

The Industrial Revolution Impact on Families as Seen in *Hard Times*

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This paper investigates how the Industrial Revolution affected the life of the British society's families in the *Hard Times* novel. Throughout this discussion, the researchers will examine the main dimensions that had its negative influence on changing the situations of the families and the internal relationships among the families' members till everything was muddled and hard as this novel is titled. In *Hard Times*, Charles Dickens represents four families of different social framework, Gradgrind's family, Stephen's family, Bounderby's family, and the circus performers' family. When the researcher explores each one of those families, she finds that the industrial revolution's impact is really tough, since those families keep suffering throughout the novel due to its cruelty. This revolution is powerful enough to make the relationship among parents and their children, and among husbands and wives cold, uncomfortable, and lacking the usual warm familiar atmosphere.

More importantly, money is the clashing point of the industrial revolution; money speaks in this novel more than anything else. Bryce Lyon states "tradition was the proper teacher of the social wisdom, pure reason no more than a false guide". However, the rise of the term capitalism and the laborers' union are more potent to affect the social familial life of the British society and turned it to move around power, money and nothing else. Traditions were totally neglected at that time, for they made no money, nor authority.

For more clarification, the family which has money has everything. It receives respect, appreciation from others. It also has the power to change and control people's minds and direct them the way it likes, or even the way that tears up the spiritual connection among the families' members as what happens in the revolutionary era.

Gradgrind' family is one of the victims of the industrial revolution. For instance, Mr. Gradgrind's obsession of being a man of reality, believing that nothing will bring advantages but facts which will lead to have a comfortable life turns his family's life to be hellish. He cares much about money, authority; he desires to be one of the parliament's members because he believes that reaching a good social position stems from having a good scientific background. "The desire/ability to attain to a higher standard of living, changed families' motivation for earning money." He totally neglects the imagination side which is according to him has nothing to do with reality and will bring nothing but failure and defeat. Mr. Gradgrind keeps telling Louisa to "never wonder". That is, his children are as machines that ought to learn, memorize, and analyze figures, numbers and facts. This strict rigid

relationship between the father and his children weakens the cooperative familiar link that should be between the two sides. One may say that the circumstances that obligate Mr. Gradgrind to be as such are responsible for destroying the two children, Tom and Louisa. Facts and numbers are not adequate to bring the children up; they never moralize.

The familiar atmosphere that Gradgrind created is suffocating. For example, Tom is unable to apply what he has been taught, so he turns to rob Bounderby's bank. Absence of morality is more powerful than facts, since what directs Gradgrind's child is his need for money to try things from which he is prevented. Gradgrind's interest to approach those who have money and control others, such as Bounderby affects negatively his relationship with his daughter, Louisa. He asks his daughter to marry Bounderby without being aware that he is getting rid of his principles. Dickens in this case emphasizes the way the industrial revolution guides those men of principles in a very contradictory manner to what they used to claim. Mr. Gradgrind says to Louisa "It's difficult to answer your question".

Furthermore, the readers of the novel can see that the role of Gradgrind's wife is totally marginalized. The industrial revolution is also present between a husband and his wife. "When capitalism arrived in 17th century England, it lowered the status of women". Ms. Gradgrind doesn't play any significant role in bringing up her children. She has no power to take decisions as if she is also programmed to behave or to speak in a certain way. "She can only parrot her husband's ideas to her children (Karen Oshima), admonishing them to "go and be something ological directly." She knows very well that things in her house should be changed, yet she is not allowed to do so because the industrial revolution freezes what is called the cooperation between husbands and wives in bringing up their children. The father is the only one who manages his house according to the way he likes". Marriage to a man consumed by one ideology rather than raising her has actually crippled her". However, at her death, it seems that she recognizes things that she wasn't aware of. For example, she tells Louisa that there was something missed in their bringing up. That is, "mother and daughter share a painful awareness about their lives. This scene shows that Mrs. Gradgrind does have an imagination, but like her daughter's, its growth has been stunted by the relentless weight of facts".

Gradgrind's philosophy which is really hateful has its unpleasant touch on the relationship between the brother and his sister. The poison of the industrial revolution that everything is related to money pollutes Tom's mind; though Tom knows that Louisa will never let him alone, he exploits the opportunity to convince her to marry Bounderby whom she has never liked only to get more money and a job with a good salary in Bounderby's bank.

In addition to Gradgrind's family, Stephen's family has got its share from the bad influence of the industrial revolution. This revolution revolves around the idea of having factories and many workers from wives, husbands and children. The working conditions are very tough and tiring, since the factories' owner as Bounderby asks them to work long hours with low wages. Stephen and the "most laborers worked 10 to 14 hours a day, six days a week, with no paid vacation or holidays". This continuous physical effort in the factories and the mental effort how they would survive and make

money put Stephen's wife under a severe pressure. She turns from being a lovable, young pretty wife to being alcoholic and unbearable due to "the factory system that had created a spiritual vacuum" as how Herbert Rowen describes it. Though Stephen has married her after a long love story, the toxic conditions of the revolt turns this story from being full of love to full of hatred, stress and melancholy. Stephen's family which represents the working class family "has little time or opportunity for recreation", since they have already spent a great energy in their work and come home with little energy so that they can't enjoy their free time.

Furthermore, getting a divorce is another social dimension that can be inferred from the novel. The matter of divorce is also affected by money. In other words, who has money and wants to get a divorce, he can pay lots of money or even live with his wife separately in the same house, for it is big enough to accommodate both of them. This is what Bounderby explains to Stephen when he tells him that "there is a law but it is not for you because it costs much of money". "He is unable to obtain a divorce and marry the woman he really loves". The industrial revolution is illogically brutal, as it doesn't distinguish between those families who are loyal and work seriously to make their society better, such as Stephen and his wife and those who produce things randomly just to gain money without any sincerity.

In Stephen's case the family that is built on love and passion is also destroyed because of money and the hard conditions of life which are highly related to the industrial revolution. The upsetting impact of this revolt doesn't stop only at destroying this family, but also it doesn't have mercy on Stephen himself, the loyal husband. Dickens wants to provoke a debate that those people who don't speak loudly and are always humiliated by their owners will be shot by people's tongues. People's tongues start shooting him because he has neither power, nor money to defend himself; especially, when he is accused for robbing the bank though there are no proofs. Their chaos makes him adopt ideas that "all is aw a muddle".

The revolution's brutality employs two characters in this novel to enter the families from different social origins and make these characters able to manipulate others. This revolution creates what is called the imbalance of power and social classes. Bounderby is one of the biggest fan of the doctrine of Utilitarianism which indicates that "the greatest happiness of the greatest number, Individualism and imagination are not highly valued in this philosophy". He represents the capitalist owner who has money and employs all other characters in the novel. "Family members must work in order to gain the resources necessary for survival in a complex social milieu" without caring for providing good comfortable working conditions.

One may say that Bounderby infringes the limitations of any family by employing children in his factories and by asking for Louisa's hand who is too much young for him. He comprehends very well her father's desire to be one of the parliament's members, one of those who have power and authority, and then Bounderby exploits his desire to marry his daughter. Bounderby does never appreciate the familiar life because he knows that Louisa has never loved him, yet she is a good example for being

prestigious and having a good appearance in front of others. Bounderby's concern about money, power, and factories leads him to be blind, since he is unable to meet his wife's needs, nor emotions. He neglects Louisa and keeps boasting that she is a good source for much historical and political information.

The researcher would like to say that the industrial revolution doesn't have its own unlikable impact only on the middle class family, but also on the high class one. It solidifies the importance of having warm emotions between husbands and wives and turns this relationship to be built upon prestige and money. After examining his role in the novel, the reader may say that Bounderby who represents the upper class family does never care if any one of those low class families lose their job. For instance, when Stephen loses his job in Bounderby's mills and when "he felt that he was socially boycotted by his fellow workers, Dickens realized that he had no chance of getting another job". (Humphry House)

Bounderby and James Harthouse are two sides of the same coin. Harthouse is another face of aristocracy who comes from a high rich family and seeks to play with Louisa's heart to enjoy his sojourn in Coketown. Harthouse is the preferable outcome of the industrial revolution who invades Gradgrind's family, trying to manipulate and offer some temptations for them to say how happy he is by having money and power though he doesn't have nor traditions, nor education. He doesn't respect the family's regulations. He keeps asking Tom personal questions about his sister, Louisa, in order to approach her.

Though the industrial revolution has bad impact on some families, it is not strong enough to affect the circus performers' families. Throughout the novel, readers can notice that these performers' families care much about each other, help and love each other. This revolt is unable to change their emotions towards each other. Neither money, nor power means anything to them. "Their diversity and deviance are strongly emphasized, as is their challenge to the authority of Gradgrind and Bounderby" (Steven Connor).

These simple poor families understand the main purposes of this revolution. They know it aims to destroy their relationships and wants to eradicate the unity of the family which is the origin of any success or happiness. They keep being one hand from the very beginning of the novel till the end. The rigid strangling atmosphere that is created by the revolution and affects other families has nothing to do with them. Love, imagination, and passion are they key elements for their simplicity which leads to happiness. Many children of these families leave their schools in order to assure their substances for living. This indicates the rise of apprenticeship such as Childers who left school to work in the circus to earn money, "I was apprenticed when I was seven years old". The best example of these families who encounter the influence of the industrial revolution is Sissy or Cissila Jupe who was brought up in an environment which is full of imagination, fancy and away from figures and numbers. Sissy is the only positive successful character in *Hard Times* for being able to enter Mr. Gradgrind's family and make real radical changes among its members. She has the revolutionary spirit that is more powerful than the industrial revolution itself. It is true that she accepts to live in Mr. Gradgrind's house, yet she does

never give up; she doesn't succumb to Mr. Gradgrind's philosophy, since she has her own principles and beliefs.

In this case, Dickens indicates that focusing on the two sides, the heart side and the mind one will lead to have a balanced life. Gradgrind's family ignores the heart wisdom. As a result, they lack happiness, experience and passions. However, Jupe's family is able to join the both wisdoms that enable them to be happy and reflect happiness on others. Throughout examining the novel, the researcher finds that Sissy has a potential ability to turn the melancholic atmosphere of Mr. Gradgrind's family into a happy fresh one. The outcome of her changes is the little daughter of Mr. Gradgrind, Jane. This girl has a shining face and a fresh spirit because she is brought up on Sissy's hands. Sissy's strength enables her to stand against Harthouse who is the worst representative of the industrial revolution.

His money and power don't make any sense to Sissy. She is powerful enough to address him in a very confident way and ask him to leave the town because he has nothing to do with Gradgrind's family. His impoliteness, callousness, and indifference shouldn't exist in this town as if she wants to convey him a message that these families love each other and care about each other and he has no place among them. These working class families, who are affected negatively by the industrial revolution, tend to organize a union to protect their rights. This step has been taken when these families recognize that capitalism controls also the government, and the economic situation is only between one millionaire's hands and other people are beggars. "Money is a weapon of immense power". The familiar situation which is highly connected with the economical situation becomes unbearable to the working class families. Bounderby feels that he is threatened by those workers, since they are unionized now and they have the same purpose which is to have better working conditions. Bounderby says to Harthouse "show me the dissatisfied hand, I'll show you a man that is fit for everything bad". Though these families work hard in Bounderby's mills, they receive inhuman treatment from him, calling them "hands" as if they are devoid from emotions or feelings or any human characteristics.

One may say that although the impact of the industrial revolution is too sharp on the working class family, it makes them more powerful to speak up, to refuse and to say "we are here, we are humans and we need our rights". Some families believe that the union's organizer "Slackbridge" doesn't care about developing the workers' conditions as much as caring about implanting tension between the employer, Bounderby, and his employees. For instance, "Stephen's refusal to join the union is not motivated and therefore puts him into a weak, contradictory position in relation to his fellow-workers".

No one denies that the impact of the industrial revolution on families isn't cruel, yet the researcher finds that the human instinct is stronger than its negative consequences. At the very beginning of the novel, readers are exposed to the callous unkind father who cares about nothing but figures and numbers. Moreover, readers can see there is a deep gap between the middle class family and the working class family. However, things turn to take another direction at the end of the novel ;especially, when the readers see how Louisa talks to her father, blaming him for anything bad she or her brother are exposed to because of his un- useful education that does never help them but will keep them

“detached from others”. At this moment, her father understands that he has a wrongheaded approach which puts his children in troubles. The researcher means by the human instinct is that Mr. Gradgrind finally puts everything away and realized that there is nothing more important than his family and as a result, he goes directly to help Tom who is accused for robbing Bounderby’s bank.

At this point, the industrial revolution loses its power on the normal father’s duty towards his children. Mr. Gradgrind knows that his role as a father to protect his children is the only thing that will make his children love and trust him. Besides, when the matter is related to save a human life, all social differences disappear. The best example can be inferred from Sleary who hides Tom until he assures that Tom will travel abroad away from Bounderby’s danger. In this regard, all Bounderby’s plans and his fans’ of the industrial revolution to destroy the unity of the family go under the drain. Gradgrind’s family can’t survive without the aid of the circus performers’. Both of them complete each other. The end of the novel totally goes against the industrial revolution’s purposes to put a wide deep gap between the families from different social classes. “Imagination enables people to have empathy towards others and also provides a means of relief from the harsh realities of everyday life”.

Sowing, Reaping, and Garnering are the titles of the three books of *Hard Times*. These titles reflect the main idea of the families’ living ways that are mentioned in this novel. Readers may understand that they reap whatever they sow. Whatever they put here, they reap it there and garner what is left. In other words, Mr. Jupe sows imagination, freedom in his daughter’s soul, and the result is the happiest character in the novel. Gradgrind sows facts, figures, and numbers in his children’s minds, and he reaps unhappy children. However, the industrial revolution itself sows certain poisonous ideas about money, power and capitalism, but the outcome at the end is a wonderful cooperation between families of different social classes. It is a matter of humanity not money.

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