## The Personal Trouble

A common personal trouble is “Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)”.  FOMO is an irresistible drive to browse social media, attend every optional event, and suffer from self-doubt while comparing oneself and one's life to the idealised image virtually handpicked by others. The elementary, unique explanation for FOMO sometimes shows this issue as a setback of self-control, a scarcity of self-confidence, or a cognitive weakness. The usual advice is to be more mindful, withdraw from the abrupt use of phones and the internet, or just stop caring so much. This vision successfully minimises the transfinite induction to a personal, mental health defect.

## Connecting to Public Issues and Structural Forces

After the text by C. Wright Mills, the sociological imagination shows that when the high-strung anxiety is shared by a whole generation, it is not an imperfection, but a social issue. It is an effect of definite historical and social arrangements (Mills, 1959). FOMO is the mental toll of living in a dense, manipulated, and competitive society.

### *The Structural Violence of Comparison*

FOMO is a genre of structural violence (Farmer, 2002). FOMO itself is not injurious physically, yet it is a social arrangement where the algorithmic sequencing is curated, and the aspirational content that levies mental distress and economic toll on a population. Paul Farmer shows how suffering is curated by the composition of living organisms, not only individual adversities (Farmer, 2002). Here, the structure is the attention economy that benefits by keeping people immersed, guaranteeing that they feel scarce and therefore are compelled.

### *The Neoliberal Disposability*

The perpetual feeling of “performing” or “optimising” one’s life to be appropriate shows a wide-ranging structural logic. The way Engels noted the isolating, relentless, and high rate of survival of the fittest of the working class in "The Great Towns" (Engels, 1845). FOMO is a psychosomatic manifestation of a highly competitive, neoliberal traffic of the self. The fear is not only missing a party, but missing a golden opportunity, a job requirement, a LinkedIn connection, or a moment that could exemplify one's worth in a risky world. This logic makes people feel endlessly thrown away if they fail to keep up.

### *The Absence of a Safety Net*

The deep anxiety based on FOMO has a strong connection with the deficit of economic and social protection. The “Luigi Mangione” shows a public panic for social safety nets and a common acknowledgement that the system is failing common people (Featherstone, 2024). The social structure shows some protected correspondents like affordable housing, stable jobs, and the pressure to continually boost social capital through contributing to missing out, becomes intense, due to the fact that one cannot afford to lose any potential benefit.

## Methodology and Social Worldview

To have a succinct knowledge of FOMO sociologically, one surpasses feeling is to explore the procedure of its production, succeeding the aim of “Finding Out How the Social World Works” (Schwalbe, 2025).

### *Thick v. Thin Description*

An example of a thin description is saying someone is anxious because they check their phone too often. The thick description highlights that FOMO must be justified through the cultural meaning of the Instagram story (Geertz, 1973). I feel they are mediatised rituals that jointly

perform status, disbar others, and support the economic logic of perpetual consumption and experience the assemblage. The ethnographic challenges to Aspholm are a similar phenomenon to brace the intense, historical, and systemic meaning behind the superficial behaviour on the South side (Aspholm, 2025).

### *Structural Avenues and Challenges*

The experiences people feel they miss out on are not random. Mostly, the missing out experiences are structurally preinterpreted by race, class, and ethnicity. Historical and economic challenges pushed particular ethnic groups into certain roles (Steinberg, 2001). Not only that, one's access to travel, leisure, or highly expensive experiences sometimes is represented virtually by structural opportunities, not through individual choices. FOMO is the anxious state generating stress while challenging people to compare their reality with the systemically privileged individuals who promote the social idealistic theory.

## Conclusion

Applying the SI creates the anxiety of FOMO from a personal weak point of view into a dynamic structural argument. This existing feeling of missing out is the logical as well as emotional repercussion of an attention economy that casts dissatisfaction, and a cutthroat society that seeks continual performance.

The systemic nature of the anxiety shows that individual “digital detoxes” can only serve as respite. The everlasting solution rests in collective action, like the usage of “disruptive power” to deliver institutions and attention (Piven, 2006). This might adduce structures for platform responsibility, or constructing community substitutes that prefer original link and shared resources over isolated consumption. This attempt to overrule the cognitive effects of social

alienation is required today to win against the political battles fought to get rid of physical displacement (Arena, 2012). Identification of the foundation of FOMO is the launching station of reclaiming our attention and our worth from the system that benefits from our anxiety.

**References**


Arena, J. (2012). Undoing the Black Urban Regime: Resistance to Displacement and Elite Divisions. In Driven From New Orleans: How Nonprofits Betray Public Housing and Promote Privatisation. University of Minnesota Press.

Aspholm, R. (2025). Introduction. In Views From The Streets, The Transformation of Gangs and Violence on Chicago's South Side.

Engels, F. (1984). Chapters 2, "The Great Towns," and 5, "Results." In The Condition of the Working Class in England. (Original work published 1845).

Farmer, P. (2002). On Suffering and Structural Violence: A View from Below. Daedalus, 131(1), 11-28.

Featherstone, L. (2024). America Will Be Obsessed With Luigi Mangione for a Long Time. Jacobin. Retrieved from https://jacobin.com/2024/12/luigi-mangione-health-insurance-democrats

Geertz, C. (1973). Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture. In The Interpretation of Culture (pp. 3-7).

Mills, C. W. (1959). Excerpt from The Sociological Imagination. Oxford University Press.

Piven, F. F. (2006). The Nature of Disruptive Power (ch. 2). In Challenging Authority: How Ordinary People Change America. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Schwalbe, M. (2025). “Finding Out How the Social World Works.”

Steinberg, S. (2001). Why the Irish Became Domestics and Italians, and Jews Did Not (ch. 6). In The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity, and Class in America. (Original work published 1982).