

The Governmentalization of “Lifestyle” and the Biopolitics of Carbon

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Abstract

The search for a sustainable civilization—an essential concomitant of dealing with global warming—will be driven, in part, by the “normalization” of a low-carbon lifestyle. To date, most research and discussion of this transition have centered on technological fixes and their economic equivalent, “getting prices right.” Although both approaches seem to point to reduced levels of consumption as a result of more “efficient” processes and practices, neither really addresses the material and cognitive changes associated with the “low-throughput” economy (along the lines of what Herman Daly called the “steady-state economy”) that is likely to follow from the current economic downturn and the need for drastic reductions in carbon-burning. More specifically, there is a glaring contradiction between the impetus for high rates of economic growth and the major modifications of “lifestyle” necessitated by environmental crisis.

“Lifestyle” is usually approached as an individual attribute: each of us has preferences, linked to basic needs and “expressive functions,” which we seek to fulfill through “choices in the market.” This disregards both the societal and regulative aspects of lifestyle, the first conditioned by subjectivities shaped through socialization from an early age into class, nation, ethnicity, identity, and other groups, the second by the governmentalization of consumption through advertising and other forms of preference-shaping, which serve to link lifestyle to “identities.” In other words, if “we are what we consume,” it is the regulation of “who we are” that will determine not only “what we consume” but also “whether we survive.”

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*The biological existence of human beings has become political in novel ways. The object, target and stake of this new ‘vital’ politics are human life itself...as it is lived in its everyday manifestations.... If discipline individualizes and normalized, and biopower collectivizes and socializes, ethopolitics concerns itself with the self-techniques by which human beings should judge themselves and act upon themselves to make themselves better than they are.*³

*More Doctors Smoke Camels than any other Cigarette.*⁴

*Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined that Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Your Health.*⁵

*Smoking can kill.*⁶

Introduction

I begin this paper with a puzzle: the decline of social smoking in the United States since 1960.⁷ Since that time, cigarette smoking—especially indoors—has become a socially-unacceptable practice that has gradually spread through much of the Global North.⁸ Fifty years ago, moreover, there were no such things as “smokers’ rights” or the “right to a smokeless environment.” One need look only at smoking advertisements and films of the 1940s through mid-1960s to see how the “smoking lifestyle” was glamorized by movie stars and legitimated by doctors, and to recognize a form of social engineering through

³ Nikolas Rose, “The Politics of Life Itself,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 18, no. 6 (2001): 1-30, 1, 18.

⁴ TV commercial, 1949, at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gCMzjJjuxQI> (accessed Aug. 11, 2009).

⁵ Warning required on U.S. cigarette packets by Public Health Cigarette Smoking Act of 1970.

⁶ Warning on British cigarette packets.

⁷ Among recent histories of cigarettes and smoking are Eric Burns, *Smoke of the Gods—A Social History of Tobacco* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007); and Allan Brandt, *The Cigarette Century: The Rise, Fall and Deadly Persistence of the Product that Defined America* (New York: Basic, 2007).

⁸ I recognize that social smoking in the UK has been forced outdoors and that the practice remains much more popular and visible there than in the United States; the Stephen King story “The Ten O’clock People” provides an amusing spin on such outdoor smoking (in *Nightmares and Dreamscapes*, New York: Viking, 1993).

the market.⁹ Social smoking was not only the signifier of an idealized identity but also, through its linkage to the “American Way,” a *moral* practice, especially via the distribution of cigarettes to members of the U.S. military.¹⁰ Indeed, the world could be seen as a smokers’ “commons” in which one could light up almost anywhere, at any time. Those who objected to newly-lit cigarettes did not possess a right to a smoke-free workplace or other smoke-free space, whether public or private. Today, by contrast, smokers must seek out specified spaces in which they can engage in their now-reviled habit.¹¹ This constitutes a significant social lifestyle change, one that has been poorly documented and is not well understood.¹² At the same time, as we shall see below, social consumption of an equally deadly substance—alcohol—has changed very little. This is not, however, a paper about either cigarette smoking or the drinking of alcohol; rather, it is about long-term changes in social practice and how they come about. While both price and knowledge play important roles in fostering such changes, there is more at work here. My goal in this paper is to tease out an understanding of how and why such “lifestyle” changes come about and apply them to climate change.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), among others, has proposed that, if the very worst impacts of global warming are to be avoided, rich and rapidly-industrializing societies will need to reduce their aggregate greenhouse gas

⁹ Many such ads can be found at Euro-Cig.com at http://www.euro-cig.com/gallery.php?id_cap=11 (accessed July 10, 2009).

¹⁰ Burns, *Smoke*, op cit., pp. 197-206.

¹¹ I might also note that when I first went east on research trips in both the United States and Europe during the 1980s and 1990s, such restrictions on smoking were virtually non-existent. Today, these are universalized across North America, most of Europe, and many other parts of the world. Istanbul has recently instituted a ban on smoking in restaurants and bars; see Suzan Fraser, “Turkey Extends Smoke Ban to Bars, Restaurants,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 20, 2009, at <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/n/a/2009/07/18/international/i141945D24.DTL> (accessed July 20, 2009).

¹² So far as I have been able to tell, this particular history of smoking has yet to be written. There is, to be sure, a growing literature on the “sociology of smoking” and smoking’s “social context,” although most seem to appear in medical journals. See, e.g., Jennifer Stuber, Sandro Galea & Bruce G. Link, “Smoking and the Emergence of a Stigmatized Social Status,” *Social Science and Medicine* 68 (2008); 420-30.

emissions by as much as 80% by the middle of the 21st century.¹³ The favored approaches to emission control seek to increase the cost of burning carbon, through direct carbon taxes or the so-called cap and trade system. Both rely heavily on self-regulating markets for effect, in the view that the internalization of higher production costs and prices for goods and services will drive substitution, innovation and a reduction in greenhouse gas intensities. Moreover, although there are likely to be surveillance and monitoring systems intended to quantify greenhouse gas emissions from a range of sources, a good-deal of self-reporting by countries and corporations will be involved, without too much in the way of audits.¹⁴ This combination of prices and practices, motivated by “self-interest in pursuit of a “common good” (not unlike Adam Smith’s “invisible hand”), is highly vulnerable to violation, corruption and collapse (as seen, for example, in the behaviors on Wall Street and the subprime mortgage bubble). Given long-standing conflicts among countries and within them, as well as the complexities associated with internalizing the cost of carbon in consumer goods, there is good reason to wonder when this program will actually go into operation and if it has any chance of succeeding.

What, then, is to be done? Inasmuch as carbon is imbricated in all facets of human life—people being carbon-based, with long reliance on the breaking of carbon bonds and oxidation to provide biological energy as well as warmth for survival—

¹³ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), *Climate Change 2007—Synthesis Report—Summary for Policymakers*. (Geneva: IPCC Secretariat, World Meteorological Organization, 2007), at: http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/syr/ar4_syr_spm.pdf (accessed 29 April 2008). At this writing, President Obama is scheduled to go to COP 15 in Copenhagen to announce that the United States will reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 83% by 2050; see John M. Broder, “Obama to go to Copenhagen with Emissions Target,” *The New York Times*, Nov. 25, 2009, at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/26/us/politics/26climate.html> (accessed Nov. 26, 2009).

¹⁴ On the flaws of self-regulating markets, see Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Boston: Beacon, 2001; new ed.); and Ronnie D. Lipschutz with James K. Rowe, *Globalization, Governmentality and Global Politics—Regulation for the Rest of Us?* (London: Routledge, 2005).

successful control of global carbon emissions will depend on changes in both individual behavior and social practices, that is, lifestyle.¹⁵ In this paper, I argue that successful reduction of carbon emissions will require individual and collective internalization of a new regime of consumption and new forms of governmentality and biopolitics. Michel Foucault called forms of management that attempt to regulate behaviors “governmentality,” in order to denote the ways in which administrative apparatuses of modern society operate on populations through “biopolitics.” His particular insight, as we shall see, is that changes in behaviors and practices are no longer effected through discipline, punishment and sovereign power but, rather, via rules, rule, desire and self-regulation. What can be called the governmentalization of lifestyle thus becomes linked to the reshaping of desire and morality so that people *want* to do what they believe is good for them, according to a biopolitical logic. Indeed, it is in this context that lifestyles are already being reshaped in preparation for a low-carbon future; the transformation in smoking practices is one example of how such reshaping comes about.

In this paper, I examine the logics of Foucault’s propositions as applied to the problem of reducing carbon burning in everyday life. I begin with the social puzzle described above: the transformation of smoking practices. This example illustrates how lifestyles change and are changed through changing norms and practices, and not merely as a result of instrumental information about risks, harms and costs. I then link this narrative to governmentality and biopolitics, especially as they relate to consumption and the consumer lifestyle in wealthy societies. In the second part of the paper, I propose the concept of “modes of consumption” in order to differentiate among forms of subsistence,

¹⁵ Matthew Paterson & Johannes Stripple, “My Space: Governing Individuals’ Carbon Emissions, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* (forthcoming 2010).

industrial and high throughput lifestyle practices and carbon burning. This last mode is characterized, especially, by the creation and enhancement of individual and collective desires and identities which, in turn, reflect a package of moral beliefs, practices, and consequences associated with particular lifestyles. In the third section of the paper, I examine automobility as a form of biopolitics and its management through governmentality. Finally, I address the relationship of governmentalization and biopolitics to social engineering and carbon burning, pointing out that, in the United States at least, the market and its advertising have been powerful forces in shaping and changing what are considered normative practices and what people *do*.

The End of Smoking: A Social Puzzle

How did smoking come to be such a reviled practice? Two explanations are generally forwarded to account for this change: (1) the revelation during the 1960s of the health effects of smoking and subsequent legislation imposing more and more restrictions on who could smoke and where¹⁶; and (2) as part of this campaign, the imposition of significant “sin taxes” on a packet of cigarettes and a high elasticity of demand among smokers. Yet, the data are not altogether clear on this point. Research by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control appears to suggest that the number of “smokers,” defined as those who light up at least every few days, has declined from around 43% of all American adults in 1965 to 22% in 2006. Moreover, elasticities of demand appear quite low: while minority youth show significant reduction in smoking in response to a 10% increase in cigarette prices, whites of all ages are unlikely to reduce their smoking rates

¹⁶ Burns, *Smoke*, op. cit., ch. Ch. 10-11.

very much.¹⁷ Moreover, at the same time, and notwithstanding widespread health warnings and campaigns against drunk driving, social drinking remains widespread: per capita consumption of all forms of alcohol consumption rose by about 20% between 1960 and 1980 and declined by roughly the same amount from 1980 to 1998.¹⁸ Certainly, alcohol has been shown to have unhealthy effects when consumed in more than very moderate quantities, and the rate of increase in the cost of most spirits has roughly paralleled that of cigarettes. Why the difference?

It is helpful to look a bit more closely at the historical process. Sumptuary laws against smoking have a long history and anti-smoking movements have emerged periodically to battle the habit, without great success.¹⁹ The most recent movement against smoking appears to have originated out of the combination of scientific evidence about smoking's health effects with the emergence of the injunction to individual "wellness." This last is a prescription of responsibility for one's own health and a growing subjectivity about one's individual "rights to health."²⁰ In the United States, the 1964 Surgeon General's report on the risks of smoking led to legislation requiring

¹⁷ "Cigarette Smoking Among Adults—United States, 2006, *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* (Centers for Disease Control) 56, #44 (November 9, 2007):1157-1161, at: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5644a2.htm> (accessed Dec. 3, 2009); "Response to Increases in Cigarette Prices by Race/Ethnicity, Income, and Age Groups -- United States, 1976-1993," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* (Centers for Disease Control) 47, #29 (July 31, 1998): 605-609, at: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/00054047.htm> (accessed Dec. 3, 2009).

¹⁸ Thomas K. Greenfield, Ph.D., and William C. Kerr, Ph.D. "Tracking Alcohol Consumption Over Time," National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, Dec. 2003, at: <http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/arh27-1/30-38.htm> (accessed Dec. 3, 2009).

¹⁹ Burns, *Smoke*, op. cit.; Brandt, *Cigarette Century*, op. cit. See also Allan M. Brandt, "The Cigarette, Risk, and American Culture," *Daedalus* 119, #4 (Fall, 1990): 155-76.

²⁰ This injunction is linked to neoliberal ideology and practice, which emphasizes both the individual and "responsibilization"; See, e.g., Rebecca J. Hester, *Embodied Politics: Health Promotion in Indigenous Mexican Migrant Communities in California*, PhD Dissertation, Department of Politics, UC-Santa Cruz, 2009; Christopher J. Fries, "Governing the health of the hybrid self: Integrative medicine, neoliberalism, and the shifting biopolitics of subjectivity," *Health Sociology Review* 17, #4 (Dec. 2008): 353-67. Note that the "right to health" is not the same as a "right to health care."

warnings on cigarette packets, a practice copied in other countries, as well.²¹ Growing numbers of ill ex- and deceased smokers sought compensation through lawsuits, a course that, ultimately, led to large judgments against tobacco companies, while concerns about the health effects of secondhand smoke resulted in indoor bans on smoking. It seems likely that the first restrictions on smoking in public were largely normative—the practice came to be viewed as socially-unattractive with public spaces informally designated as “smoke-free zones” to which smokers were expected to remove themselves.²² Via administrative fiat and public law, concerns about the health and aesthetic effects of secondhand smoke, as well as social pressure, smoking then came to be forbidden in growing numbers of enclosed spaces, including airplanes, schools and restaurants.²³ Smokers were required to consciously self-regulate their habit, to find designated locations to smoke, and to ask “mind if I smoke?” All of this involved the instantiation of new practices in and internalization of a new set of social limits by both the world’s smoking and non-smoking populations.

The story related here does not really explain the social puzzle, however. A more conventional public policy explanation would expect victory by pro-smoking forces, especially given the deep pockets of tobacco companies, their lobbyists, the activities of politicians from tobacco-producing states and the economic importance of cigarettes to particular American states. Although the companies and representatives in Congress put up a fierce fight against tobacco restrictions, their resistance failed. And federal law could

²¹ Advisory Committee to the Surgeon General of the Public Health Service, *Smoking and Health* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare, 1964; pub. 1103), at: http://profiles.nlm.nih.gov/NN/B/B/M/Q/_/nnbbmq.pdf (accessed Aug. 11, 2009).

²² Kim, Sei-Hill & James Shanahan, “Stigmatizing Smokers: Public Sentiment Toward Cigarette Smoking and Its Relationship to Smoking Behaviors,” *Journal of Health Communication* 8 (2003): 343–67.

²³ Michael P. Eriksen & Rebecca L. Cerak, “The Diffusion and Impact of Clean Indoor Air Laws,” *Annual Review of Public Health* 29 (2008): 171-85.

not reach into the indoor spaces, as a result of which much of the important action took place locally.²⁴ Again, while health effects drove much of the movement toward “smoke-free” public and work spaces, this does not explain the transformation of the *social* practice.

I propose that this is an example of governmentality and biopolitics in action, and illustrates the transformation of lifestyle through the gradual socialization of various publics into a biopolitics of not smoking. According to Mitchell Dean, biopolitics “is concerned with matters of life and death, with birth and propagation, with health and illness, both physical and mental, and with the processes that sustain or retard the optimisation of the life of a population.” He writes that

Bio-politics must then also concern the social, cultural, environmental, economic and geographic conditions under which humans live, procreate, become ill, maintain health or become healthy, and die. From this perspective bio-politics is concerned with the family, with housing, living and working conditions, with what we call ‘lifestyle’, with public health issues, patterns of migration, levels of economic growth and the standards of living. It is concerned with the bio-sphere in which humans dwell.²⁵

“Population” refers here not to a discrete group of people living within a specified territory but, rather, a statistical assemblage of individuals who share, in certain terms, a range or set of characteristics and practices. Individuals comport themselves according to the standards of “normality” of their specific population group or “lifestyle,” which are framed in terms of particular types of behavior. The “right disposition” of things is then maintained through the standardization of populations groups within certain defined parameters, the self-regulation of their own behavior through conformity to these parameters, and the disciplining function of social pressures, civil behaviors, surveillance and law, all of which constrain tendencies to stray outside of those parameters. Taken

²⁴ Eriksen & Cerak, op. cit.

²⁵ Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality—Power and Rule in Modern Society* (London: Sage, 1999), 99.

together, individuals' practices take place within a "zone of normality" that also serves to constitute "identity" in terms of beliefs and practices.

Applying this notion to smoking, we see that, in the United States, at least, biopolitics is linked to an ethic regarding injury to the self and others, articulated through a "will to the self's wellness" and an injunction against harming others. Over the past 35 years, individuals have been socialized to seek their own "wellness" through changes in their lifestyles and health-related practices. Good health has become an ethical obligation to others rather than merely an individual attribute.²⁶ At the same time, the rising costs of health insurance and health care have motivated insurance companies, corporations and the state to reward those who have succeeded in achieving metrics linked to good health. One meta-evaluation of studies of cost-effectiveness found general agreement across the published literature that significant savings were being realized by companies providing health insurance to their workers.²⁷

Stepping back, we see governmentality and biopolitics at work, Michel Foucault's terms for the regulation of people and populations.²⁸ Governmentality is about management, about ensuring and maintaining the "right disposition of things" of that which is being governed or ruled, and bringing those being managed into the process of governing themselves. As Foucault put it, governmentality is "the ensemble formed by

²⁶ It is difficult to date accurately the origins of the "wellness" discourse, although its modern use appears to be in the 1950s ; see James William Miller, "Wellness: The History and Development of a Concept," *Spektrum Freizeit* 1(2005): 84-102.

²⁷ Although there is precious little evidence to indicate that corporate injunctions to wellness have had any significant effect on individual health and well-being, it has almost certainly been used to justify a general decline in the level of attention patients receive from their doctors and has been broadly documented to reduce health care costs; see, e.g., Larry S. Chapman, "Meta-evaluation of Worksite Health Promotion Economic Return Studies: 2005 Update," *American Journal of Health Promotion* 19, #6 (July-Aug. 2005): 1-11.

²⁸ Michel Foucault, "Governmentality," in Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose (eds.), *The Essential Foucault*, (New York: The New Press, 2004), 229-45.

institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target populations, as its principal form of knowledge, political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security.”²⁹ This “right disposition” has as its purpose not the action of government itself, but the “welfare of the population, the improvement of its condition, the increase of its wealth, longevity, health, etc,” which we might assume also contributes to the maintenance of administrative apparatuses as well as the well-being and productivity of the population.³⁰ Governmentality is effected, in turn, through biopolitics which, as noted above, is concerned with specific populations enjoined, in effect, to normalize specific behaviors.

What might appear somewhat ironic is that over the period in question the anti-smoking movement worked in tandem with public health representatives (and scientists) to reshape the consciousness of both smokers and nonsmokers *via the very same instruments used to market cigarettes*. Because the social and monetary costs of smoking came to be understood as greater than the benefits—although it is doubtful that the actual calculation of individual risk played any significant role here³¹—the practice also came to be regarded as morally dubious. Hence, smoking was not merely a threat to health; in the United States, in particular, it was also regarded as a violation of civic virtue, if not tantamount to a *sin*.³² Non-smokers acted virtuously by eschewing the habit while

²⁹ Michel Foucault, “Governmentality,” in: Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (eds.), *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1991), 87-104, 102.

³⁰ Id, p. 100; see also Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality—Power and Rule in Modern Society* (London: Sage, 1999), ch 1.

³¹ The calculation and consciousness of risk are often in conflict; see, for example, the special issue on “Risk,” *Daedalus* 119, #4 (Fall, 1990).

³² In the past, some fundamentalist Protestant groups placed smoking in the same league as drinking and licentious behavior. Beginning in the 1960s, such condemnation came to be primarily *secular*, and the injunction against inflicting harm on others more Kantian than Christian. See also Rose, “Politics.”

smokers (violators of a social ethic) became increasingly sensitive to the potential long-term health and social costs to themselves and others of continuing to smoke. Ostracism to out of the way smoking zones only served to reinforce such sensibilities. Finally, while the effect of such governmentality is manifest within individual consciousness, it nonetheless reflects a *social* sensibility, of what is “right” and what is not.³³

The denormalization of social smoking suggests that deeply-embedded and widely-accepted social practices related to lifestyle consumption can, and do, change over time, albeit less as a result of price elasticity and more as a consequence of social pressures and practices. There is a tendency to regard lifestyle as a reflection of an individual’s “freedom of choice.”³⁴ In fact, it is just as accurate to say that individuals are heavily-regulated in terms of what they are permitted to do, encouraged to consume, and punished for “violation” of the rules and regulations that constrain such “freedom.”³⁵ The governmentalization of lifestyle becomes a set of internalized norms and practices through which individual members of specified populations shape themselves so as to comport with their location in specific biopolitical categories (nonsmokers, asthmatics, children of smokers, etc.) Data on these practices can be collected to generate statistical norms about group “preferences” that, in turn, can be applied to further shape consumer lifestyles and reinforce population categories. All of this serves, as well, the imperative of economic growth and accumulation, inasmuch as it is the “business of business” to shape

³³ Lee Thompson, Jamie Pearce & Ross Barnett, “Nomadic Identities and Socio-Spatial Competence: Making Sense of Post-Smoking Selves,” *Social & Cultural Geography* 10, no. 5 (Aug. 2009): 565-81.

³⁴ Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962); Milton Friedman and Rose Friedman, *Free to Choose* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1990).

³⁵ Moreover, there is growing experimental and neurological evidence that a plethora of choices may not only result in paralysis in making different choices but also result in passivity in terms of changing practices. See, e.g., Barry Schwartz, “The Paradox of Choice,” *Pique*, 2007, at: http://www.piquediscoveries.com/des_barryschwartz.pdf (accessed Dec. 5, 2009); and Barry Schwartz, *The Paradox of Choice: Why More is Less* (New York: HarperPerennial, 2005).

consumer preferences and behaviors. A further point is that the processes, practices and effects of governmentality serve as much to *create* those populations as they do to keep them contained within normative limits.

The same applies to a biopolitics of carbon, involving the governmentalization of the everyday carbon burning practices of the world's various populations (here understood in terms of categories, such as high consumers, subsistence farmers, etc.).³⁶ These practices make up the warp and weave of everyday life, constituting and reproducing social contexts, and ranging from driving to agriculture. It is these practices of living that are, after all, the major source of greenhouse gases and a major contributor to global climate change.³⁷ Excessive carbonization of the Earth's atmosphere poses a number of threats to the security, well-being and "lifestyle" of specific populations, or biopolitical categories. It is necessary, therefore, to (i) acquire knowledge about the causes and consequences that arise from those lifestyles; (ii) determine the appropriate technical and social means required to modify those practices and reduce levels of carbon burning; and (iii) regulate the lifestyle practices that generate excess carbon dioxide.³⁸ There is something a bit chilling about such a biopolitics: everyone and everything comes to be seen as either a stock or flow of carbon, a contributor to climate change, and a potential threat to global survival. If one is a stock, it is to be maintained at a constant or

³⁶ Angela Oels, "Rendering Climate Change Governable: From Biopower to Advanced Liberal Government?" *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning* 7, no. 3 (Sept. 2005); 185-207;

³⁷ Angela Druckman & Tim Jackson, "The Carbon Footprint of UK Households 1990-2004," *Ecological Economics* 68 (2009): 2066-77, 20074-75; Shui Bin & Hadi Dowlatabadi, "Consumer Lifestyle Approach to US Energy Use and the Related CO-2 Emissions," *Energy Policy* 33 (2005); 197-208.

³⁸ We might even expect that breathing will be regulated, since humans currently emit something like two billion tons of carbon per year into the atmosphere. Indeed, according to one on-line story, "Al Gore has been having the same thoughts too: 'We breathe out carbon dioxide, and this in turn causes global warming. I'm going to start holding my breath for two minutes, thirty times per day, in order to combat global warming. I would suggest everyone follow my lead and hold your breath every day. It will prevent the earth from being destroyed'." At: <http://www.firetop.co.uk/2006/11/15/cut-co2-emissions-stop-breathing/> (accessed 9 Jan. 2009).

reduced level; if one is a flow, it is to be regulated. Babies might become very costly carbon sources.³⁹

Modes of Consumption

Although consumption appears to be a well-understood concept, its content and practice are not as evident as they might seem.⁴⁰ Clearly, we consume in order to live but beyond subsistence, this consumption has as much to do with societal reproduction, and the production of identities and subjectivities, as it does with the assimilation of food, water and other things necessary to life.⁴¹ In this sense, we might think in terms of *modes of consumption* and their associated practices, differentiating among those involving basic needs, societal reproduction and identity creation. I borrow the notion of “modes” from Marxism⁴² in order to contrast different means and ends of consumption and consumerism and how the practices associated with each have been shaped by social regulation and, indeed, social engineering through normative standards and advertising.⁴³

While the parallel is not quite accurate—differing modes of consumption do not correspond to “stages” of development in some teleological sense—this framework does

³⁹ Paul A. Murtaugh & Michael G. Schlax, “Reproduction and the Carbon Legacies of Individuals,” *Global Environmental Change* 19 (2009):14-20.

⁴⁰ The literature on consumption is vast and “consumer and consumption studies” and “consumer science” are active academic and commercial disciplines. See, e.g., Colin Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987); Peter N. Stearns, *Consumerism in World History: The Global Transformation of Desire* (London: Routledge, 2001); and Benjamin R. Barber, *Consumed: How Markets Corrupt Children, Infantilize Adults, and Swallow Citizens Whole* (New York: Norton, 2007), among many others.

⁴¹ Pierre Bourdieu, “The Market of Symbolic Goods,” in: *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).

⁴² See e.g., Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

⁴³ R. Rhees, “Social Engineering,” *Mind* 56, #224 (Oct. 1947): 317-31; Lance McMahon, “The Impact of Social Marketing on Social Engineering in Economic Restructuring,” *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing* 9, #4 (2001): 75-84, esp. p. 80; Hyman, “Responsible Ads: A Workable Ideal,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 87 (2009): 199-210.

help to distinguish basic material from symbolic means and ends (even though the material and symbolic are never wholly distinct). It also points to the ways in which everyday practices related to consumption constitute both “lifestyle” and represent a primary source of greenhouse gas emissions. In particular, it is “consumption for identity creation” among the financially well-off that is most important to the high rates of economic growth associated with carbonization,⁴⁴ and it is a mode particularly subject to the governmentalization through the market.⁴⁵

The basic mode of consumption has to do with life itself. Clearly, there are certain things that humans must consume to survive; we might even say that human societies exist only as a result of collective efforts to ensure group and individual survival through adequate levels of consumption.⁴⁶ While production of such basic necessities are implicated in climate change, especially through wet agriculture, they are not, for the most part, major engines of either capitalist growth or identity and status. This does not mean that all consumption of food and water involves survival—think here of meals at French restaurants or “designer water.” Consumption of the latter can be representational or signifying as much as thirst satisfying.⁴⁷ I will, therefore, put aside consideration of the basic mode of consumption.⁴⁸

The “classic” mode of consumption is premised on the churning out of industrial

⁴⁴ I discuss this in my forthcoming book, *Political Economy, Capitalism and Popular Culture* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), ch. 3

⁴⁵ Damian Hodgson, “‘Know your customer’: marketing, governmentality and the ‘new consumer’ of financial services,” *Management Decision* 40, #4 (2002): 318-28.

⁴⁶ See, e.g., Wolf, “*Europe*,” and Kees van der Pijl, *Nomads, Empires and States. Modes of Foreign Relations and Political Economy*, vol. 1 (London: Pluto, 2007).

⁴⁷ On water, see, e.g., Frank Chapelle, *Wellsprings: A Natural History of Bottled Spring Waters* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2005); and Andrew Szasz, *Shopping Our Way to Safety: How We Changed from Protecting the Environment to Protecting Ourselves* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

⁴⁸ This point is not entirely correct: production and trade of grains is big business and can be a source of considerable profit to those in the middle. In terms of profit per unit of good, however, bottled water is much more profitable.

and white goods, automobiles and the various other 19th and 20th century accoutrements of middle and upper class life (which could be extended to the electronics of the 21st century), all of whose production were and remain very carbon intensive.⁴⁹ Many of these goods are imbricated in various aspects of lifestyle and a primary focus of contemporary consumer biopolitics as in, for example, the structuring and regulation of automobility.⁵⁰ The car, however, is better understood not simply as a means of transportation or even an element of lifestyle; it is closer to a Bourdieuan “field”⁵¹ or a Foucauldian “*dispositif*.” The latter is

firstly, a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions—in short, the said as much as the unsaid... The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements.⁵²

There is no comparable term or concept in the British or American literatures, but it has been translated as “apparatus” or “assemblage,”⁵³ while scholars of science, technology and society and innovations studies have called such assemblages “sociotechnical

⁴⁹ Stephanie J. Battles & Robert K. Adler, “Production, Energy, and Carbon Emissions: A Data Profile of the Iron and Steel Industry,” American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy Summer Study on Energy Efficiency in Industry, June 1999, at: http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/efficiency/aceee_99_final.htm (accessed Dec. 5, 2009).

⁵⁰ John Urry, “Inhabiting the Car,” *Sociological Review* 54, #s1 (Oct. 2006):17-31; Matthew Paterson, *Automobile Politics: Ecology and Cultural Political Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁵¹ A Bourdieuan “field” is the “social space” in which agents endowed with various forms of capital are positioned and interact based on the rules of the space, *habitus* and the application of those resources. Pierre Bourdieu, “The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups,” *Social Science Information* 24, #2 (1985): 195-220. See also Pierre Bourdieu, “The Genesis of the Concepts of *Habitus* and *Field*,” *Sociocriticism* 2 (Dec. 1985): 11-24.

⁵² Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. ((New York: Pantheon, 1980; trans. Colin Gordon), p. 194.

⁵³ The term “assemblage” comes from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). Here, we rely on a modified definition offered in Kevin D. Haggerty & Richard V. Ericson, “The Surveillant Assemblage,” *British Journal of Sociology* 51, #4 (Dec. 2000): 605-22, p. 608, citing P. Patton, “MetamorphoLogic: Bodies and Powers in *A Thousand Plateaus*,” *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 25, #2: 157-69, p. 158: An assemblage consists of a “multiplicity of heterogenous objects, whose unity comes solely from the fact that these items function together, that they ‘work’ together as a functional entity.”

systems.”⁵⁴ I return to automobility as an assemblage, below.

A third mode of consumption has to do with the production and reproduction of one’s body and identity. While Cartesian dualism might warn us against linking the two, it is clear that modification of the former often has to do with shaping of the latter, especially for purposes of signification and status. Such changes may involve fashion, cosmetic surgery, tattooing, piercing and scarification, as well as possessions and practices associated with status groups, such as upscale automobiles, RVs, big houses and motorcycling.⁵⁵ The decoration of the body is an ancient practice, but the commodification of “identities” linked to “body work” is a fairly recent trend.⁵⁶ “Identity” itself is a problematic concept,⁵⁷ largely dependent on an individual’s material position within the global system of capitalist production,⁵⁸ and it is based on a complicated combination of cognitive reflexivity and practice that relies on conspicuous display of various items of consumption.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Wiebe E. Bijker, Thomas P. Hughes & Trevor J. Pinch (eds.), *The Social construction of technological systems: new directions in the sociology and history of technology* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987); Maurie J. Cohen, “A Social Problems Framework for the Critical Appraisal of Automobility and Sustainable Systems Innovation,” *Mobilities* 1, #1 (March 2006):23–38.

⁵⁵ See, e.g., Nestor M. Davidson, “Property and Relative Status,” *Michigan Law Review* 197 (2009):757-817; John W. Schouten and James H. McAlexander, “Subcultures of Consumption: An Ethnography of the New Bikers,” *The Journal of Consumer Research* 22, #1 (June 1995):43-61.

⁵⁶ Lipschutz, *Political Economy, Capitalism and Popular Culture*, op. cit.; Lesley A. Sharp, “The Commodification of the Body and Its Parts,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 29 (2000):287-328; Mike Featherstone (ed.), *Body Modification* (London: Sage, 2000); Patricia Hill Collins, “New commodities, new consumers : Selling blackness in a global marketplace,” *Ethnicities* 6, #3 (2006): 297-317.

⁵⁷ I ignore here the biological sources of identity; see Benedict Care, “After Injury, fighting to Regain a Sense of Self,” *The New York Times*, Aug. 10, 2009, at:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/09/health/research/09brain.html> (accessed Aug. 10, 2009).

⁵⁸ David Harvey, “The Body as an Accumulation Strategy,” *Environment and Planning D* 16, #4 (1998): 401-21.

⁵⁹ This point could be challenged: the makers of revolutionary banners, posters and buttons almost certainly meant to market them to the proletariat—although they were, in all likelihood, members of the movement, too. Contrast this with Che Guevera t-shirts, whose message is unclear and whose producer is almost certainly not a worker-owned enterprise. Many tattoos are not displayed; indeed, they are meant to be hidden.

It is at this point that the individual consumer meets governmentality and biopolitics through production and consumption of the self in the pursuit of lifestyles. More generally, the panoply of credit, advertising, status indicators, and “rights” related to consumption all serve to shape and regulate the sovereign consumer, allowing her to be “free to choose” within those limits offered and allowed by the market.⁶⁰ Note how such “freedom” operates on both body and mind. On the one hand, the consumer is bedazzled by overloaded store shelves and the belief that s/he can acquire anything she wants—so long as she can afford it. On the other hand, s/he cannot acquire anything that is not available or do anything that is expressly forbidden. To what degree such identity construction is linked to greenhouse gas emissions is unclear,⁶¹ although there are many identity-linked practices involved.⁶² I turn next to the automobile in order to ground this discussion.

⁶⁰ Friedman’s famous dictum that “Each man can vote, as it were, for the color of tie he wants and get it” conceals the possibility that not all colors are on offer and that one’s freedom not to wear a tie at all might be limited. Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, op. cit., Chapter 1, “The Relation Between Economic Freedom and Political Freedom,” pp. 7-17. Note that the freedom associated with consumption is not limited to orthodox economics or conservatives; see Campbell, *Romantic Ethic*, op. cit., and Daniel Miller, (ed.), *Acknowledging Consumption: A Review of New Studies* (London: Routledge, 2005); Daniel Miller, *Shopping, Place and Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

⁶¹ See, however, Peter Dobers1 and Lars Strannegård, “Design, Lifestyles and Sustainability: Aesthetic Consumption in a World of Abundance,” *Business Strategy and the Environment* 14 (2005):324–36; Seonaidh McDonald, et. al., “Toward Sustainable Consumption: Researching Voluntary Simplifiers,” *Psychology & Marketing* 23, #6 (June 2006):515–34; and Nick Clarke, et. al., “Globalising the consumer: Doing politics in an ethical register,” *Political Geography* 26 (2007):231-49.

⁶² Much research focused on “lifestyle” has tried to quantify the carbon footprints (or similar metrics) of distinct practices rather than broader “assemblages”; see Druckman & Jackson, “Carbon Footprint,” op. cit.; Bin & Dowlatabadi, “Consumer Lifestyle,” op. cit.; and Murtaugh & Schlax, “Reproduction,” op. cit. For more sociological work, see, e.g., Kersty Hobson, “Competing Discourses of Sustainable Consumption: Does the “Rationalisation” of ‘Lifestyles’ Make Sense?” *Environmental Politics* 11, #2 (2002): 95-120; Kersty Hobson, “Environmental Responsibility and the Possibilities of Pragmatist-Oriented Research,” *Social and Cultural Geography* 7, #2 (April 2006):283-98; and Kersty Hobson, “Bins, Bulbs, and Shower Timers: On the ‘Techno-Ethics’ of Sustainable Living,” *Ethics, Place & Environment* 9, #3 (2009):317-36.

Automobility as governmentality, consumption and practice

I use the term “automobility” here to refer to the assemblage that is the automotive “system.”⁶³ This assemblage includes not just the car itself but also the material infrastructure (highways, gas stations, parking lots, streets, pipelines), the production system (mining and manufacture of raw materials, shipping, parts production, assembly plants, tire plants, gasoline refining), auto-related labor, tourism, advertising, the arrangement of cities and suburbs, patterns of mass transit within and without major urban areas, and individual’s and people’s subjectivities and mentalities regarding both the car and the system within which people and cars together act as hybrid agents.⁶⁴ In the United States (and, to a growing degree, many other countries), those who lack cars find their mobility highly constrained, getting around expensive and time-consuming and their lifestyles highly constrained in terms of widespread norms.⁶⁵ Life is much easier if one possesses an automobile. Possession also constructs and reinforces “normality,” as do the various elements of the automobility assemblage. The result is that practices associated with the car are, for the most part, assumed, unquestioned and regarded positively, while proposals to reduce or eliminate the car are regarded widely as heretical, marginal and unfeasible—indeed, impossible. Thus, if the assemblage imposes externalities on society,⁶⁶ these are either treated as a problem of individual agency (e.g., safe driving) or matters to be addressed instrumentally (by technological and

⁶³ Urry, “Inhabiting”; Paterson, *Automobile Politics*.

⁶⁴ Bruno Latour uses the term “actant” to describe things and objects that motivate action in agents; here, the car is an actant operating with its drivers and passengers to produce a kind of cyborg. Bruno Latour, *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986).

⁶⁵ I might point out that, historically, people seldom travelled more than a few kilometers from their natal village, except in unusual circumstances. I have not yet been able to find data about individual travel in the United States via automobile over a lifetime—but I am looking!

⁶⁶ Cohen, “Social Problems Framework,” *op. cit.*, pp. 28-30.

economic fixes, as through airbags). The assemblage, as a whole, is not subject to transformation or conversion in any way that reduces its expanse, expense or effects.⁶⁷

Indeed, notwithstanding a host of externalities arising from the automotive assemblage, the consumer-driver is subjected to social pressures, through a variety of biopolitical inducements and practices focused on status, freedom, economic necessity, health and safety, and the mobile imaginary. Advertising, in particular, operates on the consumer's subjectivity, as do a number of other social mentalities. Matthew Paterson writes engagingly about the role of "Mondeo Man" (and others) in the campaign prior to the UK's 1997 general election, which arose in response to activists' various anti-road protests and closures during that decade. He writes

Mondeo Man operated as discursive reframing. Rather than seeing cars as 'the problem', they become seen the source of identity through which a subjects political identity is understood. The legitimacy of car driving is recuperated and 'normal' politics is resumed.

But he also notes, almost wryly, that, Labour "Having legitimised car driving, it then became more difficult to engage in the 'attacks' on car drivers widely believed to be necessary to achieve other goals in terms of congestion or meeting emissions targets."⁶⁸

Increasingly, advertising—and especially automobile advertising—is pitched to very specific demographics, working on the viewer/consumer's identity and

⁶⁷ Efforts to address the "transition" away from the automobile have been addressed in the literature on "sociotechnical transition management." See, e.g., Frank W. Geels & Johan Schot, "Typology of Sociotechnical Transition Pathways," *Research Policy* 36, #3 (April 2007): 399-417; and René Kemp & Jan Rotmans, "Managing the Transition to Sustainable Mobility," pp. 137-67, in: Beolie Elzen, Frank Geels and Kenneth Green (eds.), *System Innovation and the Transition to Sustainability: Theory, Evidence and Policy* (Cheltenham, Gloucester: Edward Elgar, 2004). A general critique of the concept can be found in Elizabeth Shove and Gordon Walker, "CAUTION! Transitions ahead: politics, practice, and sustainable transition management," *Environment and Planning A* 39, #4 (April 2007): 763-70.

⁶⁸ "Swampy Fever, Mondeo Man," pp. 166-92, in: Paterson, *Automobile Politics*, op. cit.

subjectivity.⁶⁹ For example, specific connections between the character and features of a car and a particular demographic are emphasized, which serve to locate the viewer in a specific group. Second, themes such as the relationship between “freedom” and mobility are foregrounded: a very common image in such ads is the vehicle zooming down a deserted road that runs on the top of seaside cliffs, along remote desert paths or even empty city streets, notwithstanding the fact that buyers rarely travel off-road and are often confronted by traffic congestion. Third, further selection is achieved through gendering.

This is seen most clearly in advertising for pickup trucks. First, men only are the target! No women need apply and, if they appear in these ads at all, it is as decoration (women compete with trucks for men’s attention, and note that “pickup” has a double meaning in U.S. English). It follows that if one is not interested in trucks and the manly practices they facilitate, one must be insufficiently masculine. Second, one can improve one’s self-image and shape a new identity by driving a big pickup and doing the things men do—and there’s always stuff to be moved, isn’t there?⁷⁰ Third, although pickup trucks have become quite costly, they are marketed as capable of moving both family and children and cargo, as necessary, thereby substituting for less-masculine vans and sedans.

Note, too, the relationship between “freedom” and biopolitical self-regulation. The driver of a pickup can go anywhere he wishes, through mud and meadow, up hill and down dale, and even through city streets. Because trucks tend to be bigger and higher than cars, the driver can also assert himself on the road and avoid being intimidated by

⁶⁹ Linda Jane Coleman, Marie Hladikova and Maria Savelyeva, “The Baby Boomer Market,” *Journal of Targeting, Measurement and Analysis for Marketing* 14, #3 (April 2006):191-209.

⁷⁰ Caution! Men at work! Dare I point out that if men are out driving trucks, there is probably more work for the women left behind at home.

others' road rage and unsafe practices. And driving a truck helps to reinforce that sense of masculinity associated with being "on the move" and dominating over others. At the same time, however, being a pickup-driving man also imposes constraints on behaviour. One becomes subject to various regulatory regimes, including traffic law, credit and banking systems, energy supply, repair shops, and gender roles and rules. One is free to drive anywhere, so long as one can pay for the loan, insurance, fuel and repairs, the truck does not break down, and there are no fences or other obstacles in the way. And to the extent that the driver fully internalizes the beliefs and practices conveyed by the advertisement and its associated discourse, he self-regulates his own "freedom." Indeed, there is not that great a difference among the old trope of "brainwashing," the mass social engineering that is so feared in liberal societies and biopolitical regulation of consumer behaviour through various governmental mechanisms.⁷¹

Although consumers are urged routinely to utilize other forms of transportation—bicycles, buses, trains—in order to reduce their environmental impacts and carbon emissions, such alternatives generally involve considerable expenditures of time and effort, and are not appropriate for the elderly and infirm.⁷² Moreover, only limited time and funding are devoted to transforming the practices and infrastructures associated with automobility in ways that would make society less dependent on it, thereby reducing the carbon it liberates. Automobility has been internalized as normal practice, which seems to preclude any significant structural change in either organization or subjectivities or, at a

⁷¹ This was a charge first issued by Vance Packard in *The Hidden Persuaders* (London: Longmans, Green, 1957). A recent reassessment of Packard's charge is Geoffrey M. Hodgson, "The Hidden Persuaders: Institutions and Individuals in Economic Theory," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 27, #2 (2003):159-75. See also Barber, *Consumed*, op. cit.

⁷² See, e.g., Patrick Moulding, "Fare or Unfair—The Importance of Mass Transit for America's Poor," *Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law and Policy* 12, #1 (Spring 2005): 155-80.

minimum, any means to render it marginal. While a small shift in public sentiment about automobility is detectable, it is focused primarily on greater fuel efficiency and new automotive technologies, rather than the broader assemblage and its associated *habitus*. Inasmuch as even zero-carbon cars will only substitute for today's carbon burners—and, quite possible, displace emissions to growing numbers of required power plants—it is well worth think about how such a shift could happen.

Recent work by economists George Akerlof and Rachel Kranton point toward some interesting directions. They examine how organizations “inculcate non-economic motives” in new recruits in order to change norms, preferences and practices.⁷³ The point of such socialization—some might even call it “brainwashing”—is to transform *identities*, so that individuals come to identify with a different idealized norm and, indeed, come to feel incomplete or like failures if they cannot live up to those ideals. Akerlof and Kranton use the military as their model organization and examine specifically the socialization of West Point plebes from their entry into the academy until their departure. The plebes enter with expectations that West Point will be like any other college; they leave not only knowing that it is not, but also carrying with them their new identities. This is not the only organization they describe in their writings—it is, perhaps, an unfortunate choice, given the political and historical associations with forms of military discipline—but it nicely illustrates an important point: to change *habitus*, it is necessary to work with and through the “psychology and sociology of workers and organizations”⁷⁴ and, indeed, to create new biopolitical categories through which governmentality can be effected. Because how one “lives” is so deeply imbricated with identity as a *social*

⁷³ George Akerlof and Rachel Kranton “Identity and the Economics of Organizations,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 19, #1 (Winter 2005): 9-32, 9..

⁷⁴ Akerlof and Kranton,, “Identity,” 10.

category, it becomes necessary to find ways to change those idealized norms that constitute the “normal” or “virtuous” individual identity. If this sounds faintly totalitarian, or evocative of Orwell’s *Nineteen-Eighty Four*,” it is—but, then, so are most social norms and practices, including current norms and practices of high individualism and consumer sovereignty.

Akerlof and Kranton’s research and model do not, anywhere, mention governmentality or self-regulation, and they make no attempt to discover the sources and origins of organizational norms and practices internalized at West Point or how they might change or have been deliberately changed. For them, individuals remain self-interested holders of preferences who, under the influence of appropriate stimuli—in the case these cadets, it is abuse and humiliation—will shift their behaviors in the desired direction (desired by whom?).

The important point that I take away from Akerloff and Kranton is that it is not *education* that is effecting such normative change; rather, it is *socialization*. Whereas education assumes calculating rationality—if you have the appropriate information you will become convinced that a certain course of action is to your benefit—socialization does not (small children are easily socialized, but not because they have been formally educated in social norms). This observation might give us pause. Still, it would not be difficult to devise biopolitical tools offering resocialization through alternative imaginaries oriented around notions of status, identity, costs and necessity and linked to new material infrastructures⁷⁵ and forms of discipline, amounting to a governmentality of mobility. On the one hand, such imaginaries could be framed in terms of “freedom from

⁷⁵ Elizabeth Shove & Mika Pantzar, “Consumers, Producers and Practices: Understanding the Invention and Reinvention of Nordic Walking,” *Journal of Consumer Culture* 5, no. 1 (2005): 43-64.

the automobile” and its associated costs and discomforts, and linked to other forms of transport, a more relaxed life, better health, less time spent in traffic jams, etc.⁷⁶ On the other hand, just as there is a certain cachet, in some circles in California, to driving hybrid cars, carbon burners could be increasingly disparaged as unhealthy, posing long-term problems for children and nature, and even taxed out of existence. Efforts to impose congestion charges in cities, as has been done in London, point in this direction. And, of course, there would need to be incentives to make alternatives as easy to use as automobiles or easier and, ideally, less costly on a day-to-day basis. Changing attitudes and subjectivities is not sufficient to achieve such a change, but it is almost certainly necessary.

Governing Lifestyles

A common complaint, especially in the current environment of state bailouts of banks and other financial institutions, and growing surveillance of individuals as they engage in their “normal” daily activities, is that the government has no right to control how people choose to live and consume. This assertion begs the fact that management of “lifestyles” by various authorities, including consumers themselves, is already quite well-developed.

Sam Binkley frames lifestyle as follows:

Lifestyles are at once expressions of the autonomy and choice of a self-aware lifestyle practitioner who takes his or her self, body, life, and happiness as an object of aesthetic investment and creativity, but also inscriptions of social power and reproductions of social structures through which hierarchical symbolic boundaries are maintained, and through which the stratification of social groups is reproduced and naturalized. As such, lifestyles bring together processes central to sociological analysis: they describe both the subjective outlooks and the creativity

⁷⁶ There is some discussion on-line about such freedom. The late Paul Newman and others have pointed out that the average driver works one day a week to pay for automobility; see <http://theoverheadwire.blogspot.com/2008/03/you-work-on-friday-to-pay-for-your-auto.html>

of individuals, while accounting for the structural constraints that come to bear on these outlooks.⁷⁷

Invoking Mike Featherstone and Anthony Giddens, both cultural sociologists, Binkley also points out that “lifestyles are increasingly made the object of advice and instruction. The new advisability of lifestyle resonates well with Giddens’s suggestion that individuals turn increasingly to expert discourses for the undertaking of a reflexive project of self-identity...”⁷⁸ Binkley cautions, however, that the application of governmentality to lifestyle is problematic, because

these realms function according to a very different logic of representation and persuasion, one less defined by the demand to act economically, and more by the invitation to imagine and dream of oneself transformed by a new purchase. Indeed, these two influences on everyday life seem antithetical: the voice of the social worker and the career counselor, instructing us on how to prepare for job interviews, seems opposed to the seductive image of the fashion model showing off a new line of clothing.⁷⁹

To be sure, the process of identity construction is highly-individualized and the various “pieces” that comprise an individual identity can contribute to very idiosyncratic ones that barely resemble one another (hence, defying biopolitics).⁸⁰ At the same time, however, the imaginaries associated with lifestyle are highly structured in terms of specific cultural logics, since this is the grammar that makes them intelligible to consumers who pursue their dreams and visions. There is, of course, greater space for variation but identities shaped through consumption are not without boundaries or constraints, as noted above. In other words, consumers do not practice in a realm of “freedom” or “free choice,” as is so often claimed. S/he must have money and permission

⁷⁷ Sam Binkley, “Governmentality and Lifestyle Studies,” *Sociology Compass* 1, no. 1 (2007): 111-26, 4.

⁷⁸ Binkley, “Governmentality,” 7.

⁷⁹ Binkley, “Governmentality,” 10.

⁸⁰ Indeed, alternative lifestyles are often celebrated as forms of “resistance” although they partake of much the same notions of self as do more conventional practitioners of identity shaping.

to consume, the desired object or practice must be available for alienation in the market, and the item or practice must not threaten the self, others or society as a whole. These do not seem to be onerous limits, given the wide range of goods and opportunities supplied to those who are able to participate in regimes of consumption.⁸¹ At the same time, lifestyle is being regulated through norms, culture, credit, surveillance and other biopolitical tools, so socialization into a regime of decarbonization would not be radically new.

I would argue that efforts to regulate consumer practices through markets and prices are too instrumentally focused and do little to change the relevant assemblages in which carbon is burned. That is, consuming practices and associated lifestyles are conceived in terms of individual preferences and choices influenced by the appropriate price signals and, at the margin, moral suasion. Thus, we focus on raising the price of energy as a means of making automobility more costly, and try to persuade consumers that it is a “good” to use less energy (“good” for whom is rarely addressed). In this equation, lifestyle is regarded as the *consequence* of preferences and choices rather than their motivator or something shaped through social norms and practices. As the case of automobility suggests, consumer preferences are strongly shaped by visions of idealized lifestyles as status-enhancing and identity creating, which also come to be deeply internalized as guides to what is “proper behavior” for particular lifestyle categories. A cowboy would never be caught driving a Prius, and no advertising ever mentions the lifetime cost of maintaining a car and paying for insurance.

⁸¹ As the old saw has it, “Under communism, everything that is not explicitly permitted is forbidden; under capitalism, everything that is not explicitly forbidden is permitted.”

The line of argument presented here suggests two insights: First, significant changes in the *practices* of carbon consumers will be necessary if the emission reductions proposed by the IPCC are to be achieved. Second, such changes cannot rely merely on appeals to either economic self-interest or moral principles. In the former instance, although technological innovations and financial (dis)incentives can alter behaviors, in the absence of a new “normality,” long-term changes in *habitus* will be required to internalize more significantly-changed subjectivities and practices. In the latter instance, individual calculations of self-interest have been seen to change according to circumstance and opportunity even as moral behavior is an individual choice and not binding on the individual.⁸² To return to the story of smoking, both self-interest (one’s health and income) and morality (others’ health) are factors in an individual’s decision to smoke or not. In a broader sense, however, it is through governmentality and biopolitics, expressed via social pressures and norms, that practices and the status and identity linked to them can be transformed on a large scale. For the most part, people do not want to be regarded as “abnormal” or “marginal” and will change their behaviors as new forms of belief and practice become normative and normalized.

Would socialization of populations into a new normative frame addressed to carbon burning constitute social engineering of the worst sort, or would it be very much like common practice today? I suggest that selected populations are being socially-engineered at all times via the ubiquity of advertising, commercials, brand names and performance, and that this practice is more than a century old.⁸³ We call such manipulation “protected speech” and only interfere with it if it can be shown

⁸² Lipschutz, *Globalization*, ch. 7

⁸³ Certainly, if we regard religions as forms of “social engineering” basic to societal production and reproduction, the latter is very old.

demonstrably to be false. Inasmuch as little of this social engineering dwells on the defects and shortcomings of products and practices, how does it differ from “government propaganda” in any significant sense?

Conclusion

Governmentality and biopolitics are not merely hypothetical concepts or a particular forms of social power; they are also an instrumentalities that regulate people’s behavior in lieu or the absence of direct mechanisms of social control. Even duly-authorized agencies, possessing the requisite police power to monitor, discipline and punish those who violate society’s rules and laws, cannot keep track of the many and various opportunities for individuals to transgress the social norms of Anglo-American globalized capitalism.⁸⁴ There are few ways to stabilize and reproduce social relations and arrangements other than through the self-regarding consumer. Ultimately, moreover, we all are carbon “sources,” not only via basic needs but also through the myriad of activities in which we engage, the things we consume and the services we utilize that, taken together, constitute “lifestyles.” In one sense, therefore, a biopolitics of carbon involves moving the world’s high-consumption populations toward modes of life and practice that consume less and generate lower levels of CO₂. Whether this can succeed will only become clear if it is tried. Effective management of carbon will be extraordinarily complex, but the case of smoking suggests that it such a biopolitics is not impossible. Perhaps, some day, driving a car will become as socially distasteful a practice as cigarette smoking is today.

⁸⁴ They do attempt to do so, however; see Ronnie D. Lipschutz “Imperial Warfare in the Naked City—Sociality as Critical Infrastructure,” *International Political Sociology* 3, #3 (Sept. 2008): 204-18.