

Contemporary Sociology: A Journal of Reviews

<http://csx.sagepub.com/>

Gender, Branding, and the Modern Music Industry: The Social Construction of Female Popular Music Stars

Contemporary Sociology: A Journal of Reviews 2013 42: 638
DOI: 10.1177/0094306113491550f

The online version of this article can be found at:
<http://csx.sagepub.com/content/42/4/638>

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

On behalf of:



American Sociological Association

Additional services and information for *Contemporary Sociology: A Journal of Reviews* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://csx.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://csx.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

>> [Version of Record](#) - Jul 1, 2013

[What is This?](#)

meaning of the words 'fetish' and 'worship.' Once this is done, the Moderns can no longer appear to be without fetishes and worship, as they have boastfully—or despairingly—believed. They do have a fetish, the strangest one of all: they deny to the objects they fabricate the autonomy they have given them. They pretend they are not surpassed, outstripped by events. They want to keep their mastery, and they find its source within the human subject, the origin of action, or else . . . the Moderns, piqued at not being able to use human work as an explanation for action, want to kill the subject-source by drowning it in various effects of language, genes, texts, fields, subconsciousnesses, and causalities" (p. 61). And there you have it.

Gender, Branding, and the Modern Music Industry: The Social Construction of Female Popular Music Stars, by **Kristin J. Lieb**. New York, NY: Routledge, 2013. 194pp. \$29.95 paper. ISBN: 9780415894906.

It is not often one encounters the terms "whore," "hooch," or "interchangeable f**bots" in an academic text; in fact one would be hard pressed to find these in most traditional forms of media. However, *Gender, Branding, and the Modern Music Industry* is a work that has its ear pressed firmly to the ground; for the language found within its pages reflects the language of an industry, current cultural perceptions, and the increasing objectification of women as a driver for profits. These terms reflect, not the author, but more importantly, the uncomfortable truth of what she uncovers. Kristin Lieb utilizes a well-known industry to shed light on the intersection of gender studies, sociology, mass communication, and marketing.

To gain insight into how female pop stars are created and managed, Lieb interviewed 21 industry professionals who worked directly in the industry or with music industry companies, and had worked with gold or platinum selling female artists. The knowledge she gained is then analyzed through Wendy Griswold's *Cultural Diamond* (2008), which is an overarching sociological framework that incorporates feedback between the social world, creators, receivers, and

a cultural object (in this context, the female artist). This model is also informed by additional theories in sociology, communications, brand scholarship, and consumer culture.

In Chapter Two, Lieb evaluates female pop stars as short, term brands, meant to generate as much revenue as possible before fading or burning out. In Chapter Three, she delves into changes in the music industry, noting a homogenization of music and brands as producers attempt to guarantee hits based on past successes; and remarking that a de-emphasis on music as technology has changed and reduced music profitability, driving female artists to expand into other forms of revenue like perfumes and clothing.

In Chapters Four and Five, she presents her lifecycle model for female pop stars, a diagram which illustrates the general trajectory of artists. Based on the numerous interviews she conducted in conjunction with relevant examples from popular culture, she shows how, start to finish, women are largely packaged based upon their-calculated-sexual appeal. Typically female pop stars begin as good girls, who must adhere to tightly controlled albeit ever-changing cultural expectations of femininity. They then transition into temptresses, a phase in which attention is increasingly placed on looks; unfortunately this is also where a large number of careers end. The phases beyond the temptress include the hot mess, the diva, the whore, the exotic, the provocateur, and later, possibly the legend and the comeback. Overall, the chapter demonstrates that this model is a fairly regimented path with very little room for deviation. It again reinforces the industry's increasing emphasis placed on women's bodies.

Finally Lieb places her lifecycle model in an academic context, drawing upon theoretical foundations to explain how and why the model originated and persists, looking to the creators and cultural objects, as well as to those who consume them. She concludes that the heavy value placed on women's bodies and resulting presentation has resulted in numerous problems including "hyper-sexualization, eating disorders, depression, violence against women, and a lack of strong positive female figures for young women to aspire to be" (p.164).

While there is a great deal of territory to cover with such an interdisciplinary and novel topic, Lieb does a fantastic job in keeping her work concise and clear. The reader might wish for a longer chapter on theoretical foundations, but this is really no fault, for the length is fitting for an audience unfamiliar with the scholars she draws upon. This book comes highly recommended not only as an introductory text for undergraduate courses, but as an informative read for anyone interested in the branding of female artists in the music industry.

Transnational Policing and Sex Trafficking in Southeast Europe: Policing the Imperialist Chain, by **Georgios Papanicolaou**. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. 243pp. \$90.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780230246126.

Working from a Marxist perspective, Georgios Papanicolaou writes in a way that scholars and graduate students interested in the processes and consequences of globalization, capitalism, and state-perpetuated power dynamics, as well as readers with a substantive interest in human trafficking, migration, exploitation, and policing will find insightful. First and foremost a study of transnational policing, using sex-trafficking as a exemplar case, *Transnational Policing and Sex Trafficking in Southeast Europe* includes theoretical and document reviews and interviews to make the case that transnational policing operations, such as Mirage enacted in Southeast Europe against sex-trafficking, not only further entrench power relations in capitalist societies, but begin to erode democracy and freedom. The author argues that previous theoretical understandings of transnational policing have failed to recognize its role in the political, ideological, and economic struggle in society, and have largely ignored the hierarchical nature of international regulation, international organization, and national police activities. The author asserts that policing is not a power that is exercised under conditions of rationality and neutrality, but is, rather, an apparatus utilized in class struggle, pre-determined by the state's place in globalized processes, and one that actively participates

in the social organization that produces crime. As such, the operation, and eventual demise, of transnational policing endeavors such as Mirage must be understood as an imperialist project in the post-Communist region of Southeast Europe, carried out under the guise of anti-trafficking advocacy. Operation Mirage, Papanicolaou concludes, ultimately completed its imperialist objectives by incorporating that region into the global capitalist regime, and dictated labor strategies—transforming questions of migrant labor exploitation into those of sex-trafficking and organized crime, marginalizing the exploitation of economic immigrants and reifying their position as the subordinate under-class.

Papanicolaou makes the bulk of these arguments in Chapters Two–Six, which can be separated into two general sections: theory and practice. The second and third chapters of this book cover the theoretical development of transnational policing, as well as a critique of theories of international relations, globalization, and sociology that are traditionally used to explain transnational policing. These chapters also begin to outline Papanicolaou's arguments using state and imperialist theories. Chapters Four and Five move the reader into a discussion of international sex-trafficking policy, and the basis for Operation Mirage in Southeast Europe, whereas Chapter Six concludes the analysis with a specific focus on transnational policing of sex-trafficking in Greece.

Talcott Parsons: An Introduction, by **Sandro Segre**. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2012. 140pp. \$24.95 paper. ISBN: 9780761855873.

This admirable introduction demonstrates that, in contrast to the often-cited refrain, there are indeed those “who still read Parsons.” Luckily for us, Sandro Segre is among them. With this slim volume, Segre has managed to condense Parsons' theoretical framework and intellectual development into an accessible format that should prove valuable to those seeking to explore his work. And there are important reasons why sociologists should. Parsons was one of the most influential social theorists of the past century, and