posthuman synthetic nature of biopolitics. Therefore, it can also easily become a malleable and plastic figure who suffers the direct consequences of biopolitics due to its artificiality and interconnectedness.

Moving further, as we enter the digital age, we foresee conditions within the virtual as a space further away from nature where the rules of materialized society do not necessarily apply. It is the space of metaverse, alternate worldviews, multiple identities, and unethical social experimentations. Lives have multiple instances; the digital bodies are disposable and easily replicable. Within this reality, identities seem to be harder to grab on as it becomes a fleeting version of oneself existing as bits and digits. Due to this nature, the large trend in the digital world is its tendency to move beyond physical rules and representations. However, this process indeed carries the danger of bringing existing body stereotypes established by biopolitics forward and leaving them unattended. As biopolitics moves towards the digital, it is inevitable for central human identities to become emancipated but existing in flux, constructed exactly how the systems want them to. Identities and bodies themselves will become the background images constantly fluctuating while losing the extent of self-agency that's fundamental to physical bodies - a form of spectacle described by Guy Debord in 1967, updated. We are no longer surrounded by a spectacle society populated by mass media (Debord) but becoming spectacles ourselves. Identities will become pure functional images with zero weight, created as props to participate in a virtual concert, to cheer as proxy-viewers in a digital influencer's live streaming,

and to be killed in a multi-person shooter game. This entire process of digitization - the creation process of digital identities foreseeing a failure to relate back to human bodies - can be essentially interpreted within the context of the pervasive nature of the internet and the ubiquitous pathway it is developing. Various forms of technology embodiments have made the switch between physical and virtual identity instant, casual, and unintentional. Digital identities are created under the narratives of large corporations as power sectors and are utility and efficiency oriented without speculating back to the very beginning moment of exchange between the physical and the digital identity, as well as what kind of value systems are embedded or yet to be re-evaluated and re-defined. This is the central mode of alienation or dualities in the digital age - grounded in Marxism but having a different sense of representational nature. In this pathway traveling from capitalism to the digital age, human identities are experiencing a decline of being into having, and having into merely appearing.

In conclusion, the entire discourse of biopolitics, starting from the superstructure of Capitalism and updated through late-Capitalism, bio-pharmaceutics, and eventually the posthuman-digital, uses the dualities of identities as its core and inevitable assumption - a false dichotomy - to shape humans by body-control. As the paths of biopolitics carry on forward, essentially different modes and manifestations of dualities create the collective psyche and cultural zeitgeist of the modern milieu - a mentality of feeling lost; an inability to grapple with oneself feeling the constant need to go along with the flow of society. This pattern and connection discovered above, in my opinion, is the central value of my argument and how we might understand and deal with modern normalizations of biopolitical power as the first step.

Section 2

Facial Recognition and Marginalized Identities

In the above section, by means of creating connections and discovering patterns, I talked about "how" biopolitics creates identity dualities as a means. In this section, I will discuss more deeply "why" this form of identity duality matters. To analyze the significance of identity specifically in the lens of social hierarchies and normalizations, I will not give a comprehensive view but rather focus on a certain area within biopolitics - the facial recognition system. As the first step in constructing digital identity by means of electronically capturing parts of the body, this section aims at pointing out how the existing mechanisms of facial recognition identification systems have the danger of creating marginalized bodies under the racialized and gendered categories, using normalization to create social hierarchies that deprive people of equal rights and accesses.

As we know, identification documents are keys towards essential social passes - the process of verifying an individual identity determines the ability for them to move in society and participate in essential social activities. However, the process of creating identification documents observes a reversed logic that is dehumanizing - It is not the bodies, with their natural features and conditions, that come first; Instead, it is the system with requirements on individuals that come first, and individual bodies have to fit into those systems. According to Browne in her essay on digital epidermalization, "By putting identity into practice, identification documents, such as photo enhanced credit cards and more so passports, not only codify gender, race and often citizenship, but they also help to organize understandings of security, the nation and its material and discursive borders." (Browne 134) This term exactly describes this condition of how the body is codified and archived into a standardized asset, subconsciously dividing

"acceptable bodies" from "unacceptable bodies" by means of race and gender so that it would be easier to perform biopolitical powers. A similar example can also be found in my own work "City of Pixelated Identities", where the process of changing oneself in order to go through essential social passes is represented in the figurative portraits of bandwidths and resolutions. As Hito said in her work *How Not to Be Seen*, "Resolution determines visibility. Whatever's not detected by resolution is invisible." (Steyerl) This example is used to illustrate the fact that marginalized bodies eventually have the danger of becoming invisible in society.

The problems of identification using biometric technologies started here when there is an image of normalization in the present. Moving forward, one specific case of biometrics is the development of facial recognition technologies, when the combination of big data and artificial intelligence enables a machine to identify an individual face. The meaning for a computer to be able to "see a human face" is its ability "to develop automated systems for identifying human faces and distinguishing them from one another, and for recognizing human facial expressions". (Gates 3) It indeed creates efficiency in various places of law enforcement. However, facial recognition technologies had multiple cases as it was seen to recreate biases and discrimination in the racial categories, specifically to people of dark skin colors. The reason for these AI biases is rooted in the fact that machine-intelligent systems are inherently created by humans despite the common myth of systems having consciousness and autonomy. The black box behind any AI system is the feed of big data into training algorithms, and in this case, standard training databases for facial recognition systems are always based on white-dominant data as the standardized face. As a result, "Buolamwini and Gebru's 2018 research concluded that some facial analysis algorithms misclassified Black women nearly 35 percent of the time, while nearly always getting it right for white men". (Crockford) The reason behind facial recognition bias is

not an algorithmic failure but a deeply-rooted historical and cultural perception recognizing whiteness as normalized and predominant while treating the black as the "racialized other". Therefore, this technology is not innocent but has built-in embedded values - as "this prototypical whiteness is one facet of the cultural and technological logic that informs many instances of the practices of biometrics and the visual economy of recognition and verification that accompany these practices." (Browne 135)

As biometrics are keys towards participating in society, facial recognition technology is embedded into various streamlined procedures in modern societal mobility. Thus, the biases and failures of identification create societal exclusions towards black people based solely on their color of skin. This disparity between digital and physical identity is enough to deprive certain groups of people of fundamental rights and exacerbate existing racial inequalities. Moreover, this biased system is even more dangerous when the racially biased algorithms are incorporated into the current policing systems, enough to put people's lives at stake. On January 9, 2020, Detroit police arrested Robert Williams accusing him of stealing from a luxury store, while in fact, it was a false accusation because the facial recognition in the store's security cameras misidentified someone else as him. This problem exists simply because he was a black male instead of white, as the facial recognition accuracy rates on white males are way higher. Multiple similar instances of false arrests were increasingly seen that all involved black men. (Ryan-Mosley) The failure of identification in facial recognition had led to this technology being intentionally captivating towards racial minors, leading to innocent people falsely being accused. Moreover, these cases of false arrests are likely to feed back into crime prediction algorithms known as predictive policing that creates risk profilings as preventive mechanisms, thus identifying the blacks as the group of higher threats where the origins of data are not accurate enough compared to the group of white.

Facial recognition systems, built from existing biases and in turn creating more biases, form a vicious loop creating structural injustices in society when marginalized bodies become digital. Its arbitrary judgment from the automation of algorithms as a black box is also an infringement on the due process right both in the fifth and fourteenth amendment in the US Constitution.

Biometrics as social passes put people's lives at stake not only in racial categories but also in gender, in similar circumstances. As gender-binary is often presupposed in the social construction of identity, cis-gender is regarded as the normal condition and people who are trans-gendered or gender-fluid are excluded in certain places in society. Here, regarding algorithmic bias, I wanted to expand and focus on a larger area, which is how gender binary and performance had informed our pathological conventions to distinguish diseases from a healthy body. The presupposed gender dichotomy built into the medical imaging process had carried existing biases into various health examination systems, linking the extent of conformity with one side of the gender to the perception of healthy bodies. The argument I want to make here is that the dividing line of pathology - between what's healthy and what's not - is in fact heavily socially-constructed. If misused, it can be a powerful weapon used in the normalization of bodies by excluding the unnormalized bodies as "being sick". Historically, this form of control is especially seen in the category of gender and sexuality, where gender dysphoria (a sense of unease caused by the mismatch between a person's biological sex and gender identity) was previously treated as an identity disorder mental-health problem, and homosexuality was treated as a disease that needed to be cured. The pathological image of health creates certain classifications of people that not only marginalize but also mistreat the minority groups that fall out of these lines of classifications or dichotomies, and this is how the digitizations of gender biometrics can put some people's lives at stake. As a result, part of the posthuman-digitization

reality we are currently facing is also conforming to these standards as an inevitable consequence, creating new kinds of techno-bio species. It is just as Ian Hacking described, "Sometimes, our sciences create kinds of people that in a certain sense did not exist before. I call this 'making up people'." (Hacking)

In conclusion, the key point I'm looking at regarding how biometrics can produce marginalized bodies is the idea of normalization. This topic lies at the fundamentals of society and politics because "politics is a matter of defining how to separate its noise from its information" (Steyerl). As a society is a collection of information flows that is deemed to be "useful", that circulates into various functions to keep the whole population self-preserving, the bodies and identities that are marginalized eventually become "less of a representation than a proxy, a mercenary of appearance, a floating texture-surface-commodity" (Steyerl). As the representational nature of contemporary society - infused with the commercial, biological, chemical, and digital - cannot be neglected, marginalized bodies essentially will have the danger to be separated as "noises" from useful information that is "officially" recognized, and disappear eventually. In other words, "If everyone is visually represented, and no one is discounted as noise, then equality might draw nearer" (Steyerl). As an example of this, the not-so-science-fiction version of this speculative dystopian society is already appearing in the popular HBO TV series Westworld as a projection into the future based on current trends. The invention of Rehoboam - the supercomputer that surveils, archives, analyzes, and predicts every individual's everyday data - carries the powerful allegory describing a world using a normalized system to decide humans from non-humans, based on preexisting arbitrary judgments that can be essentially traced back to power. Social outliers are then extirpated from society, deprived of the basic human right to life, bearing the ultimate alienation and even monstrosity. We see that this

system is not science fiction but an actual representation of biopolitics and surveillance capitalism, only pushing it a little bit forward. However, it is notable that part of it is already existing in predictive policing brought by carceral capitalism, or in the pathological constructions in certain places. The biopolitical nature we have now is as real as this - While the system itself does not bear equal representations, if we do not conform to the dualities of identities by fitting social identities into a normalized standard, we might not be able to find a proper place at all in society.

Technologies like facial recognition created and enhanced existing biases, and racial and gender minorities seem to be the groups that bear the largest consequences of this phenomenon. However, it is also arbitrary to state that minorities are the sole bearers of these stakes. As Muñoz pointed out in his theories on disidentification, "The fiction of identity is one that is accessed with relative ease by most majoritarian subjects. Minoritarian subjects need to interface with different subcultural fields to activate their own senses of self. This is not to say that majoritarian subjects have no recourse to disidentification or that their own formation as subjects is not structured through multiple and sometimes conflicting sites of identification." (Muñoz) Responding to that, I would argue that the real stake of biopolitics goes beyond certain marginalized groups but is rather a ubiquitous phenomenon as it creates a constantly-induced state and feeling of being a minority from even the most majority groups. Relating back to the previous section from capitalism to digital-biocapitalism, during this whole course, it is inevitable that the amount of different forms, functions, states, and performances of identity is excess enough to create a condition of "identity overload". This identity overload and the interconnectedness brought by the internet and digital realities had created the constant fear of missing out and not belonging as one stumbles upon the partial acceptance of personas. As a

result, even heterosexual white males have the urge to fit into this certain social perception, a socially-constructed normalized label that covers and filters parts of their identity that society will never intend to see - the part that is without any known persona but is qualitative, authentic, and poetic enough to each special individual, that is unreachable through any kind of socio-political definitions and normalizations. This is the most valuable part of identity, or self-agency, that is currently vanished and unseen. Regardless, the power of understanding the experiences of the minority groups sheds light on the ambiguous yet lingering majority feeling of being lost at the deepest level of the human agencies that construct identities. To me, this is the modern search of what constitutes us as humans.

Section 3 {A Fluid-Identity Manifesto}

Fluid Identities: Basic Construction

Fluid identity is my response towards this modern biopolitical power. It is a concept and a powerful idea to either theoretically or socially interrogate and intervene in the normalization of bodies, bridging dualities by using fluidity to counter the false idea of dichotomy. As various processes of digitization observing the normalizing procedure make human bodies documented, quantified, and standardized, the idea of fluid identities is a disruptive, provocative, and whimsical intervention and resolution, an interface resolving the incompatibility between real identities and the socially-constructed normalized selves. It is a space for either collective social revolts or self-identity discovery and creative explorations. It is my intention that the formal and tonal inquiry of the fluidity I propose here lies at the intersection of the ontological, the socio-political, and the poetic.

On a closer look relating back to our new digital reality I analyzed above, the existence of fluid identities as a social system is also aimed at reaching a timely consensus on this following contradiction: On one hand, the physical-digital switch is too easy without having any weight. The spectacle nature of digital identities, without actually relating back to the physical bodies, is speaking the others' dominant narratives of established capitalist systems and large corporations under their constructions of worldviews and the function or the life and death of digital figures; Under this, we seem to be moving further away from a decentralized network but letting corporations take away new forms of power as "tech-Leviathans". However, on the other hand, surveillance capitalism has a quality of constantly relating back to physical bodies as a single centralized point, interconnecting everything to one point of official identity non-anonymously. The official set of information regarding one's identity documents has no priorities and

hierarchies responding to different social functions, but exposes a whole set of real information even under circumstances that are more trivial than others. Then how can fluid identities, as a system, resolve this conflict of both being too physicalized within real identities and not physicalized enough within the digital?

Countering Normalization

Both sections above describe the means and ends of biopolitics in creating modern dualities residing in the inevitable social realities of normalizations. As a response to that, fluidity is the exact opposite of normalization and a powerful tool to conquer it. The "Fluid-Identity Manifesto" observes the following -

In a society where biopolitics deprives individuals of the inherent right to identity's self-autonomy and where people are punished for not seeking enhancements or digitizations, fluid identities become a powerful new identity interface that mediates the self and the environment by giving people back the controls to either realizing situationist decentralization in different socio-political scenarios or randomizing parts of self-authenticity through poetic expressions. It breaks the widely presumed normalizations and marginalizations by deconstructing labels and dichotomies while recognizing identities to be fragmented yet authentic, and incomplete but sufficient.

You can't normalize something that is constantly in flux. Capricious will is the only way to know that you are not in a simulation. Glitch is the way to escape algorithmic control. Being fluid should be a presumed agentic human condition and a widely-known and acceptable social factor.

In order to counter normalization, the detailed concept and use of fluidity not only materializes but even celebrates the theoretical ideas around dis-identification, malleability, and "glitch". It challenges conventional ideas within identity politics by questioning the origins and discourses on whether a person's identity is meant to embrace singularity within both body and mind capacity and social communities, and discusses the social implication of identities if it becomes fluid in the everyday exchange of life. It also recognizes the singular characterization of identities originating from the false assumption in biopolitics, constructing identities having fundamental dualities - the separation between natural and fake, personal and social, physical and digital - as a false dichotomy. The following section aims at analyzing the means and stakes of fluidity based on several existing theories and concepts.

First and foremost, fluidity can be interpreted within the context of ethnic or cultural self-identification. As society tends to create fixed personas on people belonging to the same ethnic groups and use "communities" as a tool for stereotypical categorizations, fluidity is thus a powerful tool for performing disidentifications recognizing that the group identity should be recognized as partial and situational instead of a whole. The theory of disidentification proposed by Munoz looks at cultural identities within a certain community, and how identity is fluid beyond the solidary identification with or against one dominant cultural group. It recognizes the transformational nature of identity fluidities by looking at "how those outside the racial and sexual mainstream negotiate majority culture - not by aligning themselves with or against exclusionary works but rather by transforming these works for their own cultural purposes". (Munoz) The key here is countering this cultural dichotomy of either belonging or not belonging, deconstructing the sharp dividing line between the majority and minority labels, and recognizing

that there is a huge space in between - a place for an interface that has abundant context and social spaces for further authentic self-discovery.

Similar to the construction of fluidity, Schuller and Gill-Peterson developed the idea of "plasticity" in order to analyze the political effects of the malleability of a body. The presumed plasticity of a body can be used intentionally as a biopolitical strategy - a two-dimensional lever acting as a basis to construct society, both for and against the biopolitical control over populations. It is the tool for measuring the extent of impact from agency versus environment - "Over time, plasticity indicates the means by which bodies absorb the impact of their environments and resist calcification"; it "uniquely illuminates how biopolitics intervenes into matter and constitutes distinct forms like human bodies as variably actionable entities inside larger populations." (Schuller) The assumption of fluidity here essentially lies in the freedom of choices knowing that the bodies are essentially a controllable unit instead of merely a passive receiver of biopolitical controls. If used correctly, the malleability of a body can be effectively utilized as a model of calibration to perform on various kinds of societal balances. This plasticity effect can be powerful and useful towards the manifesto of fluid identities as stated here, "Each of these fields of plasticity provides an important account of malleability that, given its seemingly inexhaustible destabilizing and disorganizing qualities, has sometimes been framed as a resource for the disruption of normalizing systems of power." (Schuller)

On the other hand, glitch feminism, proposed by Legacy Russell, does not look at careful balancing but an act of disrupting existing social systems through the meaningful use of an error, as a glitch can be both literally and figuratively used to counter societal normalization systems. The glitch is fundamental in the idea of fluidity as both persist the quality of the unpredictable and the unknown; a glitch doesn't depend on pre-existing systems of automation and algorithms

but is a will of its own. Its existence embraces the image of "error" by "acknowledging that an error in a social system that has already been disturbed by economic, racial, social, sexual, and cultural stratification and the imperialist wrecking-ball of globalization—processes that continue to enact violence on all bodies". (Russell) When used as a tool to counter body normalization, "The glitch encourages a slipping across, beyond, and through the stereotypical materiality of the corpus, extending beyond a coping mechanism in its offering of new transfigurations of corporeal sensuality...The glitch body is inherently a threat to normative systems." (Russell) The social implication of the glitch is that it is not only used to escape but also used as part of the computer system responses to form new kinds of political reconfigurations.

Finally, Glissant's theory on opacity is the larger ontological framework and essentially the worldview where fluidity identity manifesto observes. The theory of opacity reconciles any dichotomies by deconstructing the "either-or" or "one-other" logic of it. It not only destabilizes the long history of the racialized and gendered "other" but is powerful enough to ontologically and poetically recognize a space and quality for any identity to be "incomplete but sufficient", and "fragmented yet authentic". It realizes parts of identity that do not always have to resolve towards the whole, but can exist in and of itself. This fundamentally changes the dynamic of the duality between the authentic and the socially constructed self that is a false dichotomy as I argued, but giving individuals a right to withhold information and being opaque as an officially recognized state. As Glissant described -

> "It does not disturb me to accept that there are places where my identity is obscure to me, and the fact that it amazes me does not mean I relinquish it. Human behaviors are fractal in nature. If we become conscious of this and give up trying to reduce such behaviors to the obviousness of a transparency, this will, perhaps, contribute to lightening their load,

as every individual begins not grasping his own motivations, taking himself apart in this manner." (Glissant)

Fluid Society

The existing social application of fluid identities in our current society can partly be seen as a process of cheating facial recognition algorithms, or as a way of revolting and escaping big data's controls and surveillance. Imagining a face that is not fixed, but the eyes, nose, and mouth shapes are changeable - it is going to escape the capture of facial recognition and biometric systems by essentially creating an identity that is "invisible". However, to me, the real value of the existence of fluid identities lies in its ability to propose new questions and speculative effects towards new forms of social imaginations in an alternative future - not purely science-fictional but grounded in current politics and new kinds of human relations that are a positive and generative ideology. Instead of passively escaping algorithms, I would like to wonder the meaning and essence of fluidity if officially and politically grounded in society. For example, currently, there are already certain places that have abandoned the male/female gender dichotomy and generated other gender labels that can be recognized as official. The most fluid cases contain over 50 gender pronouns that one is free to identify and choose from. Pushing it further, what if not only gender but other characteristics of human identity can also be recognized? And what does a speculative society look like if passports and IDs are no longer grounded in fixed biometric parts but represent the human body in a creative manner? What are some of the places in a society where the utilitarian sense of the accuracy of identifications is no longer emphasized, but rather the focus is on the expressive quality of different identities

instead? And what if a society separates parts of these identities and uses them respectively only for its corresponding social functions?

The construction of this society undoubtedly leads with the inevitable question of when fluidity is helpful and when it is harmful. Here I want to emphasize that, first of all, fluidity is a tool for decentralization instead of a threat to public security measurements. It does not deny the necessity for accurately identifying individuals for certain cases of law enforcement but criticizes the inequality of treatments in this manner, as well as recognizing that an official and complete set of identification is not necessary for all circumstances. Secondly, it is also important to realize that fluidity is only helpful when countering and deconstructing systems of normalizations but not to be used to conform to existing stereotypes. An example of this would be my own project "Body-Shifter", where a "boob suit" is designed and worn by the user as a way of freely shapeshifting boobs inflicted by the inflation and deflation of balloons. In this project, I wanted to speculate a world where gendered body parts are free to undergo transformations and shape-shifts, and one can fully take control of their gender identities. Therefore, if fluidity here is used as a way of countering gender stereotypes, then it is the correct place. In other words, one would be misusing this concept if they shapeshift their boobs larger conforming to the gender normativity of male gazes. Similarly, relating back to the previous section on marginalized bodies, fluidity is also drastically different in the context of race and gender on that skin colors are a natural body condition that deserves to be treated equally, and any performances of fluidity on that would be considered as stepping away from racial equalities. Therefore, eventually, fluidity is aiming for identity's transcendence beyond the natural vessels of a body but is not supporting existing stereotypes based on the conditions of a body. An example of this would be Rachel Dolezal, as a white woman by birth, masquerading

herself as black. "As she changed her natural skin, she was accused of exploiting the long history of black suffering to play the victim" (McGreak) by playing with the natural conditions of a body and deemed one's skin color to be necessary for undergoing changes in different social hierarchies. This is the opposite intention of the fluid identity manifesto that should be made clear. Gender, on the other hand, in itself as a societal construct pertaining to social performativity, is a different account on this spectrum.

When put into a speculative social context in the right places, the idea of fluidity can be interpreted as a form of radical situationism. Here, I want to propose a new concept called "situationist decentralization" based on identities themselves, which aims at breaking the interconnectedness of social functions connecting identities to one singular point. The identification gates we encounter in society vary from places and functions - in the scenarios of airports and immigration, showing an ID of the accurate identity information seems to be essential; however, there are other places where this utility orientation is not necessarily to be emphasized. Imagine you are going to a nightclub, and are asked to scan an ID card. Essentially, the only helpful information relevant to the entry would be the fact that you are not underage. However, by showing the ID, all of the irrelevant information besides your age is also shown and potentially given away, circulating into a system of a black box. Then why do identities, under surveillance capitalism, have to consist of this whole set of information interconnecting and relating back to a centralized entity or body that is traceable? The fluid-identity manifesto suggests a decentralized ID system showing only a piece of information related to age in this scenario, plus this ID system would also show everyone's unique movement style as an individual's unique qualitative and expressive identifications that are nice to be recognized going to a place for dancing. Responding to that, the concept of fluidity also observes the quality of an

interface of display mediating the information related to self-identity and the corresponding social environment, giving individual agencies and choices to display the partial set of information within legal scenarios when it is not only necessary but also sufficient, as well as allowing places for poetic self-expression. Eventually, if the worldview constructed by theories on opacity, where identities can be seen both as fragmented and authentic, can be actually implemented in society. When this allowance for individual rights towards bodies, this partial anonymity, and this freedom of expression is circulated seamlessly into a society's political and economic systems, it is when we truly realize identity decentralizations.

Conclusion

The modern accounts of biopolitical power established the form of identity dualities that penetrate the whole society. We see a collective population of biochemical inventions, digital creations, together with psychological confusions and marginalized body exclusions. While decentralization is and always will be an ongoing topic in modernity, we are currently able to see it in multiple places except for the use of identities as a place itself. The Fluid-Identity Manifesto actively promotes the idea and innovation using identities or bodies themselves as sites for decentralization, while making use of the double-edged sword of biopolitical malleability as an active tool in our own dispenses. This form of decentralization is not exactly grounded in revolts, legislations, or tech innovations, but is instead grounded in new modes of behaviors and interactions themselves as facilitators towards a design fiction of a speculative society. To me, this is the real power of how speculative design can bring together biometrics, dualities, and fluid identities, and create an innovatively decentralized response towards the modern normalization of biopower.

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