

# Individual Empowerment or Collective Feminist Progress? Examining *OnlyFans* Content Creator Bonnie Blue

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In an age dominated by individual entrepreneurship, Bonnie Blue, the 24-year-old OnlyFans content creator, has recently been a subject of major controversy across media platforms. Blue's marketing strategy involves targeting young, or in her own words, 'barely legal' (Hubble, 2024, n. p) males across social media platforms and encouraging them to engage in sexual relations with her for OnlyFans content. Blue has been criticised for the use of exploitative engagement strategies and has been perceived as instrumental in the reinforcement of misogynistic discourse regarding the objectification of women (Selo, 2024, n. p). This critical reflection explores how Bonnie Blue capitalises upon neoliberal and post-feminist ideals in today's social media-driven consumer society. She sits within a discourse of choice, agency, and empowerment – utilising sexuality as a commodity to drive her successful business model. Her engagement with this has implications for a wider social, cultural, and political discourse. This critical reflection considers the impact on feminism on a broader scale.

At the core of Blue's business model sits the widely discussed concept within the academic field: sexuality as a commodity. The

importance of this multifaceted subject in this context is Blue's use of agency; through monetising sexual content through the digitalised subscription-based, adult content creation platform OnlyFans, Blue feeds off the attention economy (Drenten et al., 2019, p. 2), resulting in a profitable business model; from which she claims to have earned over £3 million thus far (Cox, 2024), n.p). Neoliberalism proposes that society functions at its best under individual entrepreneurial freedoms, arguing that under free markets whereby state intervention is minimal, businesses thrive, subsequently benefitting wider society (Harvey, 2005, p. 2). Though not explicitly stated by Blue, her practices may mark her as a neoliberal-self as she embodies individual



entrepreneurship, depending upon consumer sovereignty (McGuigan, 2014, p. 223). Whilst aligning with neoliberal ideals, Blue contends that she 'loves' her practises and they have 'made her rich' (Saving Grace, 2024, 4:10-4:14), speaking to the post-feminist ideal of self-empowerment (Halvorsen, 2022, p. 60). With large emphasis on the necessity of individualism, post-feminism links agency, choice, and empowerment. This involves the repackaging and enthusiastically embracing of practises that may have been previously

critiqued by feminists (Gill & Donaghue, 2013, p. 252). In the post-feminist era, OnlyFans has been described as a 'new tool', allowing females to use their sexuality for their own economical advancements (Halvorsen, 2022, p. 5); Blue demonstrates self-empowerment through financial gain emanating from sex-work, previously described as 'degrading and oppressive to women' (Overall, 1992, p. 705). Subsequently, it may be argued that Blue is demonstrating full control over her body and career through choice and agency, allowing for self-empowerment, reflecting her capitalisation of postfeminist ideals. Whilst this essay will not critique sex-work, it will discuss the particularities of Blue's business model which undeniably stem from her use of sexuality as a commodity.

Blue's business model is under scrutiny within the public eye due to its uniqueness. She suggests that to create individuality and attract engagement with her OnlyFans content, identifying a niche was necessary (Saving Grace, 2024, 3:35 – 3:50). Blue thoughtfully crafted a distinct focus, in which she identified a gap in the market to promote her content and gain subscriptions: targeting 'fresh 18-year-old' males (Saving Grace, 4:00 – 4:10). From a neoliberal perspective, Blue is utilising her labour strategy for self-advancement, finding a niche through innovation; reflecting entrepreneurial traits driving her business model to prosper, which has not gone unnoticed by critics: 'She's a businesswoman for real, gotta rate the hustle' (Hubble, 2024, n. p). Through identifying this niche, Blue's business model has continued to prosper as she utilises a range of marketing strategies across social media platforms; recognising the wide-reaching scale of TikTok,



Blue gains high rates of engagement by using 'unsavoury inclinations' (Gammon & Samman, 2023, n. p) in her videos and captions: "I slept with 37 uni students in one night" (TikTok, 2024a, 0:01-0:05). Blue discusses her practices with the young men on numerous well-known podcasts and even positions herself as an educator, guiding teens through safe, fun, and healthy sex, regardless of the 'judgement and shame the older generation like to push about sex' (Ghazali, 2024, n.p). In turn, this essay introduces the consumer society and how its traits allow Blue's business model to capitalise from it.

A consumer society is described as one of which the buying and using of goods is considered the primary route to happiness and success (Ackerman et al., 1997, p. xxx), allowing room for Blue to market her sexuality as a consumable product. She achieves this

through generating financial gain from her business model, touching on aesthetic labour, whereby an individual's compensation depends upon 'their own body's looks and the affect' (Mears, 2014, in Drenten, et al. 2019, p. 44). In a consumer society, the concept of 'porn chic' is defined as a style that reflects the mainstreaming of the aesthetics of commercial pornography within western societies

(Lynch, 2012; Tyler Quek, 2016 in Drenten et al., 2019, p. 42). With hypersexualised content becoming normalised and subsequently a market demand (Rogan et al., 2016, p. 603), Blue, contending, 'I am a businesswoman, so I am going to capitalise on wherever the most money is.' (Wells, 2024, n. p), aligns her market supply with the identified gap for content associated with schoolboys, upon which she 'knew' would gain engagement (Giddings,

2024, n. p). However, it is not to be said these practices have gone without critique. The discourse surrounding Blue's niche of targeting young males contends that it is exploitative, raising concerns of consent and awareness of the long-term implications for the young males, extending to a petition being signed by 20,000+ people calling for 'predatory' Blue's visa for Australia to be cancelled (Dalton, 2024, n. p). Counteractively, recognising the consumer society - and the commodification of everything (Hall, 2022, n. p) - it would be reductionist to omit that this begs the question of: is it Blue doing the harm, or is she feeding into the gap in the market which demands it? However, it is crucial to consider the way in which Blue positions herself; an empowered, individual agent, capitalising upon neo-liberal and post-feminist ideals; an 'educator' (Ghazali, 2024, n.p). Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to avoid dismissing Blue's emphasis on her own personal responsibility regarding her practices.

Considering Blue's agency, it is necessary to discuss her personal reinforcement of misogynistic ideals across social media regarding the objectification of females, affirming that she condones husbands cheating on their wives with her because females are 'lazy' (Selo, 2024, n. p). She contends females should be 'servicing' their partners, boldly stating that a female committing oral sex on their male partner is the 'bare minimum' (TikTok, 2024b, 0:23 – 0:26). This specific type of misogynistic idealism has a particular likeness to the discourse around the toxic influence of Andrew Tate. Referred to as the 'self-proclaimed misogynist influencer', Tate uses shocking, extremist assertions to gain high engagement

on social media platforms (Radford, 2024, n. p). Tate positions himself as a realist, spreading misogynistic discourse: 'Women are intrinsically lazy' (Radford, 2024, n. p), as he recognises the room for engagement from the attention economy for the consumption of cringe and banter humour as appealing to young males' shock (Haslop et al., 2024, p. 2). Tate's practices may mark him as a neoliberal self, aligning with Blue's identification of clickbait engagement from the attention economy as she contends that she often employs the very language she is being critiqued for within her marketing techniques, in aims of higher engagement (Giddings, 2024, n.p). Additionally, critics have discussed the



internalised impact of Tate's ideology being embodied by males in relationships, as an oral history explains a first-hand experience of such: "But it's your DUTY," he screamed at me as he towered over the bed." (Bertrand, 2023, n. p).

As Blue continues to spread negative discourse around the objectification of women, critics contend that young, impressionable males and females are consuming highly damaging and hurtful discourse (Walters & Meyerowitz, 2024, n. p). This, in turn creates a high risk of ideological assimilation (Verkuyten, 2010); in this context, the internalisation of negative gendered stereotypes within consumers' relationships and subsequently long-term trajectories of the female role; potentially hindering the progress of feminism.

It is crucial to note that this essay is not a critical attack against sex-work, but rather highlighting the specific behaviours in which Blue adopts through her business model and the wider implications of such. Through neoliberalism, supportive of individualism and entrepreneurship, Blue capitalises upon these

ideals; her business model is allowed to be characterised as the mere exercising of individualism, taking personal responsibility for its success. Equally, Blue's business model capitalises upon post-feminist ideals by the enabling of its practices to be treated as 'reworking' traditional indicators of femininity into experiences of sexual agency and power' (Gill & Donaghue, 2013, p. 252). However, in examining the impact of Blue's business model, it is impossible to omit the catastrophic influence her content – Like Andrew Tate's – can potentially have on not only consumers, but more concerningly, the overall progress of feminism. It is not to say that neoliberalism and post-feminism are entirely to blame, but it is undeniable that a mix of their values, in a consumer society, allows for Blue's business model to manipulate them as such. Blue's means of discourse around the role of the female may be contentious as it contradicts much of the feminist theory and raises issues of consent, as critics discuss the concerns around the double standards: 'If Bonnie Blue were a man, people would still be outraged about a 25-year-old being with 18-year-old girls and using horrific terminology' (James, 2024, n. p). Considering accusations of exploitation and reinforcement of misogynistic ideology, is Blue's business model truly able to be reduced to an exercise of self-empowerment and individualism when it is likely at the expense of her consumers and, moreover, broader feminism?

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