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# Drama, Low Wages, Fugitives, and Eviction: A Qualitative Analysis of the American Underclass as Presented in Books and Trash TV

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DRAMA, LOW WAGES, FUGITIVES, AND EVICTION: A  
QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE AMERICAN UNDERCLASS  
AS PRESENTED IN BOOKS AND TRASH TV

by

Derrick Johns Jr.

A Thesis Submitted in  
Partial Fulfillment of the  
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Master of Arts

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at

The University of Wisconsin Milwaukee

August 2018

ABSTRACT

DRAMA, LOW WAGES, FUGITIVES, AND EVICTION: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF  
THE AMERICAN UNDERCLASS AS PRESENTED IN BOOKS AND TRASH TV

by

Derrick Johns Jr.

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2018  
Under the Supervision of Professor David Pritchard

*Maury* is a trash-talk television show that has presented American viewers with depictions of deceit, denials of paternity and portrayals of poverty since 1991. This thesis aims to qualitatively analyze *Maury*'s trashy televised depictions of the American underclass, and understand the differences between depictions of the American underclass based on immersive investigation and the way that *Maury* depicts the American underclass on a daytime trash-televised format.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

*Maury* is a trash-talk television show that has presented American viewers with depictions of deceit, denials of paternity and portrayals of poverty since 1991. On *Maury* guests have their partners take tests to identify infidelity and to prove paternity. Tears flow and teens go on tirades about committing crimes and having sex for fast food. Parents bring their prostituting teens to get scared straight by prisoners and security personnel. On *Maury* mothers who misidentify their children's fathers run around the set hysterically as falsely accused fathers jump for joy. Sexy decoys set up unsuspecting men as cheaters. Screaming matches unfold, and secrets are revealed.

These situations are dramatic, wild, and wacky but the behaviors on this show should be expected by its viewers. After all, *Maury* is a part of a long tradition of television shows that scholars, politicians, and pundits have all identified as “tabloid” or “trash television.”<sup>1</sup> Although scholars have studied the viewership and responses to trash television shows, few have examined the behaviors of the guests on them.

The guests on *Maury* are disproportionately poor Americans. The program never explicitly states that its goal is to reveal how poor Americans live their lives, but the implication is clear: the behaviors that are the focus of the program document the dysfunctional lives of the American underclass.

Whereas “poor” is a term that describes people who simply don't have enough money, the underclass is a controversial term that describes people who are both poor and deviant.<sup>2</sup> People who are members of the underclass can't afford the standard fixtures of life, and display

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<sup>1</sup> Teresa Kellner, “Trash TV,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 26, no. 4 (1993): 195

<sup>2</sup> Erol R Ricketts and Isabel V. Sawhill, “Defining and Measuring the Underclass,” *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 7, no. 2 (1988): 316-25.

various levels of social and behavioral dysfunction. These dysfunctional behaviors include criminality, drug dependence, unwillingness to work, broken family dynamics and a host of other features that can be stereotypically identified as anti-social. The wild guests and behaviors on *Maury* present its viewers with depictions of the American underclass in each episode.

However, *Maury* is not the only media depiction of the American underclass. Barbara Ehrenreich journalistically studied the American underclass by going undercover as an unskilled worker. Alice Goffman studied the American underclass by practicing participatory sociology and joining fugitives on the run. Matthew Desmond studied the American underclass by moving into poor neighborhoods and studying the lives of landlords and tenants as an observational sociologist. This thesis will compare these four different media depictions of the American underclass.

What is the difference between depictions of the American underclass based on immersive investigation and the way that *Maury* depicts the American underclass on a daytime trash-televised format? For the purposes of this research I want to answer this question and more. To begin to answer this question, I must first understand *Maury* and trash television.

## Chapter 2: Background

My research question is:

- What is the difference between the way the American underclass is depicted on *Maury* and the way the American underclass is depicted in immersive investigations?

### Discussion of the four creators

According to a biography on his website, Maury Povich began his career as a reporter in Washington, D.C.<sup>3</sup> Povich appeared on talk and sports shows on a TV station owned and operated by the Metromedia group. During the 1960s and 1970s Povich hosted a two-hour live news talk show, called *Panorama*. On *Panorama* Povich discussed major events like the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Vietnam War. After 15 years, Povich left *Panorama* and Washington, D.C. to work at different stations. For the next seven years Povich was a news anchor at ABC, CBS and NBC stations in cities from Philadelphia to Los Angeles. According to the biography on his website, Povich returned to *Panorama* in D.C., in 1983. After purchasing the Metromedia group in 1985, and turning it into Fox Television, Rupert Murdoch invited Povich to host a show in New York. The show was called *A Current Affair*, and it was launched in 1986. In September of 1991, Povich left *A Current Affair* to host *The Maury Povich Show*. *The Maury Povich Show* was nationally syndicated talk show distributed by Paramount Domestic Television in partnership with Povich's MoPo Productions. By 1998 *The Maury*

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<sup>3</sup> "Maury Povich," Maury's Team, accessed April 9, 2018. <http://www.mauryshow.com/team/maury-povich>

*Povich Show* was reorganized, and produced by NBCUniversal. Ever since the reorganization in 1998, the show has just been called *Maury*.

*Maury* provides a setting in which guests can confront or confess to the people they are involved with. Some guests come to find out if they have been cheated on, while others come to admit they have been cheating. Some guests confront their out-of-control teens, while other guests behave as out-of-control teens.

According to *Maury*'s website, *Maury* is the number one talk show among women, adults, and men ages 18-34-years-old. *Maury* presents its viewers with 42-minute episodes, Monday through Friday. Each episode features at least three different segments, and each segment features at least one issue that needs resolution.

To become a guest on *Maury* viewers must apply to be on the show. Viewers must call or email in response to questions that apply to their situation. The questions appear before commercial breaks and on the show's website. The questions range from: "is your husband a serial cheater?" and "do you work a sexy job?" to "do you have a ratchet (uncouth) person trying to interfere with your relationship?" and "is your teen son obsessed with porn and leading a destructive lifestyle?" These questions shape a segment's theme or an episode's topic. If your husband is a serial cheater you would come on with your husband, and be featured in a sequence with other people who have that problem.

The producers of *Maury* use a specific structure to tell dramatic stories. Through my observations this structure features a complaint, an argument, the results, and the aftermath.

The Complaint: Guests who seek answers and confrontation provide background information, suspicions, and complaints via pre-recorded video messages. The pre-recorded messages are made with the help of *Maury*'s producers, and are played as exposition before the

confrontation happens. Messages often feature tales of happiness and content that wilt into discontent and drama narratively and visually. Color images go to black and white to signal dysfunction as guests display various levels of anger, sadness, and disbelief. At the end of the video messages, the guests ask Maury for help and announce resolutions they will make once the truth is revealed. Some guests resolve to end their relationships if they learn that their partners have been unfaithful.

When the guests come out the audience cheers or jeers, depending on whether they perceive the guest to be good or bad. In my observations, the person doing the confronting is usually a woman and considered good, while the person being confronted is usually a man, and is booed as bad. Typically, the guest who is confronting will come out first and retell her story to Maury. Audience members react to the guest's stories with a collection of different facial expressions and a varied soundtrack of oohs, awws, applause, and everything in between. In the same time that the guest is speaking and the audience is reacting, the reactions of the confronted guest who's backstage are played on a big screen for everyone to see. Close ups of the confronted guest depict expressions of frustration, disbelief, and denial as he responds to the allegations with talkback, yelling, and profanity.

The Argument: After the confronting guest's story is over, the confronted guest comes from backstage and is booed. The confronted guest tells his side of the story as the argument unfolds with his partner. During this entire time Maury listens and mediates the dispute. Maury asks questions to clarify the issue behind the confrontation. After the argument reaches its height Maury promises that a lie detector or DNA test will reveal the truth of the matter.

The Results: A crew member delivers a manila envelope holding the test results to Maury, the same way a jury's verdict is delivered to a judge. After a few moments of suspense

and restating the questions at hand, Maury reveals whether the confronted guest told a lie or the truth, or whether he is the father of the woman's child.

The Aftermath: Depending on the results, the guests' reactions to the tests are a chaotic, mixed bag of performance. If the confronting guest is happy with the results she might gloat and point in the face of the confronted guest. If the confronting guest is sad, she might run backstage and fall to the floor. If the confronted guest is proven innocent he may gloat, dance, and celebrate. And if the confronted guest is guilty he might apologize, ask for forgiveness, or continue to deny guilt. While Maury Povich's work reflects the story of a veteran journalist's transition from traditional news to trash-talk television, Barbara Ehrenreich's work signifies a different path.

Ehrenreich is an American journalist, activist, and New York Times best-selling author, who has dedicated her life's work to identifying, investigating, fighting inequality in America.<sup>4</sup> According to a biography I found on her website Ehrenreich was born in 1941 to a coal miner's family in Butte, Montana. After Ehrenreich's father earned a degree at the Butte School of Mines, the job opportunities he received moved Ehrenreich's family from city to city, and from lower to middle class. At Reed College in Portland, Oregon, Ehrenreich studied chemistry and physics. In graduate school at Rockefeller University in New York, New York, Ehrenreich studied theoretical physics and cell biology. In 1970, as Ehrenreich was pregnant with her first child a doctor induced her labor because it was late at night and the doctor wanted to go home.

This medical mistreatment inspired a socio-political awakening within Ehrenreich to advocate for better health care for women through the women's health movement. After co-

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<sup>4</sup> Barbara Ehrenreich, "About Barbara," Barbara Ehrenreich, accessed April 6, 2018. <http://barbaraehrenreich.com/barbara-ehrenreich-bio/>.

authoring a series of pamphlets about women's health and the history of women healers, Ehrenreich worked as a teacher at State University of New York at Old Westbury but quit her job to become a full-time writer. Ehrenreich initially struggled to make ends meet, but gained popularity and exposure through the articles she wrote about feminism and healthcare disparities. Ehrenreich's big break came from a cover story she wrote for *Ms.* magazine that dispelled the myth that feminism causes heart disease. Ehrenreich went on to write for *Mother Jones* and various mainstream publications like the *New York Times*. Over the years, Ehrenreich has written books that tackle different layers of inequality in America. Yet of all the books Ehrenreich has written, *Nickel and Dimed* has been her most popular.<sup>5</sup>

After eating a \$30 lunch at a restaurant in 1998, Ehrenreich wondered how workers live off the hourly wages of low-paying jobs in America. To answer this question, Ehrenreich traded in her identity as a scientist, educator, and writer to pose as a divorced homemaker without any professional skills. In *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By In America* Ehrenreich goes undercover as a server in Florida, a maid in Maine, and a clerk in Minnesota to see what it was really like to be an unskilled worker in America.

From the spring of 1998 to the summer of 2000, Ehrenreich followed three rules on her undercover journey that dictated how she worked and lived. First, she couldn't fall back on the skills and educational experience of her real life; second, she had to take the highest paying job offered to her; and third, she had to accept the cheapest living standards that were acceptable, safe and private to her. In the process of her experiment Ehrenreich bent and broke most of these rules in the different positions and places she worked. Ehrenreich chose to work in Key West Florida because that's where she lived at the time. Ehrenreich chose to work in Maine, because it

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<sup>5</sup> Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By In America* (New York: Picador, 2011).

was predominately white and Ehrenreich wanted to see how being white in a white area affected employment, and Ehrenreich chose Minnesota because she thought it was a nice, liberal Midwestern state. Through the book-length journalism, Ehrenreich discovers an American underclass shaped by low wages, hard labor, tough decisions, and poverty.

While Ehrenreich posed undercover as a member of the American underclass, Alice Goffman decided to follow the lives of members of the American underclass as a participating sociologist.

As of 2018, Alice Goffman was an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The daughter of renowned sociologist Irving Goffman, Alice followed in her father's footsteps by studying sociology in college. As a sophomore at the University of Pennsylvania, Alice Goffman tutored a black high school student named Aisha. Through her interactions with Aisha, Goffman befriended Aisha's family and met Reggie, Mike and Chuck.

Through various interactions with Reggie, Mike, and Chuck, Goffman learned about their criminal records and run-ins with the law in the Philadelphia streets. Inspired by the stories they told her about crime, drugs, and the ghetto, Goffman made the lives of Reggie, Mike, and Chuck the topic of her senior thesis, the topic of her dissertation as a Ph.D. candidate at Princeton University, and the topic of her book *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*.<sup>6</sup>

From 2002 to 2008 Goffman was let into the lives of various people she encountered and befriended. As both a fly on the wall and a participating sociologist, Goffman followed the lives of Reggie, Mike, and Chuck. She immersed herself into their lives as fugitives on the run. Goffman lived with Mike and Chuck as a roommate. In her research Goffman experienced and recalled various instances of criminality and conflict. I will discuss the results, controversy and

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<sup>6</sup> Alice Goffman, *On The Run: Fugitive Life in an American City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

implications of her work later in this thesis. Through her special blend of ethnography and participatory sociology Goffman discovered an American underclass shaped by drugs, violence, and over-policing.

While Goffman's work presented a complex and controversial approach to sociology, Matthew Desmond's observational examination of eviction in Milwaukee breaks down what it's like to live as a member of the American underclass.

As of 2018, Matthew Desmond was a professor in the department of sociology at Princeton University, a contributing writer for the *New York Times Magazine*, and a MacArthur "Genius."<sup>7</sup> When he was a Ph.D. student at the University of Wisconsin Madison, Desmond became interested in examining poverty. Wanting to reach beyond the explanations that merely discussed poverty in terms of social-political structures and personal responsibility, Desmond looked to examine the relationships that produce and perpetuate poverty in America.<sup>8</sup> In *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* Desmond followed the lives of tenants and their families as they struggled to navigate eviction in an American city. From May 2008 to December 2009, Desmond shadowed landlords, tenants and their families in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Desmond lived in the same neighborhoods as his subjects and recorded their experiences in rich detail. Unlike Goffman, who actively participated in the lives of her subjects, Desmond shadowed and interviewed his subjects in a way that presented observational distance and a clear and complicated set of relationships involved with housing and the American underclass. Desmond's observational sociology revealed a world in which the American underclass is subject to predatory renting, racial segregation, and the constant threat of getting evicted.

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<sup>7</sup> "Matthew Desmond," Princeton University, accessed April 10, 2018. <https://sociology.princeton.edu/people/matthew-desmond>.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew Desmond, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* (New York: Crown, 2016).

While Desmond's observational sociology, Goffman's participant sociology, and Ehrenreich's book-length journalism appear more academic in their approaches to understanding the American underclass, *Maury* is a little different. While there is not a significant amount of research that is specifically about *Maury*, a considerable amount of work examines *Maury's* genre. Trash talk television has a lineage of scholarship that identifies its goals, hierarchies, and politics.

In "Fearing The Freak: How Talk TV Articulates Women and Class" Elizabeth Birmingham discusses how trash-talk television articulates ideas of gender and class through the production and management of the carnivalesque.<sup>9</sup> Although Birmingham wasn't writing specifically about *Maury*, her analysis of female-oriented talk shows creates a useful context for understanding *Maury*. When trash-talk television shows present figures that viewers can either identify with or reject, the viewers experience a rollercoaster of anxiety. Trash-talk television shows operate like carnivals. The guests are the spectacles. As viewers tune into trash talk television shows they are warned with disclaimers about viewer discretion and adult content. The warnings produce anxiety and excitement within the viewers, as they prepare to view the shows. Trash-talk television topics focus on guests who are either physically and/or behaviorally freaks. Birmingham notices that many trash talk shows disproportionately focus on women and their bodies. Birmingham believes that by focusing on women's behaviors and bodies, trash-talk shows include their primary viewing audience: women. By identifying freaks and spectacles talk shows police the borders of proper womanhood and by extension, proper behavior for everyone. With topics like "You're Too Fat to Wear That," "Mom I Don't Want to be Fat Like You," and

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<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth Birmingham, "Fearing The Freak: How Talk TV Articulates Women and Class," *Journal of Popular Film & Television* 28, no. 3 (2000): 133.

“You’re Too Fat for the Beach” Birmingham believes trash-talk television shows present and problematize fat women’s bodies as freakish. Just like the fat ladies of various carnivals and circuses, fat female guests on trash-talk television shows are made into spectacles by the hosts, experts and audiences. Viewers at home recognize the differences between the fat female guests and everyone else. Being fat is bad, and being skinny is good.

*Maury* has historically offered wretched, carnivalesque, depictions of fat women. In recurring segments like: “My Overweight Mom Dresses Too Sexy!” different guests have complained over the years to Maury about their mother’s revealing clothes. In response to these complaints, the mothers defiantly jiggle around the stage, and drop it like it’s hot (dance move), in bras and booty-shorts.<sup>10</sup> Skinny family members are often seated next to the fat female guest to accentuate the physical difference between the two. Birmingham thinks this production technique produces a great deal of anxiety in the viewers. This anxiety is then relieved and managed through a process of identification between the viewers, the hosts, and audience. The host and experts of the show are often dressed in a suit or other professional attire. The attire signifies normalcy and acceptable middle-class appearance to the viewers. In “Stop My Sister From Overfeeding Her 120 LB. 4 Tear Old!” (an old *Maury* segment that isn’t on Maury’s official YouTube page) a horde of shirtless, morbidly obese babies, waddles about the stage and mumbles as “experts” Dr. Kris Van Almen and Heidi Schumacher literally look down on them, and discuss childhood obesity.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> snobbishgas10CoqR, “Maury: My Overweight Mom Dresses TOO SEXY!!! (2007) - Part 1 fresh funny films babes modelling,” YouTube, Published on Mar 27, 2012, Accessed April 12, 2018 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1fUbZMJnc5I>.

<sup>11</sup> eaglejo, “All the fat babies,” YouTube, Published on April 16, 2006, Accessed April 12, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pRLkcmkSUG4>.

Birmingham notes that the contrast between the host's proper English and guest's broken English creates a deeper class divide. Emphasis is often put on the reactions of the audience, through zoom-ins of the camera. This filming technique highlights the audience's emotional responses to the guests, ranging from amusement to disgust. Viewers at home identify with the hosts and the audience because they appear normal on television, while rejecting the guests as freaks and lower-class. Birmingham's work helps us better understand how trash-talk television uses representations to produce social standings.

Jason Mittell expands on the ideas in Birmingham's work by reflecting upon the cultural hierarchies of tabloid television forms. In *Television Talk Shows and Cultural Hierarchies*, Mittell maps out the audiences of talk television shows and tabloid television through Pierre Bourdieu's theory of taste.<sup>12</sup> Bourdieu's theory of taste is that cultural hierarchies are expressed through discourse and taste. Everything that people like and engage with is distinguished by class, and says something about their class.<sup>13</sup> Mittell unpacks how trash-talk shows classify the audience. When surveyed about talk shows, Mittell's respondents established a difference between desirable and undesirable trash talk shows. Respondents who watched *Live with Regis and Kathie Lee* looked down upon, and weren't likely to watch, the trash-talk television that is *The Jerry Springer Show*. Respondents referred to *The Jerry Springer Show* as trash, and described its guests as low class and white trash. While it would be easy to argue that people don't like trash-talk television because the depictions of people feature wild and wacky behaviors, things grow more complicated with Julie Engle Manga's research.

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<sup>12</sup> Jason Mittell, "Television Talk Shows and Cultural Hierarchies," *Journal of Popular Film & Television* 31, no. 1 (2003): 36.

<sup>13</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984).

In *Talking Trash: The Cultural Politics of Daytime TV Talk Shows*, Manga explored how viewers make sense of trash-talk television shows.<sup>14</sup> Seeking to understand the business, consumption, lure, and discourse of trash-talk shows, Manga interviews the audience that primarily watches them.

Manga discovered that trash talk television shows are low-cost, daytime programming primarily watched by women between the ages of 18 and 34. Advertisers vie for the attention of this female demographic. The women who watch trash-talk television shows relate to them in different ways based on how convenient the shows are to watch. The premise is that if you are a stay at home mom, or someone who has breaks to watch TV during the day, you can watch trash talk shows. This relationship explains how viewers may value, dismiss, or compare themselves to trash talk shows through the lens of productivity. Some women find these shows legitimate, while others literally don't have the time of day to engage with them. Manga also highlights how some women use these trash talk shows to blow off steam.

Now that I have discussed *Maury*, Barbara Ehrenreich's *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By In America*, Alice Goffman's *On The Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*, Matthew Desmond's *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* and the background of trash television. I am going to explore how I analyze the way these four different creations depict the American underclass.

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<sup>14</sup> Julie Engel Manga, *Talking Trash: The Cultural Politics of Daytime TV Talk Shows* (New York: New York University Press, 2003).

### **Chapter 3: Methods**

To begin my analysis of the different ways *Maury*, Ehrenreich's *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By In America*, Goffman's *On The Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*, and Desmond's *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* depict the American underclass, I first had to watch and read the texts. I started by reading Alice Goffman's *On The Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*, I continued with Matthew Desmond's *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, and I finished with Barbara Ehrenreich's *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By In America*. After reading Goffman and Desmond's books, I believed that Ehrenreich's would balance the racial make-up of the subjects by providing more depictions of white members of the American underclass, in contrast to Goffman's exclusively black/ghetto depictions. For the purposes of this research and its organization, I have and will continue to discuss the three books in the order that they were published. I think it's important to discuss the books in the order they were published because they represent different moments in time, and different depictions of the American underclass. This means I will discuss Ehrenreich first, Goffman second, and Desmond last. To examine and organize the themes of these books I summarized each, in multiple paragraphs, to identify the larger themes that appeared in each book.

#### **Selection Criteria**

To discuss how the American underclass is framed on *Maury*, I examined 30 *Maury* segments. A segment comprises an individual dispute that features the story of a guest who is complaining, and a guest who is being complained about. The segments on *Maury* vary in topic, vary in length and vary in terms of which guests are featured. As noted earlier, topics in the segments range from "is your husband a serial cheater?" and "do you work a sexy job?" to "do you have a ratchet (uncouth) person trying to interfere with your relationship?" and "is your teen

son obsessed with porn and leading a destructive lifestyle?” The guests who are featured in the segments typically have never been on the show before. If the guests have been on the show before Maury explicitly says so. For the scope of this project, the most reasonable and available place to find segments of *Maury* was on the internet, on *Maury’s* official YouTube page (TheMauryShowOfficial). *Maury’s* YouTube page features a collection of videos and segments of *Maury*. I chose *Maury’s* page because the content on that page is specifically what the show wants viewers on YouTube to see. Unlike the random videos of *Maury* segments scattered across YouTube and the internet, *Maury’s* page offers an organized collection of videos the show’s team selected to represent the scope of *Maury’s* work. While the segments on *Maury’s* YouTube page have been edited down to encapsulate the conflict within four minutes, the arguments and drama in each present a clear and complete narrative. These segments are no shorter than four minutes long.

I selected 30 segments and watched for the dominant topics of the segments. I chose the number 30 because at the time of this writing, only 30 clips met my four-minute criteria.

*Maury’s* YouTube page offers different categories that describe the dominant themes of the videos. While some of those themes were helpful in organizing the segments from *Maury*, the descriptive titles speak most clearly to the subject of the segment’s conflicts.

After collecting 30 segments I went back to the books so I could quantitatively and qualitatively measure them. To drill down on the larger themes in the books, I repeatedly reread and scanned the books for specific examples of how the authors described what it’s like to be part of the American underclass. I identified eight categories that speak to how the American underclass is depicted in these four works. The categories are as follows:

- **Infidelity:** Infidelity reflects instances in which the subjects cheat on their partners or are accused of being cheaters. These instances might be dramatic and confrontational, or they might be inferred and casually discussed.
- **Denying Paternity:** Denying paternity reflects instances in which men deny that they are the fathers of their partners children.
- **Troubles with the Law:** Troubles with the law reflects instances in which the subjects commit crimes, are arrested, have warrants, and serve time.
- **Housing Issues:** Housing issues reflects instances in which the subjects struggle to have affordable, safe, and secure housing. Housing issues could include everything from instances in which the subjects have a hard time paying their rent to instances in which the subjects don't feel safe in their homes or neighborhoods.
- **Employment Issues:** Employment issues reflects instances in which the subjects mention problems with securing and maintaining employment. These issues include everything from troubles finding work to troubles the subjects mention they have while at the workplace.
- **Substance Abuse:** Substance abuse reflects instances in which the subjects use illegal drugs, or abuse alcohol or controlled substances.
- **Personal Security:** Personal security reflects moments in which the subjects express feeling physically unsafe.
- **Race:** Race reflects instances in which the subjects identify race as a factor that influences their condition and the decisions they make.

The categories I identified are exhaustive. They represent the overall themes of the works I analyzed, while also offering enough broadness for me to trace the categories across the different works.

To trace the categories across the different works, I developed a chart. Each time that I encountered an instance of infidelity, troubles with the law, etc. in my reading and viewership, I recorded and counted it.

Although these categories are exhaustive, they are not mutually exclusive. Denials of paternity are inherently instances of infidelity because when a man denies being the father of his partner's child, he is also claiming that his partner cheated on him with another man, and got pregnant. While denials of paternity are instances of infidelity, I chose to distinguish the two categories because each offers unique features. On *Maury* denials of paternity are distinguished by discussion of a child, a comparison of the child's features to the alleged father, and DNA testing. Instances of infidelity on *Maury* are distinguished by evidence of cheating, and lie detector tests.

In analyzing the segments of *Maury* I examined the titles, the dialogue, the conflicts and everything in between. Instead of simply labeling each segment under the category it most dominantly featured, I looked and listened for instances of each of eight categories. I analyzed the segments in this way because I wanted my results to reflect the nuance and complexity of the instances I examined. With these categories

## Chapter 4: Results

The results of my analysis present clear differences and similarities between the way the American underclass is depicted in the four works.

Table 1: Depictions of the American Underclass

<b>Shows:</b>	<b>Maury</b>	<b><i>Nickle and Dimed</i> by Barbara Ehrenreich</b>	<b><i>On the Run</i> by Alice Goffman</b>	<b><i>Evicted</i> by Matthew Desmond</b>
<b>Categories</b>				
Infidelity	30	0	5	2
Denying Paternity	18	0	1	1
Troubles with the law	0	0	7	1
Housing Issues	2	9	4	31
Employment Issues	0	16	5	6
Substance Abuse	1	3	4	7
Personal Security	0	0	7	5
Race	0	0	5	4

Number of segments: 30

### **Infidelity:**

*Maury*: Infidelity is the dominant feature of *Maury*. Of the 30 segments of *Maury* I watched and analyzed, all featured instances in which the subjects cheat on their partners or are accused of being cheaters. In every segment all the guests who initiated the confrontations were women and all the guests who were confronted were men.

All 30 segments followed the structure of complaint, argument, results, and aftermath that I mentioned earlier in this thesis. The segments that featured infidelity were distinguished by the details women mentioned to support their suspicions, the evidence that the show's producers

presented to prove men were cheating, and the selective instances in which women were explicitly accused of being unfaithful.

The women who accused their partners of cheating would often divulge dramatic details that identified their suspicions of infidelity. In “I found an open condom in his sock...He Is Cheating!” a woman named Iris suspected her boyfriend Deonte of cheating because she found over 100 pictures of naked women in Deonte’s phone, hickeys on Deonte’s neck, a picture of Deonte’s head on another woman’s butt, and (of course) the titular condom in Deonte’s sock.<sup>15</sup> When Maury asked about Iris’ searches, Iris explained that she found the condom in Deonte’s sock, after performing a body search on him. Iris asks and Maury allows her to go up and demonstrate how she made Deonte spread his legs during the search “like he’s under arrest.” Iris went on delightfully explain that she smelled Deonte’s private parts to identify if he’s cheating. Beyond the dramatic details women would divulge, *Maury*’s producers would present evidence to prove the men were cheating.

In “That Naked Girl On My phone...She Is Just an Old Friend!” 19-year-old Chianti claimed to know that her 35-year-old boyfriend Phillip was cheating on her because she found a picture of a naked woman lying in her bed on Phillip’s phone.<sup>16</sup> Chianti also mentioned that she found another woman’s “fancy underwear” and hair products in her home. To prove that Phillip is cheating Maury brought out Chianti’s sister, a private investigator, and the results of the lie detector test. Chianti’s sister confessed that Phillip told her that he was cheating on Chianti. The private investigator presented footage of Phillip kissing two sexy decoys in the green room. The

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<sup>15</sup> TheMauryShowOfficial, “I found an open condom in his sock...He's cheating!” YouTube, Published on March 1, 2018, Accessed April 12, 2018, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXUK\\_uVZSTo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXUK_uVZSTo).

<sup>16</sup> TheMauryShowOfficial, “That Naked Girl On My phone...She Is Just an Old Friend!” YouTube, Published on February 20, 2018, Accessed April 12, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N4QLGX0zImg>.

private investigator produced text messages that revealed that Phillip was flirting with other women. The test results revealed that Phillip had cheated on Chianti. The evidence was incontrovertible. In other segments, executive producer Paul Faulhaber presented photograph, video, and audio evidence to prove to women that their partners were cheating. Despite the disproportionate number of women who initiated the confrontations, allegations of infidelity were not exclusively made by women.

In contrast to every segment in which a man denied the paternity of his partner's child, 18 of the 30 segments featured allegations of infidelity made by men. Of those 18 segments, seven explicitly featured men who alleged their female partners were whores. These allegations also fall under the category of denying paternity. I will discuss these segments further in the appropriate section of my results and in the discussion section of this thesis.

Infidelity didn't play any mentioned or significant role in *Nickel and Dimed* by Barbara Ehrenreich.

In *On the Run* Goffman revealed that infidelity played a threatening and dangerous role in the daily lives of criminals and their partners. Aside from the small moment in which Goffman thought that Chuck's girlfriend suspected Goffman and Chuck had an affair, infidelity could lead to domestic violence and imprisonment to criminals and their partners. Because Alex enjoyed drinking and lap dances from other women, his girlfriend Donna threatened to call the police on him. Calling the police on Alex would get him arrested because he would be caught in violation of parole. Donna knew that. Donna was just one of other women who know that they can threaten to call the police to rein in the bad behavior of their criminal partners. Because Donna was upset, she took Alex's housekeys, slashed Alex's tires, and threw Alex's clothes out the window. In response to this violence Alex couldn't call the police or do anything because he's on

parole and couldn't afford any negative police interactions. After Marie bleached Mike's clothes, keyed Mike's car, threw hot grease at Mike, and chose to call the police on Mike for cheating on her with a woman named Chantelle, Mike called a woman to beat Marie up. Marie gets beaten up by the woman. Eventually Mike and Marie get back together.

While Desmond's observational sociology in *Evicted* focused on an American eviction crisis, infidelity emerged as an issue in Desmond's notes about his project. At different points two different men (Ned and Earl) accused their partners (Pam and Vanetta) of having affairs with Desmond. When Ned accused Pam of having an affair with Desmond, Ned and Pam got into an argument. Pam blew the accusations off and Ned eventually backed off the accusations. But Desmond recognized that he might have been too close to Pam, so Desmond decided to spend more time with Ned instead. After Earl confronted Desmond about Desmond's closeness to Vanetta, Desmond explained his work to Earl. Earl apologized, but Desmond felt deeply unsettled by Earl's history of domestic abuse charges. Sometime later Vanetta broke up with Earl, and someone shot up Vanetta's house. Everyone suspected Earl. Because Desmond lived in the same buildings as his subjects, and was granted such close access to their lives, it's easy to imagine how a boyfriend or potential suitor could find Desmond's presence problematic. The accounts of alleged infidelity that Desmond mentions and the suspicion Goffman references are reminders that a sociologist's proximity to their subjects is a tightrope that must be carefully walked. On one hand, close access to their subject's lives presents sociologists with insights that they might normally miss. On the other hand, if sociologists get too close to their subjects, they could cause their subjects personal problems.

### **Denying Paternity:**

*Maury*: Denying paternity is the second most prevalent theme of *Maury*. Of the 30 segments of *Maury* I watched and analyzed, 18 featured instances in which men denied being the fathers of their partner's children. In all 18 segments, the guests who initiated the confrontations were women and the guests who were confronted were men. Outside of the explicit claims and the DNA testing, denials of paternity were distinguished by the varied roles family members and friends played, the names the accusing women were called, and the outlandish excuses made by the accused men.

Whether on the side of the accusing woman or the denying man, the family members and friends of the guests played interesting and varied roles during the denials of paternity. In some segments family and friends came out with the guests on stage. In other segments family and friends stood up in the front row of the audience and injected themselves into the confrontations. Either way the results led to more dramatic and contentious exchanges.

Family members who came to support women during paternity denials voiced their frustrations with having to help parent the children that the alleged fathers don't. In "She's sleeping with the whole city!" Lataija and her mother Jodi claimed that a man named Osh got Lataija pregnant.<sup>17</sup> Because Osh denied being the father of the child, he didn't take care of it. Jodi stepped up to help Lataija raise the child. Jodi complained that she didn't feel like she had a chance to be a grandmother because she had to be the baby's father as well. Jodi told Osh that she is tired of doing his job. As Osh argued with Jodi and Lataija and accused Lataija of being a whore, Osh's girlfriend Abigail yelled from the audience to support him.

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<sup>17</sup> TheMauryShowOfficial, "She's sleeping with the whole city!" YouTube, Published on March 18, 2018, Accessed April 12, 2018, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zr\\_qIw9qBj4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zr_qIw9qBj4).

Family members and friends who came to support men during paternity disputes typically used their voices to echo the denials and call the mothers of the children whores. By calling the women whores the accused men and their families tried to cast doubt on the trustworthiness of the women and the paternity of the babies. Abigail called Lataija a “hoe,” a “bopper” (slang for whore), and said that Lataija had “slept with the whole city of Saint Paul and across the bridge.” Despite Osh’s and Abigail’s claims, DNA testing showed Osh was the father of Lataija’s baby.

DNA didn’t always determine which side of the paternity disputes the guest’s family would take. In some segments the mothers of the accused men came out to support the claims of the accusing women. The men still denied paternity in these segments, but having their mothers side with their partner added another layer of drama to the conflicts. In “Ashley and Andy Full Story” Eddie denied being the father of Ashley’s child, but his mother Jackie insisted that Eddie was the father.<sup>18</sup> Jackie came out on stage with Ashley and said that she didn’t raise her son to be a deadbeat dad. Jackie even pulled out a pink onesie to taunt Eddie about being the father of Ashley’s child. The test results eventually revealed that Eddie wasn’t the father of Ashley’s child. Ashley apologized to Jackie and Jackie apologized to Eddie. Such segments presented examples of family not merely siding with family.

Segments that featured denials of paternity often included men who made outlandish excuses as to why they couldn’t possibly be the fathers. In “Tabatha and Rodney: I’M BACK FOR A 3RD TIME... WILL I FIND MY BABY’S FATHER TODAY?” a man named Rodney denied paternity by saying that he was kicked in the testicles by a donkey when he was a child,

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<sup>18</sup> TheMauryShowOfficial, “Ashley and Andy Full Story” YouTube, Published on November 4, 2015, Accessed April 12, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6UJkcIfLQvI&list=PLbgX5IjtUzCYkIoMbqawkYIPze5JBmk1q>.

so he couldn't make children.<sup>19</sup> In "I COULD TELL BY THE ULTRASOUND PICTURE... THAT'S NOT MY BABY!" a man named Pierre stated that Lexis's baby wasn't his because the ultrasound of the fetus didn't look like him.<sup>20</sup> In "That baby looks like Michael Jackson" a man named Deangelo claimed that he was not the father of Dymond's baby because he and Dymond, didn't have enough sex to make a baby, and because the baby looked like Michael Jackson.<sup>21</sup> In all three of these cases, DNA testing proved that the men were the fathers. Unfortunately, the outlandishness extended to the moments after the DNA test results were read.

When Rodney found out he was the father of Tabitha's baby he dropped to his knees and held Tabitha by the waist in apologetic relief. While Rodney and Tabitha seemed elated, Tabitha demanded that Rodney kiss her foot to apologize. Rodney obliged. Pierre kissed Lexis' foot after he was identified as the father, and after he did a set of push-ups on the stage. Although Dymond was the first one to drop to the floor and did the hinge kick (dance) to celebrate Deangelo being declared the father of her baby, Deangelo dropped to one knee and proposed to marry Dymond. She said yes.

Denials of paternity were not present in Ehrenreich's book.

Although denials of paternity weren't the explicit focus of Goffman's book, some examples were interesting. In *On the Run*, Reggie (who is one of Goffman's main subjects and a

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<sup>19</sup> TheMauryShowOfficial, "Tabatha and Rodney: I'M BACK FOR A 3RD TIME... WILL I FIND MY BABY'S FATHER TODAY?," YouTube, Published on July 28, 2015, Accessed April 12, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S5fogOpeubY&list=PLbgX5IjtUzCYkIoMbqawkYIPze5JBmk1q&index=5>.

<sup>20</sup> TheMauryShowOfficial, "I COULD TELL BY THE ULTRASOUND PICTURE... THAT'S NOT MY BABY!," YouTube, Published on July 28, 2015, Accessed April 12, 2018, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u0Sctv\\_\\_GiM&index=3&list=PLbgX5IjtUzCYkIoMbqawkYIPze5JBmk1q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u0Sctv__GiM&index=3&list=PLbgX5IjtUzCYkIoMbqawkYIPze5JBmk1q).

<sup>21</sup> TheMauryShowOfficial, "That baby looks like Michael Jackson!," YouTube, Published on January 22, 2018, Accessed April 12, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iyp15WUwd5o>.

criminal on the run) denied impregnating a woman and refused to pay for her abortion.<sup>22</sup> One day after Reggie returned gunfire in a shootout, the bullets hit the house of the woman Reggie allegedly impregnated. The woman's family called the police and claimed that Reggie intentionally attacked the house. Reggie was arrested and had to appear in court. While Reggie denied targeting the woman and her family, he decided to apologize and admitted that he was the father of her child.

*Evicted* by Matthew Desmond: While *Evicted* focuses more on the eviction crisis Desmond mentioned a woman named Arleen who lived in poverty, on welfare, with multiple children from partners who walked out on her.

#### **Troubles with the Law:**

*Maury*: None of the segments that I watched or reviewed mentioned any instance in which there were troubles with the law.

*Nickel and Dimed* by Barbara Ehrenreich: In *Nickel and Dimed* Barbara Ehrenreich doesn't describe any notable instance in which she or anyone else had troubles with the law.

*On the Run* by Alice Goffman: In *On The Run* Goffman chronicles the lives of three black men who live in poverty. Mike, Chuck, and Reggie each experience the pressure of being the breadwinner for their families. At various times these men turned to robbery because the money from drug dealing doesn't come fast enough. With so many warrants, tickets, and fines from being apprehended by police, these men simply choose to run from the police to avoid any

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<sup>22</sup> Alice Goffman, *On The Run: Fugitive Life in an American City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 106.

further engagement with the law. So they become fugitives, and this is where the book gets its title.

These men lived under the threat and pressure of incarceration every day. Their community was a sort of wild-west that was completely colored by over-policing. These men can't go to the doctor or hospital for the birth of their children or emergency treatment for fear that they will be arrested upon providing identification.<sup>23</sup> They are forced to purchase medical equipment to perform emergency procedures. Goffman meets one man who pulled his aching tooth with a set of pliers, and later bought the antibiotics he needed from his nephew who works in a dentist's office.<sup>24</sup> Survival on the run from police depends on people who Goffman and her subjects identify as "clean." The term "clean" in this context of fugitive life speaks to people who do not have criminal records. Some fugitives rely on using the IDs and personal material of "clean" people to disassociate from their criminal histories and to get through various social situations without being arrested.<sup>25</sup> Other fugitives rely on clean people to rent apartments, own cars, or have cellphones.<sup>26</sup> For these services and silence, "clean" people and others often need to be paid by fugitives so that they do not tell the police about the fugitive's whereabouts. Should the "clean" people choose to remain silent, fugitives still worry about other fugitives. Some fugitives turn themselves in, and work with police as informants to receive deals for lesser charges and punishment.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Alice Goffman, *On The Run: Fugitive Life in an American City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 34.

<sup>24</sup> Alice Goffman, *On The Run: Fugitive Life in an American City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 43.

<sup>25</sup> Alice Goffman, *On The Run: Fugitive Life in an American City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 39-43.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 43-53.

*Evicted* by Matthew Desmond: Although Desmond's book focused more on the eviction crisis in America, Desmond noted an interesting exchange between his subjects about troubles with the law.

In *Evicted* Desmond recalled a game of spades between a group of black men. As the men played cards, laughed, and told stories they discussed being harassed, overpoliced, and criminalized in their neighborhoods. The group consisted of a disabled black Vietnam veteran named Lamar and four black teens who were his biological and adoptive sons. Eddie, DeMarcus, Luke, and Buck were all between the ages of 15 and 18.

Buck said the police were crazy and talked about how the police would routinely stop him and his group of nine friends as they left school, work, football practice or the corner store. Buck said that the police must see or smell something to justify stopping him and friends on the street. Buck learned that at school. Buck vowed to ask the police why he's being stopped the next time it happens. Lamar disagreed and says that the school taught Buck wrong. The men discuss how DeMarcus has a "smart mouth" and was just arrested by the police. Buck believes that the police aren't protecting them. Lamar sort of agrees with Buck, but says all police aren't the same and that he's want the police to clean up the rough neighborhood. DeMarcus said the neighborhood will protect the men, but Lamar disagreed. Lamar recalled going to court to support DeMarcus. Lamar mentioned seeing a teenager bawl his eyes out after being sentenced to 14 years of prison for accompanying his older brother when he beat a crackhead to death. Lamar says that prison isn't a joke and they all continue to play.

## **Housing Issues:**

*Maury*: Although none of the segments of *Maury* I watched explicitly identify housing as an issue.

*Nickel and Dimed* by Barbara Ehrenreich: On the minimum wages of an unskilled worker, Ehrenreich had to live in motels. The motel rooms were often quite dirty and small. In one motel, the toilet was so close to the bed that Ehrenreich had to close the bathroom door so that she didn't feel like she was sleeping in a latrine. Few of the motels offered a range on which Ehrenreich could cook food so most of her meals were at work, fast food or heated up in a microwave. Early on Ehrenreich learned that paying the daily rates to live in motel was too expensive. Ehrenreich had to find trailer parks or apartments she could stay in. When Ehrenreich asked her coworkers about their living arrangement she discovered various situations. Gail (a fellow waitress) paid \$250 a week to live in a flophouse downtown with a male roommate that sexually harassed her. Claude (a Haitian cook) shared a two-room apartment with his girlfriend and two other unrelated people. Anette, a pregnant, twenty-year-old server who was abandoned by her boyfriend lived with her mom, who's a postal clerk. Marianne and her boyfriend paid \$170 a week to live in a one-person trailer. Billy (a cook) earned \$10 an hour and paid a \$400-a-month lot fee for the trailer he owns. Andy (a cook) lives on a dry-docked boat that needs repairs. Tina (another server) and her husband paid \$60 a night to live in the Days Inn. Marianne eventually moved in with Tina and her husband after being kicked out of her trailer for subletting to her boyfriend. Joan lives in a van parked behind a shopping center and showers in Tina's motel.

In *On the Run* Goffman doesn't really discuss paying for housing, but as a roommate of two fugitives she experienced police raids and shootouts that formed an insecure living situation.

In *Evicted* Matthew Desmond follows the lives of tenants and landlords in Milwaukee, Wisconsin as they engage with renting homes and property ownership.<sup>28</sup> Through a collection of interviews and observations, Desmond identifies a parasitic relationship between tenants and landlords that produces an industry of eviction and poverty in American cities.

Tenants in this context are generally on the lower economic end. The tenants struggled with employment, addiction, and disabilities. Most tenants relied on government assistance and all tenants needed affordable places to live. Landlords may be considered middle to upper class. In many cases the landlords owned multiple properties which they either purchased from the city for cheap or inherited. These properties and poverty became the landlords primary source of income.<sup>29</sup>

In exchange for tax breaks and benefits from the government, landlords rented their properties to low income tenants. The tenants in *Evicted* struggled to pay rent. Many tenants depended upon government assistance to help pay for their housing. Depending upon government assistance is so commonplace that some landlords watch the mail for the tenant's checks to arrive, so the landlords can collect payment.<sup>30</sup> While these tenants are glad to have places to live, many of the properties are in trailer parks and ghettos. The properties tenants rented often featured violations to safety and health codes.

Ten tenants who lived in a trailer park lived over sewage spilled by an unconnected plumbing system.<sup>31</sup> Such violations were problematic because they diminished the tenants' lives, and made tenants choose between discomfort and eviction.

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<sup>28</sup> Matthew, Desmond. *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* (New York: Crown, 2016)

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 34-35.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 36.

While some tenants chose to ignore these safety and maintenance code violations because they had fallen behind on their rent payments, others addressed their concerns to the landlords or the government. In most of the cases in which the landlord is contacted verbal agreements are made between landlords and tenants, to reduce rent or delay eviction, in exchange for the tenant's handiwork. Unfortunately tenants who agree to exchange labor for rent reductions, don't have formal contracts.<sup>32</sup> Upon completing various repair and maintenance projects, tenants will be confronted by Landlords who "don't remember" the agreements, devalue the tenant's labor, and renege on the rent reductions.<sup>33</sup> Arguments unfold, and ultimately lead to the tenant's eviction.

The tenants who decide to address their safety concerns, withhold their rent or explore their renter's rights to the government, often face retaliation and eviction by their landlords. Tenants who are evicted must often make a choice between having their items shipped away, or thrown onto the street by the government's eviction taskforce. Living in poverty means living under the constant fear of eviction.

### **Employment Issues:**

*Maury* doesn't focus on employment.

In *Nickel and Dimed* Ehrenreich experiences and examines a host of employment issues as an undercover, low-skilled worker.

Securing a job was in itself a job. Ehrenreich spent a great deal of her time applying for jobs. Ehrenreich had to complete multiple applications and countless personality tests, to only be

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 46-69.

invited to only a handful interviews. At some interviews (with businesses that had help wanted signs in their windows) Ehrenreich discovered that these businesses weren't actually hiring. Instead of hiring these businesses were building up a pool of applicants to cushion themselves from the high turnover they experience. In the event Ehrenreich was interviewed and offered a job, she would accept it and take a mandatory drug test.

Ehrenreich learned that working in poverty means performing grueling and dehumanizing work. As server in a restaurant Ehrenreich worked eight to ten hour shifts daily.<sup>34</sup> With little to no support Ehrenreich would be responsible for serving dining rushes and large groups. The customers were demanding and made complaints that bordered on the insane. One customer complained about their iced tea being too icy. The pace and intensity at which Ehrenreich had to work caused her physical pain for which she took over-the-counter painkillers. The chemicals that she cleaned with caused her to break out in a massive rash for which she had to get medication. As a maid Ehrenreich had to clean up pubic hair and all manner of shit from homeowner's toilets. These tasks were gross but in no way compared to the disgust Ehrenreich felt as she had to endure the prying and dehumanizing conduct of the homeowners. As Ehrenreich scrubbed floors on her hands and knees, suspicious homeowners stood over and stared down on her. After Ehrenreich had vacuumed, homeowners would climb under desks and flip over rugs to check for dirt piles they intentionally made and left behind.<sup>35</sup> Homeowners made these hidden dirt piles because they wanted to test how thoroughly Ehrenreich had cleaned. Some homeowners would even plant money and hide cameras to tempt and catch Ehrenreich in the act of stealing.<sup>36</sup> This power dynamic infuriated Ehrenreich because it robbed workers of

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<sup>34</sup> Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By In America* (New York: Picador, 2011), 11-49.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, 93.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*.

their dignity. Ehrenreich discovered that exploitative businesses and managers also work to rob the dignity of their employees.

Working in poverty means working under exploitative and abusive managers and businesses. As Ehrenreich worked fast-paced, grueling shifts as a server in a restaurant, she was not allowed to take breaks. Workers didn't get 15-minute breaks and lunches. The restaurant had a break room in the restaurant but it was just a small dirty room which no one really used. When servers purchased food, or were caught eating in between serving customers, they were yelled at by restaurant managers. The restaurant managers didn't seem to do anything all day. When servers were caught sitting or working at a slower pace, they would be given busy work which included dirty humiliating busy work. Servers were barred from purchasing food from the restaurant and subject to random drug testing. As a maid Ehrenreich's managers subjugated her to dirty and ineffective policies that compounded employee suffering. Ehrenreich scrubbed floors on her hand and knees because that was her company's policy. The company thought the sight of maids scrubbing on their knees had a greater appeal than using mops. Dirt and filthy water was redistributed across every floor because the cleaning company demanded that maids only use one small half-bucket of water. Employees had to work hard and felt as if they couldn't get sick.<sup>37</sup> One maid tries to work on a broken ankle to continue to make money and be a part of the team. Managers and business owners often bastardized notions of teamwork and self-sacrifice to guilt employees into working longer shifts. As both a server and a maid Ehrenreich's schedule was constantly changed without receiving notice. After eight-hour shifts Ehrenreich was expected to stay and continue to work without time-and-a-half, or even pay because that's what the team needed. As a clerk Ehrenreich was promised \$10 an-hour during her interview process, but was

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 113.

only guaranteed \$7 later.<sup>38</sup> Ehrenreich's experiences as an unskilled worker taught her that there is no such thing as an unskilled worker. The labor she performed as a server, maid, and clerk required a lot of work and sacrifice. The deep physical, financial and emotional costs Ehrenreich paid in her time taught her that working in poverty is an extremely difficult circumstance many Americans face.

In *On the Run* the Goffman studied subjects who are primarily ex-cons and fugitives on the run. Because the ex-cons have criminal records they are rejected when applying for jobs. Mike and Chuck applied for positions with various companies, but didn't get call backs. Because the fugitives are on the run, the information they supply for background checks could lead to their arrests. The inability to obtain a traditional job produces a scenario in which the subjects must either be creative or commit crime to make money.

Ned and his partner Jean's primary income came from taking in foster children. Ned and Jean also hosted dollar parties at their house, where admission, drinks, food, and games cost a dollar each.<sup>39</sup> One subject pulled teeth and sold antibiotics. Another subject sold urine so the customers could pass drug tests. Another man makes casts for broken bones. Mike and Chuck turned to drug dealing to make money.

In *Evicted* Desmond highlights the relationship between problems with employment and substance abuse. When Vietnam veteran Lamar suffered a cocaine addiction he lost his jobs, and his legs. Lamar used to be a janitor, forklift operator, and he poured chemicals for a laboratory, but he lost his jobs and became addicted to drugs in the same era that Milwaukee and many rustbelt cities began to deindustrialize and cut jobs. At the height of Lamar's drug addiction, he

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 148.

<sup>39</sup> Alice Goffman, *On The Run: Fugitive Life in an American City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 32.

got high and broke into an abandoned home in the winter. His feet were frostbitten and by the time he had regained sobriety, Lamar couldn't escape the house. Over the course of seven days Lamar's legs deteriorated. On the eighth day he jumped out of a second story window. The next time he woke up, Lamar was in a hospital bed without any legs. Lamar applied for government assistance. Although the government determined that Lamar could still work and granted him limited benefits, Lamar struggled with securing work because of his poor and disabled status.

After five years of working as a nurse and hoisting the elderly up, Scott slipped a disk in his neck. After his pain was treated with drugs that included opioids, Scott became addicted. Scott began to steal drugs from work. Scott got caught. He lost his job and spiraled out of control. Scott became addicted to Vicodin, heroin, and crack. Scott lived in a trailer park and could never hold onto a job. Scott worked as a mover for a moving company, but lost his job to hypes (drug addicts).

Hype is slang for a drug addict. Although Scott was addicted to drugs, he was not considered a hype because he had a reasonable amount of functionality. Hypes work for next to nothing and their labor is exploited to get work done cheaply. Whereas Scott was paid a wage to move items for a moving company, hypes will do the same work for mere dollars to feed their addictions. Landlords used hype labor to do odd jobs around the properties they owned for cheap. Although Lamar spent a week doing handiwork like painting and cleaning a filthy basement until his stumps got sore, in return for a credit on his rent, his landlord Shereena ridiculed him and reneged on the agreement because she could have used hype labor. Because landlords used hypes to handiwork poor people like Lamar and highly functioning people like Scott were unable to secure work in the odd jobs economy.

## Substance Abuse

*Maury*: Of the 30 segments of *Maury* I watched and reviewed, only one featured an instance in which the subjects used illegal drugs, or abused alcohol or controlled substances. In “You cheated... you paid 15 dollars for sex!” a woman named Tara suspected her boyfriend Ricky was addicted to escorts and drugs.<sup>40</sup> Tara explained that Ricky was the person who helped her overcome a life of drugs and partying, but after hearing rumors that Ricky paid a woman \$15 for sex Tara thought that Ricky was cheating. Tara mentioned that Ricky didn’t answer her calls or send her money on time. Tara pulled a bottle of doxycycline (an antibiotic) to allege that Ricky is using it to protect himself from sexually transmitted diseases. Ricky tells Tara that he just spent some money to help the woman in question. Mary reveals that the woman Ricky allegedly paid is on the show. Lajuana says that she had sex with Ricky for \$15 because she needed the money, and Lajuana boasted that it was the best fifteen minutes of Ricky’s life. Tara derided Lajuana as a “cheap hoe” and questioned what kind of woman Lajuana was. The lie detector results revealed that Ricky was doing drugs and cheating on Tara. Ricky paid Lajuana for sex and Tara was heartbroken.

There are no serious instances of drug abuse in *Nickel and Dimed*, but as a low-wage worker Ehrenreich highlights various instances in which she and her colleagues are subjected to humiliating suspicion and stigma about drug use.

As a waitress Ehrenreich and the staff were berated by the managers about using drugs. At one waitressing job a manager thought she saw employees trying to inhale the nitrous oxide from a whipped cream canister. The management opted to eliminate whipped cream canisters from the restaurant and the pies looked terrible. As a person who applied to multiple jobs

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<sup>40</sup> TheMauryShowOfficial, “You cheated... you paid 15 dollars for sex!” YouTube, Published on February 21, 2018, Accessed April 12, 2018, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zr\\_qIw9qBj4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zr_qIw9qBj4).

Ehrenreich answered questionnaires about drug use and took urine tests. Ehrenreich smoked marijuana so she researched how to pass a drug test. Ehrenreich purchased a detox kit from GNC and drank immense amounts of water. Ehrenreich passed her drug test and lamented the ways employers screen for and harass employees about drugs.

In *On the Run* substance abuse's role varies between being an illness, a recreation, and a means to make money. Chuck's mom, Ms. Linda suffered a five-year addiction to crack when she was pregnant with him. Chuck grew up and became a crack dealer. Ned's girlfriend Jean is addicted to crack. Chuck and his friend do PCP. Steve battled addiction and was on probation. Steve burnt his leg because the urine he bought to pass a drug test was too hot. The temperature urine one provides for a drug test must be within a certain range at the time of the test, so the heating is crucial.

In *Evicted*, substance abuse is presented as an affliction that can ruin your life forever. Vietnam veteran Lamar lost his legs because he was addicted to crack, jumped out of a window, got frostbite and had to have his legs amputated. Being addicted to drugs and losing his legs were barriers that Lamar didn't overcome, and he has lived on government assistance ever since. After slipping a disk at work, Tony became addicted to opioids, heroin, and crack. Because of Tony's addiction Tony has never been able to hold a job since.

### **Personal Security**

*Maury* and his guests didn't not describe any events that highlight questions of personal security.

Barbara Ehrenreich: Ehrenreich doesn't mention any notable time in during which she feared for her safety.

In *On the Run* Goffman's subjects were under the constant threat of police and community violence. As criminals and fugitives on the run, Mike, Chuck, and Reggie were always hiding from the police. Any police interaction these fugitives have could result in arrest, police violence, or potentially death. As men who dealt drugs and lived in a Philadelphia ghetto Mike, Chuck, and Reggie experienced arguments and conflicts that escalated to shootouts. Goffman witnessed and heard about multiple shootouts throughout her research. Chuck gets murdered in a shootout, and Goffman drives Mike in a car to find and kill the person. Goffman and Mike didn't succeed.

*Evicted* by Matthew Desmond: Living in poverty means feeling physically unsafe. On the North Side where the black residents lived Desmond noted how his subjects feared personal violence and police violence. A man was shot in one of the subject's properties, and a property was shot up by a bitter boyfriend. In the trailer park where the white residents live Desmond noted how 260 phone calls to the police made in one year, and how an alderman called the neighborhood a hotbed for drugs and violence.

### **Race:**

*Maury*: None of the segments or subjects in *Maury* identified race as a factor that influences their condition and the decisions they make.

In *Nickel and Dime* Ehrenreich says that she chose to work in Maine for its whiteness. Ehrenreich believed that by working in a state that was predominately white she could make observations about her infiltration of the white working class. Ehrenreich had bad experiences in Maine and the other states, that she worked in, but she doesn't come to any discernable conclusion about race.

In Goffman's research and opinion, poverty is part and parcel of over policing, and over-policing is based in race. Because of the victories of American civil rights movement, the black American middle class expanded in the 1970s. Middle class blacks had a considerable amount of financial, social and political power. They could go to the same schools as whites, earn more equitable wages, and purchase property in communities which they were previously denied access to. In response to these advancements, Goffman notes a harsh shift in policing and laws that occurred in the mid-1970s. This crackdown translated into the war on drugs in the 1980s and led to longer drug sentences, mandatory minimums for certain offenses and disparate sentencing between white and black offenders. Although crime rates decreased by the 1990s, the harsh, discriminatory and punitive policies worsened and continued though the decade. Goffman notes that although black Americans in 2010 made up only 13% of the American population, they represented 40% of the US incarcerated population.

Race plays a significant factor in determining where you live. In *Evicted* Desmond discusses how whites in Milwaukee clashed with blacks during the civil rights era over integrating and resources. White people didn't want to integrate their neighborhoods, so as black people marched for freedom, whites chanted "we want slaves" and "kill kill kill!"<sup>41</sup> After the 1968 Civil Rights Act blacks began to integrate white neighborhoods and white began to move out of them. To the present Milwaukee is one of America's most segregated cities. Desmond notes that blacks predominately live on the North side of Milwaukee, while whites lived on the East and West sides. Latinos lived on the South side. As Desmond conducted his research in 2008, he encountered whites who vowed that they would never move to the North side for fear of

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<sup>41</sup> Matthew, Desmond. *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* (New York: Crown, 2016). P. 33

getting robbed and targeted by blacks. While the white subjects, expressed fears about living in a black neighborhood they lived in substandard trailer parks that experienced crime and violence levels so high that the city tried to get their trailer park shut down.

On the North Side, a group of Desmond's black subjects discussed the over-policing their neighborhoods experience during a game of spades.

At another point in *Evicted* a landlord named Shereena goes to a housing conference. Shereena speaks to white landlords who don't want to do business on the North side, and offers to be the black go-between so they don't have to deal with black renters. In *Evicted* race shapes the experience of people who live in Milwaukee and the American underclass.

Desmond also notes receiving special treatment from the police and the subjects he observed.<sup>42</sup> After a shooting happened outside of Desmond's door when he was staying on the North Side, two of Desmond's black subjects were questioned by the police. When Desmond came outside to see what was going on, the police drove off. After two of Desmond's subjects were discriminated against by a landlord, Desmond posed as a renter with the same income and children as his subjects. The landlord offered Desmond a nice apartment, and drove Desmond to the location. Desmond reported the landlord to the Fair Housing Council. Desmond also mentions that his subjects just felt the need to protect and look out for him as he lived in the ghetto.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 322.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

It isn't surprising to see that *Maury* would have the most depictions of infidelity. After all, *Maury* belongs to the genre of television shows that are labeled trash. At the same time, I'm disappointed because in my analysis of *Maury* I found some troubling features that affect what is discussed and what my results were.

In some of the segments *Maury* glossed over statements and discussions that may have connected to the other categories of this research. In the segment where a woman named Iris found a condom in her boyfriend Deonte's sock and his head on another woman's butt in a picture, Deonte said that he was just talking to the woman because she was paying his phone bill. Deonte remarked that Iris didn't pay his phone bill, and the couple began to argue. *Maury* told them he didn't care about the phone bill and redirected the conversation back to the cheating drama. Deonte may have needed the woman or Iris to pay his phone bill because he struggled to secure a job, or because he had troubles with the law. The audience would never know because *Maury* didn't care about any of that, and wanted to focus on the drama.

When an older-looking black woman named Lajuana boasted about having sex with a man for \$15 because she didn't have any food in her house, *Maury* didn't ask her about her situation. Lajuana may have suffered from substance abuse, employment issues, or troubles with the law, but *Maury* didn't care to ask about anything more than the infidelity. By not drilling down or asking deeper questions, *Maury* disregarded the issues that connected to the survival and well-being of his guests.

When Goffman identified how infidelity in a relationship with a fugitive can lead to arrest, incarceration, or domestic violence, she connected the concept to the larger world. Infidelity wasn't the focus of Goffman's work but she noticed, recorded and reported about how

it played a role in what she observed in her research. When Desmond mentioned that he got so close that his subjects that their boyfriends thought he was sleeping with them, it revealed to how much time he spent with the women and how he got too close to them in trying to tell a story about evictions. Desmond stepped back, evaluated the proximity he had to his subjects for their safety, and made a note of allegations of infidelity during his research. Maury didn't demonstrate this behavior or this concern. Maury manipulates and decontextualizes his subjects by focusing exclusively on infidelity and paternity disputes. Some might argue that Maury decontextualizes his guests because of his show's medium, genre, audience and cultural hierarchy.

Ehrenreich, Goffman and Desmond who performed book-length, investigative and academic examinations of the American underclass. The books took multiple years of work and research to produce. Ehrenreich developed her book in between her work as a journalist and activist while Goffman and Desmond developed their books as graduate students who wrote dissertations. The authors had to work independently to live, record, and retell their experiences to produce their books. The authors aimed to add new layers of understanding to the social and academic discourse about the American underclass by making discoveries about the American underclass. By presenting new discourse and discoveries the authors stimulate their academic audiences and potentially change the way everyone thinks about the American underclass.

Maury's foremost goal is to get high ratings by entertaining and enthralling his audiences in studio and across America. Maury depends on and works with a team of producers and staff to make hundreds of 42-minute episodes every year. Maury and his team produce serialized episodic content for his show, and control how each episode is supposed to go. Instead of depicting the complex and dynamic lives of the American underclass, or being open to new revelations Maury is only invested in their sexual and salacious dirty laundry. With each

segment, the audience can feel better about themselves, because they aren't the freaks that Elizabeth Birmingham described.<sup>43</sup> Through this limited focus, Maury presents his audiences with a caricatured version of the American underclass that is predominantly black.

While this research doesn't specifically focus on the race of subjects on Maury's trash-talk television, I noticed that at least 17 of the 30 segments centered couples that appeared to be black. If black people only make up 13% of the population of the United States, but represent 56% of the guests on *Maury*, black people are being overrepresented.<sup>44</sup> Understanding that 100% (30) of the segments of *Maury* I watched centered infidelity, and 60% (18) featured denials of paternity, it is clear: *Maury* overwhelmingly depicts black people as dysfunctional, hyper-sexual, caricatures. The women are loud, angry, wild and wacky, and the men are cheaters who don't want to claim responsibility for their sexual behaviors. By depicting blacks in this racist manner, *Maury* produces and a modern-day minstrel show. I understand that the scope of Maury's work is to magnify the worst and most contentious aspects of his guests lives for entertainment. However, if Maury showed some sincere concern outside of that for the drama, my results might look different, and the guests might not look like caricatures.

Aside from the topics Maury ignored to focus on infidelity, I found the show's use of sexy decoys questionable and unethical.

I understand the rationale of trying to catch a man red handed in a sting-like operation, but there is so much that the show doesn't explain about the sexy decoys. Where do they come from and who are they? Are they producers or are they prostitutes? How often are they used? Do

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<sup>43</sup> Elizabeth Birmingham, "Fearing The Freak: How Talk TV Articulates Women and Class," *Journal of Popular Film & Television* 28, no. 3 (2000): 133.

<sup>44</sup> United States Census Bureau, "Profile of General Population and Housing Characteristics: 2010, 2010 Demographic Profile Data," *American Fact Finder*, last modified August 4, 2018, <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>.

they ever get turned down? No one knows. The show doesn't make any information about the sexy decoys clear or public. While the scope of my research is larger than this one feature of Maury's trash television show, the idea that the producers planted and plotted with someone, to lure a subject into infidelity is a problem. When reading or viewing any of the creations the assumption as consumers is that we can trust the creators to tell the truth. By luring men into flirting with and kissing decoys on camera, *Maury's* producers compromise that trust for entertainment value. Unfortunately, Maury isn't the only creator who was accused of compromising trust, and the truth.

Although *On The Run* received critical acclaim, it has been haunted with allegations of embellishment and lying.<sup>45</sup> Some believe that Goffman's accounts were written with just too much detail. They believe that Goffman misrepresented events, numbers and dates. Others believe that some of Goffman's accounts were completely fabricated and dramatized. Goffman said that she destroyed all her notes to protect the anonymity of her subjects, therefore there is no way to truly verify. While I don't know to what extent Goffman work was truthful, the overlap that Goffman's findings shared with Desmond's create a space in which I can grant her trust. This parameter of verification is known as convergent validity.

For example, Desmond and Goffman both contextualized their depictions of the American underclass with the civil rights movement, white flight, and the war on drugs. These narratives are based in historical and statistical evidence that contextualized the findings the authors found in the present day. Goffman and Desmond both have recorded low instances of infidelity and denials of paternity. Goffman and Desmond both referenced substance abuse and how various subjects struggled with drug addiction. Goffman and Desmond both described how

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<sup>45</sup> Gideon Lewis-Kraus, "The Trials of Alice Goffman," *The New York Times Magazine*, "January 12, 2016. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/17/magazine/the-trials-of-alice-goffman.html>

the lives of their subjects were shaped by race, and their feelings about personal security. There is tremendous similarity between Goffman and Desmond's work in all areas except for troubles with the law and housing issues.

It makes sense for Goffman's and Desmond's work to differ in the two categories because both works focus on different things. Goffman's featured more instances of troubles with the law because she studied fugitive life. Goffman's work centered a community sphere and the relationships that were shaped by crime. Desmond's work featured more instances of housing issues because he studied the eviction crisis in Milwaukee. Desmond's work centered a domestic sphere and the relationships shaped by housing. Based on the overlap between Goffman and Desmond, I believe that Goffman is broadly trustworthy. Some people believe that Goffman crossed too many lines in her work.

Some believe that Goffman inserted herself into the lives of her subjects in a way that was intrusive, interruptive, and evocative. I agree. It's hard to truly pin down, but there is something in the tone of Goffman's book and the way she told stories that comes off like she was a tourist. Perhaps this feeling is hidden all the times she referenced being white, while she told the story of her black subjects. Perhaps this feeling is hidden in the way she always centered herself. It's just a feeling so it can't be quantified, but when I consider the way Ehrenreich and Desmond discussed their experiences, I feel differently.

When Ehrenreich discussed her time as a low-wage worker and her experience, she centered herself. *Nickel And Dimed* was an experiment to see if Ehrenreich could work and survive as many people in the American underclass try to. Ehrenreich talks about working in three different states and all the struggles she faced as a low wage worker, but I never got the impression that the book was about her. Ehrenreich connected with different coworkers and

employers to tell a story that was vibrant and complex. Ehrenreich provided me with more information about employment issues within the American underclass than any other author. Ehrenreich seemed like a member of the American underclass. Unlike Maury who just sat back and directed a televised carnival, Ehrenreich was working right there with the American underclass. While Desmond's research was like Goffman's, he seemed more removed.

In *Evicted* Desmond told stories about eviction and housing issues, but he isn't a part of them. Although Desmond got too close to a couple of his subjects, it he was just because he around too much. Unlike Goffman, Desmond doesn't feel like a character in his story and Desmond isn't friends with his subjects. Desmond doesn't discuss his whiteness, or drive a getaway car to assist a revenge killing as Goffman did.

At the end of the day, each of the texts are different and they help us understand different things about the ways the American underclass is depicted.

*Maury's* trash-talk television presents its viewers with dramatic and sensationalized depictions of the American underclass. Instead of focusing on the many layers of a person's life *Maury* magnifies infidelity and paternity disputes for entertainment. While Ehrenreich, Goffman, and Desmond present their readers with serious broad-based examinations of the American underclass *Maury* delivers a carnivalesque crisis Monday through Friday on television. *Maury's* televised format makes it quick, easy and available to access while Ehrenreich, Goffman, and Desmond's books are long and not meant for entertainment. Some might argue that *Maury* doesn't present a dynamic depiction of the American underclass, because of his shows medium, and genre. Unlike the three books, *Maury* is a trash-talk television show.

Ehrenreich, Goffman, and Desmond teach us that being members of the American underclass is a difficult status marked by various levels of seemingly inescapable suffering. Whether as workers, fugitives, or tenants, members of the American underclass are subject to employment issues, troubles with the law, housing issues, and many other circumstances that determine and reduce the quality of life that they can live. No matter how hard members of the American underclass try, they can be a paycheck from poverty, an arrest from incarceration, and an eviction from homelessness.

As of 2018 *Maury's* trash-talk television has brought its viewers daytime drama for 27 years. I suspect, however that this era of trash television may be coming to an end, based on the sudden cancellation of *The Jerry Springer Show*.<sup>46</sup> I don't hope for *Maury's* demise. Instead I hope that through this research we see how differently the American underclass is depicted between trash television and broad-based examinations in books. I hope that we work to bridge the gap between entertainment and books to contextualize the lives of the American underclass, and I hope we end the structures that keep so many Americans from transcending poverty.

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46 Aurelie Corintios, "The Jerry Springer Show Quietly Cancelled After 27 Years," *People*, June 21, 2018, <https://people.com/tv/jerry-springer-show-ending/>

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## Appendix

### Segments on *Maury*'s Official YouTube Page

1. I found an open condom in his sock...He's cheating!  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXUK\\_uVZSTo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXUK_uVZSTo)
2. You cheated... you paid 15 dollars for sex!
3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fsM-a8nOrIc>
4. My daughter is pregnant by my husband!  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VbgNP8Hgcik>
5. She lied and slept with my 14 year old son..and brother!  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yIK9MD3VfEc>
6. You're cheating on me with your brother's girlfriend!  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b1QQh209jic>
7. If you take him back...Consider me out the picture!  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cYV-0ntU--k>

#### Infidelity/Baby Disputes

8. I didn't make the baby alone..which one of you two is the father?  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zh7GYM\\_hc1A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zh7GYM_hc1A)
9. I slept with you not your mom...You're the father!  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VdummuZVDqs>
10. I changed his name...He better be my son! (GF Pop Out)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZpAUJDFQYal>
11. That baby looks like Michael Jackson!  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iypI5WUwd5o>
12. She's sleeping with the whole city! (GF Pop Out)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zr\\_qIw9qBj4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zr_qIw9qBj4)
13. My mom had me at 13..I had OUR baby at 17..You are the father!  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6sP4L7od9hA&spfreload=10>
14. She slept around... I can't be the father!  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fgHMjAg81Sw>
15. You got me pregnant at 15! You're the dad to my baby too!  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2yBINGxlaN8>

#### You ARE NOT the Father! FULL Stories

16. Ashley & Andy Full Story  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6UJkcIfLQvI&list=PLbgX5IjtUzCYkIoMbqawkYIPze5JBmk1q>
17. Whitney and Cameron  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ThA\\_lfuh-A&list=PLbgX5IjtUzCYkIoMbqawkYIPze5JBmk1q&index=2](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ThA_lfuh-A&list=PLbgX5IjtUzCYkIoMbqawkYIPze5JBmk1q&index=2)
18. I COULD TELL BY THE ULTRASOUND PICTURE... THAT'S NOT MY BABY!

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u0SCtv\\_\\_GiM&index=3&list=PLbgX5IjtUzCYkIoMbgawkyIPze5JBmk1q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u0SCtv__GiM&index=3&list=PLbgX5IjtUzCYkIoMbgawkyIPze5JBmk1q)

19. Fantasia & Greg - Full Story: I'VE TAKEN 21 DNA TESTS...I'LL PROVE I'M NOT THE DAD!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mwuzKVufQs&index=4&list=PLbgX5IjtUzCYkIoMbgawkyIPze5JBmk1q>

20. Tabatha and Rodney: I'M BACK FOR A 3RD TIME... WILL I FIND MY BABY'S FATHER TODAY?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S5fogOpeubY&list=PLbgX5IjtUzCYkIoMbgawkyIPze5JBmk1q&index=5>

21. Brittany, Jihad and DRAKE: Full Story

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t6-zwrsS0DI&list=PLbgX5IjtUzCYkIoMbgawkyIPze5JBmk1q&index=6&spfreload=10>

22. Mitika, Zonella and Mike - Full Maury Segment

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qBnwtpaNmU&list=PLbgX5IjtUzCYkIoMbgawkyIPze5JBmk1q&index=7>

OUT OF CONTROL TEENS <20 videos on site. Only two videos are more than 4 minutes. One videos is a report on Snapchat(outlier), the other video is an actual segment.>

23. That naked girl on my phone...She's just an old friend!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N4QLGX0zImg>

24. Maury ATR | Did you get another woman pregnant??

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=on9JY5Ev8N4&index=1&list=PLbgX5IjtUzCaURKN\\_4aO3V-sEYkJ0L2YM&t=0s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=on9JY5Ev8N4&index=1&list=PLbgX5IjtUzCaURKN_4aO3V-sEYkJ0L2YM&t=0s)

25. You slept with my sister and your coworkers!?

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I4DTIIT7Vkw&index=2&t=0s&list=PLbgX5IjtUzCaURKN\\_4aO3V-sEYkJ0L2YM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I4DTIIT7Vkw&index=2&t=0s&list=PLbgX5IjtUzCaURKN_4aO3V-sEYkJ0L2YM)

26. I'm A Man...I Like To Have Sex

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CNOOeTXmYlg&t=0s&index=6&list=PLbgX5IjtUzCaURKN\\_4aO3V-sEYkJ0L2YM&spfreload=10](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CNOOeTXmYlg&t=0s&index=6&list=PLbgX5IjtUzCaURKN_4aO3V-sEYkJ0L2YM&spfreload=10)

27. You Cheated While I Was Giving Birth To Our Child

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1KYPZOn1vTs&index=7&list=PLbgX5IjtUzCaURKN\\_4aO3V-sEYkJ0L2YM&t=0s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1KYPZOn1vTs&index=7&list=PLbgX5IjtUzCaURKN_4aO3V-sEYkJ0L2YM&t=0s)

28. You Cheated On Me At The Maury Show!

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQOQWaWZ3Gc&index=9&list=PLbgX5IjtUzCaURKN\\_4aO3V-sEYkJ0L2YM&t=0s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQOQWaWZ3Gc&index=9&list=PLbgX5IjtUzCaURKN_4aO3V-sEYkJ0L2YM&t=0s)

29. Once, Twice, Three Times a Cheater...You're Out of Here!

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=StctY1kfU9Q&index=10&list=PLbgX5IjtUzCaURKN\\_4aO3V-sEYkJ0L2YM&t=0s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=StctY1kfU9Q&index=10&list=PLbgX5IjtUzCaURKN_4aO3V-sEYkJ0L2YM&t=0s)

30. I Lied & I Hate Your Guts!

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wKcP-m1xj4Y&index=16&list=PLbgX5IjtUzCaURKN\\_4aO3V-sEYkJ0L2YM&t=0s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wKcP-m1xj4Y&index=16&list=PLbgX5IjtUzCaURKN_4aO3V-sEYkJ0L2YM&t=0s)

31. Will New York Admit He Cheated?

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d\\_\\_TSzhGDBo&index=17&list=PLbgX5JtUzCaURKN\\_4aO3V-sEYkJOL2YM&t=0s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d__TSzhGDBo&index=17&list=PLbgX5JtUzCaURKN_4aO3V-sEYkJOL2YM&t=0s)