Dating as a market: the Red Pill conception of relationships

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Resumo

O presente trabalho busca analisar o fato de a comunidade Red Pill pensar as relações de namoro como um mercado. O estudo se apoia no pensamento do Institucionalismo Radical (Thorstein Veblen e Karl Polanyi), bem como em interpretações do neoliberalismo, que o colocam como uma racionalidade centrada na competição e que tem o potencial de criar valores nas pessoas. Os Red Pill acreditam que uma relação Homem – Mulher é equivalente a troca de mercado simples, na qual os homens seriam os compradores e as mulheres as vendedoras. O preço de compra e de venda seria refletido no Valor Sexual de Mercado (SMV) de cada indivíduo. O modelo econômico do qual os Red Pill partem é o neoclássico, no qual o ônus do consumidor é menor com um sistema de livre concorrência. Entretanto, os Red Pill acreditam que as mulheres apresentam um poder de mercado muito elevado, o que possibilita que elas marquem seu preço via mark-up e aumentem o ônus do consumidor. A saída que a comunidade apresenta para os homens é buscar o autoaperfeiçoamento. As interpretações do neoliberalismo apontam que a visão de namoro do movimento Red Pill é centrada na competição (entre homem e mulher, bem como homem e homem) e leva a imposição de um tipo ideal de mulher a ser desejada. Já a contribuição institucionalista traz que a visão Red Pill se encaixa na falácia da economia formal apontada por Polanyi e é uma tentativa de defesa de um dos primeiros mitos facilitadores que fundaram as sociedades: a submissão das mulheres aos homens.

Palavras-chave: Red Pill; Namoros como mercado; Institucionalismo Radical; Neoliberalismo

Área de interesse: Economia Institucional Original

Abstract

This paper analyzes the Red Pill community's view of dating relationships as a market. The study draws on the ideas of Radical Institutionalism (Thorstein Veblen and Karl Polanyi), as well as interpretations of neoliberalism, which position it as a rationality centered on competition and with

the potential to create value in people. The Red Pill believe that a man – woman relationship is equivalent to a simple market exchange, where men are the buyers and women the sellers. The purchase and sale price is reflected in the Sexual Market Value (SMV) of each individual. The economic model from which the Red Pill starts is neoclassical, in which the consumer burden is lower with a free competition system. However, the Red Pill believe that women possess very high market power, allowing them to set their prices via mark-ups and increase the consumer burden. The solution the community offers men is to pursue self-improvement. Neoliberal interpretations suggest that the Red Pill movement's view of dating is centered on competition (between men and women, as well as men and men) and leads to the imposition of an ideal type of woman to be desired. The institutionalist perspective argues that the Red Pill view fits into the fallacy of formal economics identified by Polanyi and is an attempt to defend one of the first enabling myths that founded societies: the subjugation of women to men.

Key words: Red Pill; Datting as a market; Radical Institutionalism; Neoliberalism

Thematic area of submission: Original institutionalist economics

1. Introduction

In the 2020s gender issues have been gaining prominence in economic debates. This phenomenon has emerged across different research areas (e.g access to the labour market; double work burden). This trend has strengthened the feminist school of thought (see Harvey, 2015 and Himmelweit, 2018). In that sense, Ageno–Calderón and Gálvez–Muñoz (2019) identify six points that would summarize the proposals of the Feminist Economics: 1) the notion that economics as we know it is a science historically developed within a patriarcal social order; 2) the idea that feminist economics should break with the dominant idea of what is economics, making the invisible process that enables the reproduction of contemporary social life we have today visible; 3) the point that gender should not be seen as just another variable, but a central element of the economic analysis; 4) the necessity of building a new conception of well–being (centered around living standards and social provisioning); 5) the necessity of a new methodology (centered on transdisciplinariry); and 6) the idea that feminist economics has a commitment towards confronting inequalities.

However, there is one point related to gender issues that economics still needs to address more thoroughly: the manosphere movement called “Red Pill”. This movement relies on the argument that women’s lives are in fact easier than men's. Their reasoning is based on the assumption that fundamental differences between men and women exist, but also create a system that favours women: unlike men, women can be “deceptive, promiscuous, and power-seeking with their

sexuality." (Vallerga and Zurbriggen, p. 618, 2022) Women seek for more sexually attractive men when they just want to have sex and still have a safety net of "weaker beta men who provide support in exchange for a relationship" (Vallerga and Zurbriggen, p. 618, 2022). With that in mind, the Red Pill ideology calls for men to become stronger via self-improvement. (Vallerga and Zurbriggen, 2022 and Ging, 2017)

It is very easy to find Red Pill content online and it is causing harm to both men and women. The latter are being attacked in real life and on-line while the former are being exposed to ideological manipulation by this discourse. (Marwick and Lewis, 2017)

But where does economics enter this discussion? The answer rests on the assumption that the Red Pill community promotes about how dating functions. They work under the hypothesis that dating should function as a competitive market. In other words, dating functions as an exchange mechanism where men are the buyers and women are the sellers. Following this logic, men should maximize their value by dating the best basket of women they can afford. In this situation, the currency used is the sexual market value (SMV) of each person. This worldview argues that it is possible to improve your SMV by going to the gym, gaining more social status, becoming richer, and so on. (Vallerga and Zurbriggen, 2022; Ging, 2017) It is not difficult to link the Red Pill dating idea to Gary Becker's theory of human capital. (Van Valkenburgh, 2021)

The main issue for the Red Pill movement emerges when (in their minds), women don't want to date men with the same value as theirs. All of them want men with higher dating scores than the sexual free-market would require. In other words, the movement belives that women use a mark–up system in the dating market. This is what Red Pill creators claim before their audiences and its use as an excuse for arguments that make resentment towards women increase.

This article argues that authors from Radical Institutionalism (in particular Thorstein Veblen and Karl Polanyi) and analyses of Neoliberalism can help explain this scenario. In regard to Radical Institutionalism, the subjection of women to men appears in Veblen's book "The Theory of the Leisure Class" (Veblen, 1899) as one of the first enabling myths that shaped societies. Polanyi adds to this debate when he contrasts "formalist economics" with "substantive economics" (Polanyi, 1977; 1944). A "formalist economy" is a concept under which all economies function on a market basis model. That means that humans act driven by non-stop bargaining impulses. However, the economic organization of societies does not need to be centered around the market, there are many other ways of ensuring material provision. It is exactly from this fact that the idea of "substantive economy" was born. The author argues that the spread of the "formalist economy" is a way to institutionalize a

market-based society. Thus, viewing dating as a market is nothing but an extreme use of the "formalist economy".

Neoliberalism, in turn, seeks to extend market-oriented rationality into all areas of society. (Dardot and Laval, 2013) Second, neoliberalism has the ability to shape values. Because of the social division it creates in societies the idea of moving up through hard work has lost credibility. This makes working class individuals oppose liberal elites, including discourses favorable to minorities – which includes women's rights. (Graeber, 2011)

It is important to distinguish between neoclassical economics and neoliberalism. Neoclassical economics was the dominant paradigm of nineteenth-century economic analysis. Neoliberalism, although influenced by neoclassical economics, should be understood as a historically specific form of social rationality which, extends market-oriented logic into broader social domains.

Dispite the fact that Veblen and Polanyi developed their critiques in opposition to neoclassical economics, their theoretical frameworks remain useful for understanding neoliberal dynamics, since neoliberalism uses nineteenth century economics (period of time in which the neoclassical school of economics was dominant) as inspiration. (Davies, 2014)

This paper is divided into six different sections. This brief introduction is followed by a literature review of both the Radical institutionalist authors in question (Veblen and Polanyi) and the recent interpretations of neoliberalism. The third section tries to show the connections between the Red Pill vision of dating and one of the foundations of basic neoclassical microeconomic theory: consumer theory. The fourth section links the main ideas of the Red Pill dating view with neoliberalism. The fifth section uses ideas from Polanyi and Veblen to analyse the movement discourse. Finally, some conclusions are mede in the last section.

2. Literature review: Veblen's radical institutionalism; Polanyi's formal and substantive economics; the neoliberalism ability to create markets and shape values

2.1. Veblen: The importance of institutions and the "role of women" in the society

Veblen's approach towards economics is very critical of the neoclassical equilibrium models. The neoclassical line of thought focuses on statistical-equilibrium models based purely on economic incentives and on representative agents. In his view, this framework does not allow an understanding of the cultural and historical elements that exist in actual human behaviour and have an impact on the economy. (Veblen, 1898)

In order to correct that, Veblen proposes that economics should transform itself into an evolutionary science. Institutions and cultural/historical analysis would be at the center of this perspective. These institutions can vary across place and time. Going further on Veblen's system, human behaviour is determined by the set of different institutions that exist in a certain society. This set of institutions is the base of all economic and social relations. (Veblen, 1898)

In that sense, every society's power hierarchy legitimizes itself by a series of enabling myths that are born from the society's institutions. Right in the first chapter of his seminal book "The Theory of the Leisure Class", Veblen explains that one of the first institutional marks of ancient societies was the male dominance over women. While men can choose to devote themselves to "higher-value activities", (such as hunting, sports, war and religious activities) women are the ones that do the daily work. Meaning: from the beginning social institutions created an environment that encouraged men to engage in "more honorable" activities than those assigned to women. (Veblen, 1899) For Veblen this idea of division of labour is so important that it was this differentiation that gave birth to the discrepancy between the working class and the leisure class in later stages of human development. "The early differentiation out of which the distinction between a leisure and a working class arises is a division maintained between men's and women's work in the lower stages of barbarism." (Veblen, 1899, p. 22)

Veblen (1899) points out that gender not only impacted the division of labour, but also the ownership of women was a sign of status. First, women were viewed as useless trophies. This logic brought the marriage-relations based on ownership and slavery as well. As Veblen (1899) argues, the ownership of women by men created a situation where the letter owned not only the person, but the things this person makes. "From the ownership of women the concept of ownership extends itself to include the products of their industry, and so there arises the ownership of things as well as of persons." (Veblen, 1899, p. 24)

In sum, for Veblen institutions molded societies in a way that women's should function as extensions of men. Their work is not seen as important and honorable as men's work and they are tied to a man that society consideres superior to them. This situation is justified by enabling myths such as "the need for protection" or "natural gift to take care of the home".

2.2. Polanyi and the different types of economics: "formal" and "substantive"

Polanyi also critiques neoclassical economic thought. For him, this way of approaching economic problems limited the whole area of research to the economics of market societies. "[...] the error was

in equating the human economy in general with its market form" (Polanyi, 1977, p. 6) He defines this as the fallacy of "formal economics". In "formal economics" if there is no market, there is no economy. As the author puts it: "[...] the formal springs from the logical character of the means – ends relationship, as in economizing or economical; from this meaning springs the scarcity definition of economic" (Polanyi, 1977, p. 19) Under "formal economics", every single person would act as if driven by bargaining impulses and fear of hunger. All they do is try to maximize their utility with the resources they have. Nevertheless, there are other ways to organize a society besides a market one. So economies exist even in situations where the market does not (or is left aside). (Polanyi, 1977)

With that in mind, Polanyi brings up the concept of "substantive economics" that relates economy to the ways that a society uses to secure its material needs. Following Polanyi (1977): "[...] the substantive meaning, points to the elemental fact that human beings, like all other living things, cannot exist for any length of time without a physical environment that sustains them" (Polanyi, 1977, p. 19).

Polanyi's distinction between "formal" and "substantive" economics becomes very important when he points out that the idea of "formal economics" is a way to naturalize market society, making it seem that it is the only possible economic form: "As regards society, the kindred doctrine was propounded that its institutions were "determined" by the economic system. The market mechanism thereby created the delusion of economic determinism as a general law for all human society" (Polanyi, 1977, p. 12) and: "The economistic fallacy [...] consist in a tendency to equate the human economy with its market form" (Polanyi, 1977, p. 20).

2.3. The neoliberalism mentality: creating new markets and shaping values

Some authors/economists mentioned by Polanyi (1944) as guardians of the market-oriented world order and consequently gatekeepers of the "formalist economics" (e.g Mises and Hayek) were part of the Mont Pelerin Society. Various studies trace the origins of neoliberalism to the meetings that this society promoted. (Vidal and Brum, 2025; Dardot and Laval, 2013; Davies, 2014).

Davies (2014) points out four major elements that constitute today's neoliberal structure: 1) even though nineteenh-century liberalism was an inspiration, neoliberalism is a new process; 2) an active role of the State; 3) its policies being directed to institutions and activities outside the market; and 4) a worldview based on the competition between the different agents of the system. Taken together these four points reveal that neoliberalism is much more than a system centered on free market economies. In that sense, Dardot and Laval (2013) argue that neoliberalism is in fact a rationality.

> The thesis defended in this book is precisely that neo-liberalism, far from being an ideology or economic policy, is firstly and fundamentally a rationality, and as such tends to structure and organize not only the action of rulers, but also the conduct of the ruled. The principal characteristic of neoliberal rationality is the generalization of competition as a behavioural norm and of the enterprise as a model of subjectivation. The term 'rationality' is not used here as a euphemism that allows us to avoid pronouncing the word 'capitalism'. Neo-liberalism is the rationality of contemporary capitalism – a capitalism freed of its archaic references and fully acknowledged as a historical construct and general norm of existence. Neo-liberalism can be defined as the set of discourses, practices and apparatuses that determine a new mode of government of human beings in accordance with the universal principle of competition (Dardot and Laval, 2013, Introduction to the English Edition)

As seen in Davies (2014), despite being something new, the neoliberal system is inspired by nineteenth-century liberalism. Thus, Veblen and Polanyi's critiques of neoclassical economics (the dominant school of thought during that period) can still be useful for analyzing points related to neoliberalism[1]. Therefore, it can be said that the set of neoliberal institutions promotes not only the creation of new market spaces, but also the extension of competition principles to places where they did not exist previously.

It is also possible to analyse how neoliberalism impacts people's values. For instance, Graeber (2011) uses the case of the United States to examine how this process occurs. The author uses the case of the American working class that prefers to vote Republican, even when Democrats have a more pro-worker platform. He argues that neoliberalism destroyed the so-called "American Dream" (if you work hard enough you can have a better life). With no chance of moving up socially, the workers not only vote according to the identities with which they most identify (in the case of the article G.W Bush), but develop resentment towards the liberal elites (the ones that, although tend to defend minorities' rights, end up reproducing the neoliberal system. "What I want to ultimately argue then is that it's the very liberal elites who find Bush so repellent who have to bear much of the blame for this. Bush-style populism is the final result of their own stacking of the deck in favour of their own children" (Graeber, 2011) The kids that go to expensive schools that still give any opportunity of having a good job in the future are the children of the liberal elites, not of the working class. (Graeber, 2011).

3. Consumer's Theory and the Red Pill vision of dating

3.1 Consumer's theory in basic microeconomic theory

[1] Some authors believe that neoliberalism is a return to the market economy of the nineteenth century. See: Bugra (2007) and Palley (2024). Others consider it something new. See: Luz, Compagnoli and Fernandez (2024).

To understand the logic behind the Red Pill dating view, it is important to know the basics of microeconomics consumer theory. “Consumer theory is very simple: economists assume that consumers choose the best basket of goods they can afford” (Varian, p. 19, 2016) (*author translation*) This is the first sentence of the second chapter ("budget constraint") of the ninth edition of Varian's microeconomics textbook. In the same chapter, the author defines budget constraint with the following equation:

$$p_1 * x_1 + p_2 * x_2 \leq m$$

Where x_1 and x_2 are the two goods available for the consumer; p_1 and p_2 are the prices for each good; and m the amount of money the consumer has. (Varian, 2016)

In chapter 3, the author defines what constitutes the best basket of goods. That depends on the consumer's preferences. Preferences have three axioms: 1) Two different baskets of goods need to be comparable; 2) Each basket needs to be as good as itself; and 3) Different types of consumption baskets should exhibit transitivity in their comparisons. That allows the drawing of an infinite number of indifference curves on a Cartesian graph (curves that represent points where the consumer is equally as happy with different sets of baskets of goods: x_1 and x_2). Indifference curves can be described as a function and are viewed as something internally subjective. A well-behaved indifference curve is another step forward and means that no goods can hurt the consumer. So, more is always better. (Varian, 2016)

Combining the budget constraint with well-behaved indifference curve we get the point where the consumer will make his spending decision. He will use his money to buy x_1 or x_2 depending on his preference curve. This gives us the idea of Utility. A Utility function is a way to give a number to all the possible baskets of goods, making it possible to rank them. By logic, the consumer will choose the basket of goods that maximizes his utility. (Varian, 2016)

Throughout the book, Varian makes it clear he is thinking in terms of a free-market economy, where prices are taken as something exogenous. The author highlights the negative effects of taxes, oligopolies, and monopolies. Those tend to make goods more expensive and reduce their quantity in the market. This means that, for the consumer, free and competitive markets are always better[2].

3.2 The Red Pill movement: the idea of dating as a market transaction

[2] Those are all assumptions that come from neoclassical economics.

The Red Pill community is a group within the manosphere. The name "Red Pill" is a reference to the movie "The Matrix", in which the main character (Neo) has to choose between taking the blue pill or red pill. The blue pill would keep him living his ordinary illusory life. The red pill, on the other hand, would allow him to see the "real truth" of the world. In this sense, the group in question claims that they understand the "true" functioning of society: it is based on a system that favours women. In this system, women control men via sexuality and have the power to choose different partners depending on their needs: if a woman just wants to have sex, she can choose a more sexually desirable man; if she wants comfort, she always will have weaker men available for her. The movement not only say that they have discovered this secret, but call all men to empower themselves via self-improvement. (Vallerga and Zurbriggen, 2022; Ging, 2017; Valkenburg, 2021)

The Red Pill ideology sees the dating relationship between men and women in market terms. Men are the consumers, while women are the sellers. (Valkenburgh, 2021) As seen above, this would mean that men will try to maximize their dating utility function by: choosing the best basket of partners they can afford. Understanding what the basket of partners means is quite easy: the biggest number of attractive women possible. The logic behind the budget constraint is trickier. Both sides of the relationship have their own "price" (Men – buyers' price; Women – seller' price). In order to create this price system, the community designed the sexual market value (SMV) index. According to Valkenburgh (2021): "SMV amounts to a quantification of sexualized human bodies, reducing them to rationalized exchange values and rendering them commensurable in the sexual marketplace." (Valkenburgh, p. 98, 2021) This would signify that every relationship is the exchange between a woman and a man with an equilibrium SMV.

Based on readings of Gary Becker's theory of human capital, Red Pill men argue that it is possible to increase one's SMV by "making yourself look better" or improving your social status.

> [...] women are said to use "Push-up bras/Implants/Makeup/Corsets/Hair coloring, wigs, and extensions" to augment their SMV. The SMV of a man can also be "improved manually" via improvements in physical attractiveness as well as gains in socioeconomic status, such that making oneself physically attractive and improving one's personal SMV score are essentially identical. (Valkenburgh. p. 98, 2021)

Since the consumer theory idea that "more is always better" works under the group logic, the process of "SMV improvement" has no end. This will inevitably fall into problems of body objectification. The obvious one is that men will objectify women's bodies even more. The second is that men will objectify other men and themselves. All those aspects can lead to issues such as poor body esteem, body shame and body surveillance. (Vallerga and Zurbriggen, 2022)

4. The neoliberalism expensive rationality and the shaping of values

As seen, Valkenburg (2021) points out the fact that the Red Pill community looks at dating from an economic neoclassical and neoliberal perspective. From the neoclassical dimension, Red Pill men believe that the system operates in an oligopolistic manner[3] and because of this, they suffer with consumer burden. Their claim to men to improve their SMV is a way to attemp to reduce the market concentration. The neoliberal aspect can also be very interesting. We can see that Red Pill beliefs on how dating fits the mold of Dardot and Laval (2013) and Davies (2014) interpretation of how the neoliberal system operates: 1) competition is at the center of everything (between men – to purchase the best basket of women – and between men and women – to diminish the "natural mark-up that women have") and 2) the market rationality expanding from outside of economically related issues to different areas of society (in this case, dating). These aspects showcase the relentless competitive logic of neoliberalism: the ideals of market and competition must be expanded as far as possible.

Neoliberalism also has the power to create social values. As Graeber (2011) shows, neoliberalism creates such a social disparity that the dream of moving up socially due to your hard work becomes impossible. This makes the ordinary working-class individuals oppose the liberal elites (and all they stand for) because those elites claim that the system is broken, but they are the ones benefiting the most from it.

> Instead, their hatred is directed above all at the 'liberal elite' (with its various branches: the 'Hollywood elite', the 'journalistic elite', 'university elite', 'fancy lawyers', 'the medical establishment'). The sort of people who live in big coastal cities, watch PBS or listen to NPR, or even more, who might be appearing in or producing programming for PBS or NPR (Graeber, 2011, p. 189)

For example, high-quality education is expensive in the USA. The ones that can afford to put their kids in good schools so they can have good jobs are the liberal elites, not working class people. (Graeber, 2011)

Here it is possible to deduce some of the authoritarian aspects of neoliberalism. Since those elites tend to be more progressive and defend minorities (including women), "regular" working class men will tend to listen to more anti-feminist speeches. Consequently, this favoured the Red Pill movement. Liberal elites also defend other minorities such as non-white and non-Christian individuals. The result is that the best basket of women will tend to be made of white conservative women. This means that the utility function that men will try to maximize is not subjective anymore. In other words, the

[3] Red Pills believe that the sytem provides women ("the sellers") with a mark-up that defines their market share.

community will try to come up with the ideal type of woman that men should seek[4]. However, this goes against one of the foundations for the consumer's theory: "different people have different tastes".

5. Red Pill dating market and the Radical Institutionalism

Having passed all this discussion, we can now examine the discourse of dating as a market through the lens of Radical Institutionalism. Starting from Polanyi's concept of formal economics, it is quite clear that the Red Pill vision not only resembles, but is almost a carbon copy of what formal economics is. In the Red Pill framework men act as bargaining agents competing for women and try to maximize their "dating utility function" with their SMV. Likewise, the idea that men should always try to improve their SMV in order to 1) be able to acquire a better basket of women and 2) reduce women's market power is totally in line with Polanyi's notion of formal Economics. Another point of convergence is that while Polanyi argues that formal economics is a way to naturalize market societies, Red Pills claim that they have seen how the system really works. We can say that this dating view is basically an application of formal economics outside of the economic field. Finally, Polanyi's "The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time" (1944) warns about of the authoritarian tendencies of free-market capitalism. As demonstrated above, those tendencies appear in the Red Pill movement as the people's values can be shaped by neoliberalism and the ideal type of women (white-Christian-conservative) appear.

Veblen's enabling myths help us to look at other points of the Red Pill movement. From a veblenian perspective, the idea of trying to attract as many women as possible is just an action to showcase your social status. "Improving your SMV" follows the same logic. If you work on yourself to look like a man that can seduce lots of women, you do not necessarily need to seduce lots of women, because you are doing this to show your own social status.

Moreover, the SMV logic goes against the evolutionary economy that Veblen argued in favour of. The same neoclassical framework is now being used to analyse relationships. All cultural, social and institutional aspects are disregarded in favor of a function of qualities that are considered timeless, but it is obvious that they can vary across time and place. (e.g. beauty standards – a person can be viewed as good looking depending on the specific historical or cultural contexts).

The study of Red Pill behaviour from a Veblenian perspective also brings the idea that the rise of the manosphere can be seen as a counterattack against the advances of women's rights and the rise of

[4] This authoritarian aspect of the Red Pill movement aligns with Slobodian's (2018) idea that neoliberal institutions can be non-democratic (e.g. the IMF; WTO; etc)

gender issues debates on the different fields of society. As seen in section 2.1, for Veblen the social role of women was one of the first institutions established in the history of human societies. Thus, the Red Pill movement, in particular its ideas of dating as a market and improving your SMV, are nothing more than an attempt to protect those ancient institutions and forms of society that were built over it.

6. Conclusion

This paper tried to analyse the Red Pill movement in economic terms. More specifically: it used Radical Institutionalism (Thorstein Veblen and Karl Polanyi) alongside interpretations of neoliberalism (neoliberalism as a rationality based on relentless competition and its ability to shape values) to study the Red Pill view of dating. For them, dating works as a market exchange, where the men are the buyers while women are the sellers. The currency of the transactions is the Sexual Market Value (SMV) of each person. The ideal world for Red Pill supporters would be a perfectly competitive market for dating, so there would be no "consumer burden for men". However, instead of a competitive market, there is an oligopoly in the market. So women can use a mark-up system to price their merchandise. That is to say that "the truth" that the Red Pill community claims to have witnessed is that there is a system that favors women. This is the basis for the Red Pill's resentment towards women. Their solution is to argue in favour of self-improvement activities (e.g. going to the gym; becoming richer; and gaining more social status).

From the neoliberal side of the analysis, we can conclude that the Red Pill movement is a child of the logic of permanent competition mentality that neoliberalism imposes on society. It not only created an open competition in a new social space (dating), but also increased the competition between men and women (to lower the "mark-up price system") and between men (to seduce "better women" and to have "better bodies"). Taking a step further, since the neoliberal system created hatred towards the liberal elites, working class individuals are more open to the Red Pill discourse. Another important point, because the liberal elites say that they stand with minorities, this created space to the uprising of the "right" type of women that man should look for: white-Christian-conservative.

The fact that Red Pill content points towards a "right type of women", goes against one of the main elements of the "consumer theory": preferences are subjective. This subject relates to what Polanyi had shown about the authoritarian tendencies of the free-market gatekeepers. Still from a Polanyian perspective, the Red Pill vision of dating (dating as a market) and their solution (improving your SMV) fall under the fallacy of formal economics, in which economics only exists where the markets are the predominant form of distributing the social resources. The point that Polanyi makes that formal

economics is a way to naturalize the market system fits perfectly with the Red Pill notion that they saw “the truth" of gender relations.

The study of the Red Pill community through Veblen’s framework can be fruitful because of the way the author describes the relations between men and women in “The Theory of the Leisure Class”. In the book, Veblen argues that right in the beginning of mankind, women were considered trophies to show social status. The Red Pill argument that men need to “improve their SMV” to “attract more desirable women” follows the same logic that Veblen points to. The fact that neoclassical economics is used (even if just by a community) as the base for understanding dating, goes against the Veblen’s claim to develop an evolutionary economic science (that would take into consideration social, cultural, historical, and institutional elements). Finally, due to the fact that gender issues are gaining greater prominence in the public debate, the Red Pill movement can be considered an attempt to preserve the institutions and the societies built under the enabling myths of the women's role in society.

In order to challenge Red Pill ideology, economists should engage with the framework proposed by Ageno–Calderón and Gálvez–Muñoz (2019), reconsider their theoretical approaches, and to develop a new analytical basis grounded in a more institutional perspective and with the six principles outlined in the introduction of this paper.

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