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2019 BJS Annual Public Lecture

- Fourcade on *Ordinal citizenship*

2019 BJS Annual Public Lecture – Commentaries

- Soysal on *The future of ordinal citizenship*
- Joppke on *Neoliberal citizenship*
- Khan on *Market citizenship*
- Accominotti on *The aesthetics of hierarchy*
- Fourcade on *The unbearable rightness of being ranked*

Class, Status and Education

- Sullivan et al on *Intergenerational transmission of language skill*
- Betthäuser et al on *Intergenerational transmission of social (dis)advantage*
- Goldthorpe on *Class and status in interwar England*

Politics and Religion

- Fernández on *Religiosity, gender and political interest*
- Martin on *Counter-radicalization*
- Giani and Merlino on *Terrorism and perceived discrimination*
- Amini and McCormack on *Older Iranian Muslim women's experiences of sexuality*
- Edmunds on *The securitization of the "veiled" woman*
- Aidenberger and Doehne on *Everyday discrimination against religious minorities*

Sociology and Critical Race Scholarship

- Meghji on *Critical race theory and British sociology*
- Keuchenius and Mügge on *The diffusion of Black feminist knowledge*

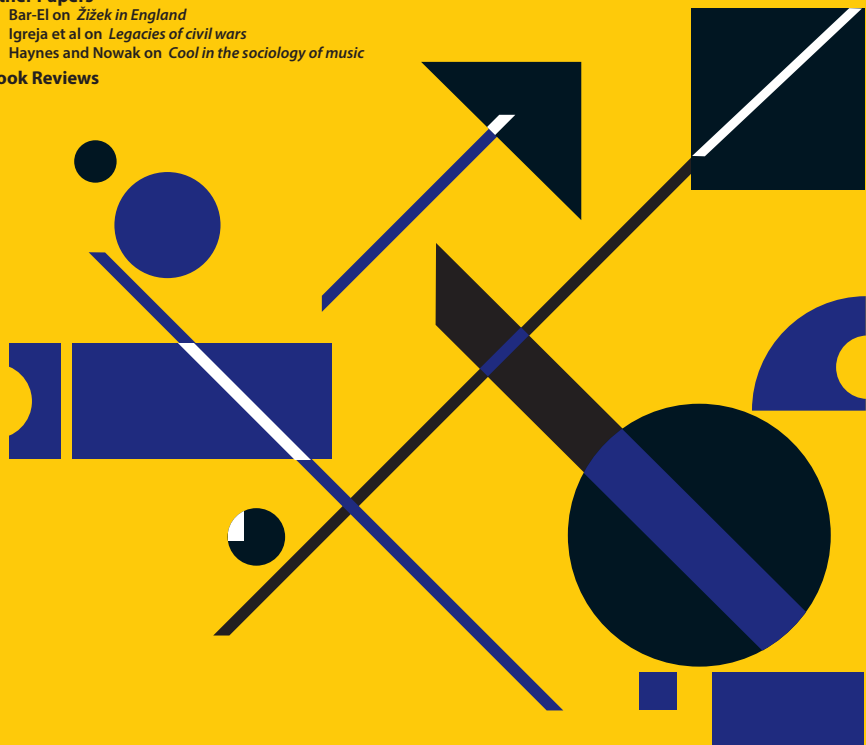
Climate Change and Society

- Baker on *Climatology and the "stabilization" of climate*
- Bowden et al on *Ignorance in climate change adaptation*

Other Papers

- Bar-El on *Žižek in England*
- Igreja et al on *Legacies of civil wars*
- Haynes and Nowak on *Cool in the sociology of music*

Book Reviews



The British Journal of Sociology

VOLUME 72 NUMBER 2 MARCH 2021

Contents

2019 BJS Annual Public Lecture

Ordinal citizenship
Marion Fourcade 154

2019 BJS Annual Public Lecture - Commentaries

Institutional underpinnings, global reach, and the future of ordinal citizenship
Yasemin Nuhogğlu Soysal 174

From liberal to neoliberal citizenship: A commentary on Marion Fourcade
Christian Joppke 181

States against citizens: On the (limited) value of market citizenship
Shamus Khan 190

The aesthetics of hierarchy
Fabien Accominotti 196

The unbearable rightness of being ranked
Marion Fourcade 203

Class, Status and Education

The intergenerational transmission of language skill
Alice Sullivan, Vanessa Moulton and Emla Fitzsimons 207

The case for studying the intergenerational transmission of social (dis)advantage: A reply to Gary Marks
Bastian A. Bethäuser, Erzsébet Bukodi and Mollie Bourne 233

Class and status in interwar England: Current issues in the light of a historical case
John H. Goldthorpe 239

Politics and Religion

Societal religiosity and the gender gap in political interest, 1990–2014
Juan J. Fernández, Antonio M. Jaime-Castillo, Damon Mayrl and Celia Valiente 252

The radical ambitions of counter-radicalization
Thomas Martin 270

Terrorist attacks and minority perceived discrimination
Marco Giani and Luca Paolo Merlino 286

Older Iranian Muslim women’s experiences of sex and sexuality: A biographical approach <i>Elham Amini and Mark McCormack</i>	300
Precarious bodies: The securitization of the “veiled” woman in European human rights <i>Aneira J. Edmunds</i>	315
Unveiling everyday discrimination. Two field experiments on discrimination against religious minorities in day-to-day interactions <i>Amelie Aidenberger and Malte Doehne</i>	328
Sociology and Critical Race Scholarship	
Just what is critical race theory, and what is it doing in British sociology? From “BritCrit” to the racialized social system approach <i>Ali Meghji</i>	347
Intersectionality on the go: The diffusion of Black feminist knowledge across disciplinary and geographical borders <i>Anna Keuchenius and Liza Mügge</i>	360
Climate Change and Society	
Agricultural capitalism, climatology and the “stabilization” of climate in the United States, 1850–1920 <i>Zeke Baker</i>	379
“I don’t think anybody really knows”: Constructing reflexive ignorance in climate change adaptation <i>Vanessa Bowden, Daniel Nyberg and Christopher Wright</i>	397
Other Papers	
“If at First You don’t Succeed”: Why Žižek Failed in France but Succeeded in England <i>Eliran Bar-El</i>	412
Legacies of civil wars: A 14-year study of social conflicts and well-being outcomes in farming economies <i>Victor Igreja, Janna Colaizzi and Alana Brekelmans</i>	426
We were never cool: Investigating knowledge production and discourses of cool in the sociology of music <i>Jo Haynes and Raphaël Nowak</i>	448
Book Reviews	463

List of books reviewed

AUTHOR	TITLE	REVIEWER	PAGE
P. Berta	<i>Materializing Difference: Consumer Culture, Politics, and Ethnicity among Romanian Roma</i>	Clayton Childress	470
Roi Livne	Values at the End of Life: The Logic of Palliative Care	Barbara Kiviat	472
Giugni Marco and Maria T.Grasso	Street Citizens. Protest Politics and Social Movement Activism in the Age of Globalization	Jasmine Lorenzini	463
Andreas Reckwitz	The Society of Singularities	Alan Warde	466

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Ordinal citizenship

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Abstract

The expansion of social citizenship in the 20th century mitigated the brute effects of economic inequality in people's lives. The new rights also created new social divisions, however, separating citizens according to their ability to do well through them. In the 21st century the conceptual matrix of citizenship has developed further, powered by new technologies that have promised new freedoms and opportunities in every aspect of people's lives. As the scope of economic and social incorporation has broadened, the possibilities for classifying, sorting, slotting, and scaling people have also grown and diversified. Echoing the earlier rise of the meritocracy, this new matrix produces its own winners and losers, partly recycling old inequalities, and partly creating new ones. Demands for self-care and individual fitness pile up, eroding the universal and solidaristic basis upon which the expansion of citizenship historically thrived. In its place stands what I call "ordinal citizenship," a form of social inclusion that thrives on social measurement, differentiation, and hierarchy.

The expansion of social citizenship in the 20th century mitigated the brute effects of economic inequality in people's lives. The institutionalization of social rights and entitlement programs recognized that access to "the life of a civilized being" (to use TH Marshall's (1950, p. 11) quaint phrase) should not depend on wealth only. To be sure, the process was incomplete, stigmatizing, and often brutal, particularly for the poor and for minorities of various kinds.¹ Still, the reliable provision of education, healthcare, housing, and social insurance turned into one of the main *raison d'être* and functions of governments throughout the world, while also strengthening their claims to demand sacrifices (e.g., military conscription) and duties (e.g., income taxes) from the newly constituted citizenry in return. These very facts, however, also made social rights suspect. Unlike civil and political rights,

socioeconomic rights entertained a tortuous relationship to liberal political theory (Somers & Roberts, 2008). For many, liberalism's emphasis on contractual relations, possessive individualism (MacPherson, 1974), and negative freedoms left little room for anything but residual forms of solidarity. For others, freedom meant nothing if it boiled down to the freedom to live a wretched, inhuman life. To the extent that human autonomy, the capability to function as a full member of one's society and participate in its politics are concrete, practical achievements, social rights are essential to them (Sen, 1999).²

As long as the state was taken to be the primary provider of social rights, these two positions (contractualism and inclusive solidarity) seemed irreconcilable (Fraser & Gordon, 1993). However the erosion of this core assumption, and the shifting of the politics of solidarity from distributive justice toward recognition and identity (Fraser, 1995; Joppke, 2007) have brought them closer together. The semantic halo of citizenship has diffused far and wide, shoring up a broad range of social demands in the economic, political and cultural domain. What is at stake here is the equal ability to participate in all activities that may be seen as essential to one's functioning as a social being. But what is and isn't essential? On this question liberalism is mute and uncomfortable. The deep reason, perhaps, is that any universal or a priori definition of "the life of a civilized being" might force liberalism to confront its long history of exclusionary practices (Glenn, 2000; Mehta, 1990). The more serviceable excuse is that liberal theory *does not have to* concern itself with the problem. It seems far more satisfactory to let people define by themselves—via collective struggles or private pursuits—what it is that they see as essential *for themselves*. And thus, citizenship claims have proliferated, targeting nearly every institution and almost every aspect of people's lives. The language that surrounds these claims is a strange melding of self-sufficiency and rights, autonomy and inclusion, social difference and social belonging.

Citizenship, this "weighty, monumental, humanist word" (Fraser & Gordon, 1993, p. 45) now comes in many different flavors, depending on the adjective that precedes it. Citizenship discourse is mushrooming, colonizing the domains of economy, medicine, biology, culture, ecology, and sexuality, among others (see Figure 1).³ Right-claims have multiplied and diversified, promising new freedoms and opportunities. For instance, grassroots organizations, international financial institutions, central banks, and hedge funds peddle "financial citizenship" (or the extension of credit to populations that were previously excluded from it)⁴ as both a social justice imperative and a growth-oriented economic project. Likewise, early internet evangelists, education specialists, and tech companies have all pitched the economic, political, and social benefits of internet access, and argued that bridging the digital divide is an essential component of citizenship in the information age.⁵ Indeed, "being a digital citizen" demands a new kind of political subjectivity and enactment of rights (Isin & Ruppert, 2015). Similarly, the idea of bio-citizenship—and associated struggles for the incorporation and recognition of marginal bodies into the medical polity and the state—has morphed from a grassroots movement to democratize treatment and expertise into a direct-to-consumer enterprise peddling citizens' right to biomedical self-knowledge and their duty to self-care.⁶ The model

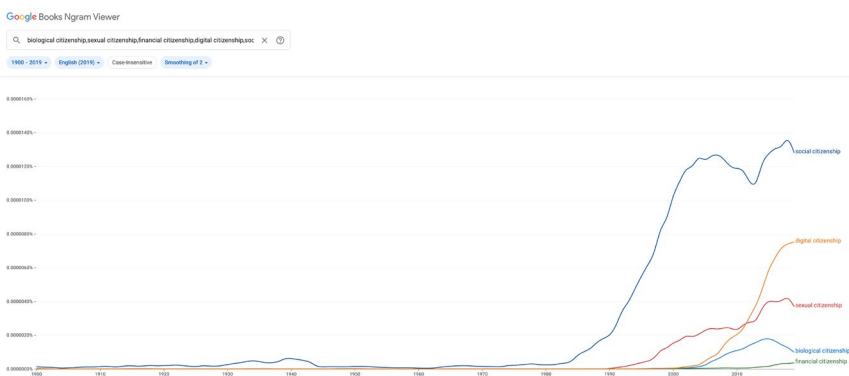


FIGURE 1 Frequencies of selected phrases in Google's text corpora in English (ngrams). [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

citizen of yesteryear had to be educated and informed, but in a general kind of way. Today that knowledge must be turned inward and made productive. She must be active—entrepreneurial even—, transparent to herself, and, as Michel Feher (2018) put it, “work toward her own appreciation.”⁷ And, the market offers her a wide menu of choices to do so.

These new iterations of citizenship talk—of “citizenship-as-desirable-activity” (Kymlicka & Norman, 1994), or “citizenship as claims-making” (Bloemraad, 2018; Stewart, 1995)—differ from older conceptions in four crucial ways. First, the new citizenship dwells in a *multipolar* world. Rather than an all-absorbing social state that supports generic entitlements and protections (in principle if not in practice), it defines multiple dimensions of obligations and rights between people and institutions. Second, the question of positionality within each world, rather than simply access, becomes a central preoccupation (Bloemraad, 2018; Fourcade & Healy, 2013). The new citizenship is *actuarial and quantitative*. It cares about statistical fairness, rather than social fairness. Consequently (and third) it depends on the *individualized* biopolitical enrollment of its subjects to provide the fuel for these calculations, and often demands an *agentic* orientation from them (Joppke, 2010). Fourth, the meaning of citizenship, from striving toward universalism and solidarity, has become more *transactional*.⁸ Corporations, rather than the state, control many of the domains where the new rights-claims are being formulated and the figure of the citizen is semantically morphing into that of the customer, the client or the digital user. (Stewart, 1995, p. 71)⁹ This lecture is a meditation, perhaps still a bit inchoate, on the social implications of this evolving understanding.

1 | INCLUSION

Marshall famously described modern citizenship as a historical process of rights unfolding, which he disaggregated into three major temporal stages (civil rights in the 18th century, political rights in the 19th and social rights in the 20th). None of these stages, however, was ever fully settled. Social rights, in particular, were always going to be in movement. To the extent that the standards for social rights—for economic security, and for supporting the “life of a civilized being”—are always evolving, we should expect societies to exhibit a continual and dynamic process of claims-making, rights-granting, and institutional transformation. Marshall imagined that public provision was the only truly universal basis for such expansions, but history has shown that this is not always the case: private institutions, too, have been pressed to enroll and service everyone, in the name of the expansion citizenship.

The changing meaning of personal finance in American society offers a good illustration of this intertwining between lifestyle change and rights emergence. From the 1790s onwards federal and state governments in the United States supported the expansion of credit markets to manage economic opportunity in a large and deeply divided land (Prasad, 2012; Quinn, 2019). By the 1920s, progressive foundations and unions promoted credit as socially beneficial and empowering (Anderson, 2008; Trumbull, 2012). Still, large swaths of the population were excluded, or left at the mercy of predatory lenders. By the mid-1960s, Hyman writes, “to be denied credit went beyond an economic inconvenience; credit access cut to the core of what it meant to be an affluent, responsible adult in postwar America” (2011, p. 201). It took fierce popular struggles by racial minorities (fighting against usurious exploitation) and by feminist organizations (fighting against marital dependency) for credit to finally overflow the boundaries of the white, male population (Hyman, 2011, Thurston, 2018). The legal battle that won the argument revolved around equality of treatment and the ability to participate fully in economic life (Krippner, 2017).

In other words, anyone looking at the expansion of credit in postwar America would conclude that it had many of the hallmarks of a hard-fought social right. Today, the ubiquity of credit cards and mobile payment systems indexes the natural and open-ended relationship that people around the world have with the financial system. The ordinary person is incorporated in quite mundane and concrete ways. Offers of private credit (at variable rates!) arrive unsolicited in the mail and on the web, as financial service providers prequalify potential targets in increasingly precise ways.¹⁰ Meanwhile, credit utilization has become essential not simply to the realization of people's social identity as consumers but also to their status as full members of society (Fourcade & Healy, 2013;

Marron, 2015). Having no credit history, even for reasons of age or nationality, is awkward enough. But in the United States (and increasingly elsewhere) a bad credit check affects one's ability to participate in a whole range of normal activities, such as renting an apartment, applying for a job (Kiviat, 2019a), or obtaining insurance (Kiviat, 2019b; Rona-Tas, 2017).

Far from protecting people from the vagaries of the market, status as an ordinary citizen actively enrolls them into it. Rather than de-commodifying their lives, it inserts them into new kinds of commercial circuits. The experience of this form of "inclusion" goes hand in hand with a politics of financial education, so that the new subjects may dutifully face their responsibilities (James, 2013).¹¹ As of February 2020, 45 U.S. states included personal finance education in their K through 12 curriculum standards, sometimes requiring such courses as early as middle school. Cheered by the business press and often involving partnerships with financial institutions, financial literacy programs train children in the basics of budgeting, stock market finance, insurance, and debt, including how to build "good credit." Responsible debt management is publicized both as a means of access to a normatively middle-class life and as a protection against precisely those financial emergencies that Marshall thought called for the institutionalization of public forms of solidarity. (Because finance is more private, it is also thought to be less stigmatizing than they were).

In practice, however, welfare and private debt are deeply entangled. The dependability of cash subsidies from the state (in the form of welfare payments or pensions) offers lucrative perspectives for the financial sector. For instance, the introduction of basic income supports in Latin America, South Africa, and India, has been accompanied by a rapid expansion of financialization—and the re-commodification of previously public services. As governments replace social provisions by cash disbursements and physical services are transformed by the introduction of virtuality, social policy becomes just another "collateral," ripe for extraction by the financial system, either as interest money or, increasingly, as data.¹²

Like personal finance, digitality has become another dimension of modern citizenship. In the same way that living without easily accessible credit is increasingly inconceivable, is it possible today to live one's life outside of the reach of Google, or LinkedIn, or Facebook? Or without a laptop, tablet, or smartphone within one's own reach? Or to have no digital existence whatsoever? To the extent that all essential social activities have moved partially online, being a full member of society implies one's bit by bit incorporation into the networked infrastructure of the internet. Many digital services, whether publicly or privately run, look like basic social infrastructures, much like electricity or water. As these technologies have normalized, they have become endowed with a quasi-public good feel. National governments and international organizations, such as the OECD (2019), anxiously track various measures of digital access and usage as essential dimensions of overall citizen welfare. In some countries, digital citizenship has been formalized. As of January 2020, at least seven countries (Costa Rica, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, India, and Spain) have explicit institutional provisions to treat internet access as a basic social right.¹³ A recent French survey compares the struggle against "illectronisme" (or digital illiteracy) to the historical mission, emblematic of modern French Republicanism, to eradicate (analog) illiteracy (Legleye & Rolland, 2019).

The private side, too, participates in that perception. Many of the core products of the digital economy—from search to social media, from mail to office tools, from games to self-tracking applications—came into people's lives in the form of handsome handouts, free of charge (or nearly so), and open to anyone with an internet or cellular connection (Fourcade & Klutetz, 2020). Even Wi-Fi—or hardware—sometimes comes free, supplied by some tech giant to a city or a school district. This quasi-public logic is also common in the Global South, where it is often powered by Western philanthropy. As Morgan Ames shows in *The Charisma Machine* (2019), a utopian vision of expanded educational opportunities inspired the project, originating at the MIT media lab, to outfit every child in the developing world with a small, sturdy and cheap laptop. The project failed miserably, but the vision survives. In 2013 for instance, Facebook unveiled what would become the Free Basics experiment, designed to deliver basic internet service to populations in developing countries. The ultimately fraught (Hempel 2018) project was launched in the name of a right of individuals to connectivity, understood as an essential social ingredient of a "dignified and fulfilling life" (Alloa, 2019, p. 55).

The tech industry draws its legitimacy from the idea of citizenship perhaps more than from any other institution, but it is a form of citizenship that bypasses the state, and even transcends national boundaries. Politically, the modern tech industry was born out of the promise to close the exclusion gap through the expansion of broadband and associated services, and to do so in multiple domains at the same time. Its vision of the digital future was that of a gigantic inclusionary machine. The politically marginal would be incorporated into the polity; the uneducated would discover opportunities to train themselves; the financially excluded would muster credit, or funding; the jobless would find work; the entrepreneurial would innovate; the geographically and socially isolated would connect to the rest of the world; minorities of all kinds would finally feel empowered; those in need of temporary assistance would be served by crowdfunded campaigns of support; unknown artists and innovators would suddenly have a platform to showcase their creativity. Last but not least, the state itself would be reorganized as a digital platform, a Government 2.0—nimble, more efficient, and better able to reach underserved populations (Arora, 2016; O'Reilly, 2009). Many of these interventions aim to replace top-down forms of government action and to deliver instead flexible services adapted to each person's needs (Fourcade & Gordon, 2020).¹⁴ International organizations, for instance the United Nations with its Global Pulse project, look at big data as the next frontier for the realization of sustainable development or humanitarian goals (Isin & Ruppert, 2019; Johns, 2017, 2019).

Even critics of these optimistic claims (which are legion in the social sciences) find it hard to downplay the real satisfactions that come with digital incorporation, from seamless and convenient life to expanded capabilities, from the right to participate to the extension of solidarity, from the irresistible allure of self-exposure to that of voyeurism (Harcourt, 2015a). Let us not forget that this regime of hypervisibility arose with little resistance. We were guided instead by the fear of missing out on the common experience and by the affirmative pleasures of individuation, of feeling as “one of a kind,” as a recent Tube ad by the U.S. data broker Experian proudly proclaims (Figure 2). Nearly every internet-based service promises to realize two fundamental dimensions of citizenship—equal status and the freedom to be whoever we want—at once.

Let me summarize the argument so far. I have suggested that demands for citizenship have been reoriented toward socio-technical systems that are most visibly dominated by private institutions. In particular, financialization and digitization have been construed as solutions to problems of opportunity, fairness, and (occasionally) solidarity in domains as varied as credit, education, jobs, politics, or healthcare. One reason to treat these two processes in tandem, rather than sequentially, is that they are increasingly collapsing into one another. First, “the ‘datafication of everything’ is [arguably] an extension of the much broader phenomenon of the financialization of everyday life” (Morozov, 2015): every aspect of experience, properly categorized through digital means, can be commodified, assetized, bundled, and traded (Birch & Muniesa, 2020). Second, financialization and digitization converge technologically through the development of fintech, particularly in poor countries without an existing banking infrastructure (Gabor & Brooks, 2017; Donovan & Park, 2019).¹⁵

In the second part of my exposé, I will show that these new ways of thinking about inclusion have both changed the moral economy of citizenship and the pattern of economic inequality. The reasons are twofold. First, the expansion of citizenship (the equalization of status vis-à-vis some social good or activity) always precipitates some form of biopolitical regulation. Rights beget duties. Children are required to attend school. The unemployed must “look for work.” And so on... Likewise, we must analyze the specific moral injunctions that accompany the new citizenship claims. Second and relatedly, any expansionary and equalizing process always prompts efforts at differentiation (Simmel, 1972).¹⁶ Just as the development of social rights created new and consequential forms of stratification around welfare and education, or the opening of legal citizenship prompted a redrawing of lines through citizenship tests (Joppke, 2019), the move toward financial and digital inclusiveness is producing newly actionable social divisions, social duties and forms of capital that shape people's life trajectories in multiple ways (Fourcade & Healy, 2013, 2017). In other words, the equalization of status that was so important to Marshall is generating newly meaningful differences.



FIGURE 2 Experian advertisement, London Tube, October 2019. (author's picture) [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

2 | MERITOCRACY

The politics of citizenship in a liberal society is perennially a problem of overcoming exclusion and sustaining substantive solidarity (Somers, 2008). If we want to think clearly about the current transformation, it may be useful to go back in history, to those earlier inclusionary episodes that sought to mitigate deeply entrenched forms of social disadvantage. Just as the extension of financial or digital citizenship is today brandished as a liberal panacea that

will help people help themselves (and possibly reshuffle social hierarchies by freeing up energies and innovation), the extension of social rights once affirmed that all lives should be guaranteed “a modicum of economic welfare and security.” The expansion of education, most characteristically, supported the notion that everyone should have “the right to share to the full in the social heritage,” to quote T.H. Marshall again (1950, p. 11).¹⁷

But as Marshall was quick to point out, this major institutional transformation also had a profound effect on the social structure. The new rights created their own special divisions, separating citizens *according to their ability to do well through them*. Postwar sociologists confirmed these insights over and over again in empirical studies. Those who rely on social assistance to survive suffered “psychological class discrimination” (Marshall, 1950, p. 55). Presumed to be lacking in grit and motivation, they were treated as a morally inferior group, subjected to enhanced surveillance and often forced to work (Somers, 2008; Somers & Block, 2005). Likewise, the expansion of the right to education created a new axis of social stratification. Daniel Bell wrote about “the codification of a new social order based, in principle, on the priority of educated talent.” (1972, p. 41) Randall Collins (1979) announced the advent of the “credential society.”

And, yet it was soon clear that these movements benefited the existing elite much more than the common mass. Education was both an effective social ladder *and* a particularly devious conduit for the recycling of old inequalities across groups. In the United States, James Coleman concluded in 1964 that public schools were ineffective in reducing racial achievement gaps. In France, Pierre Bourdieu (1974) observed the institutionalization of a new form of capital (“cultural capital”), through which the educated tended to reproduce themselves. The children of the bourgeoisie (as it was then called) were not only the ones getting the bulk of the new degrees and the better grades, but they also disproportionately got those degrees that paid the most (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). The ideological consequences were profound. Rather than disappearing, economic and social differences could now legitimate themselves via the morally impeccable seal of a college diploma. Marshall had anticipated all of this, when he couched the fundamental dilemma of liberalism in the following terms:

“The right of the citizen in this process of selection and mobility is the right to equality of opportunity. Its aim is to eliminate hereditary privilege. In essence it is the equal right to display and develop differences, or inequalities; the equal right to be recognised as unequal.”

(Marshall, 1950, p. 65)

No one, perhaps, was as biting as British sociologist and Labor leader Michael Young, who in a futuristic satire first published in 1958 coined the term meritocracy and described its rise as a cruel liberal fantasy. No matter how deep and how detailed the quantification of merit might become, Young (2017) predicted, those who dominate the game will soon hoard resources, concentrate political power, and project onto those excluded from their ranks the belief that only they are to blame for their lack of success. In a later text that anticipates on a host of future developments—from the rise of the 1%, caught, like everyone else, in an endless race for social esteem to the anti-democratic consequences of philanthropy—¹⁸ Young blasted the sense of entitlement that a meritocratic system produces, and predicted a populist revolt against it, born out of resentment.¹⁹ Today, the sociologists’ verdict on the meritocracy is more widely shared than ever: in the United States especially, statistics about stalled intergenerational mobility (Chetty et al., 2017) or widening health gaps between income groups (Zimmermann & Anderson, 2019) show that the social elevators do not work anymore. Tales of social closure, moral bankruptcy, and unfair advantage populate the radio podcasts, the columns of newspapers, and the shelves of booksellers. Bearing out Michael Young’s prophecy, education has arguably become the core variable organizing political conflict in the Global North, partially displacing income (Piketty, 2020).²⁰

And yet the institutions are resilient, even as the moral justifications are crumbling. If the system has caught a fever, it’s the thermometer that must be broken. Universities and corporations alike still claim their commitment to raising the most deserving of the overlooked, whatever their disadvantage may be, in an effort to rekindle a broken “egalitarian pact” (Zelizer & Gaydosch, 2020). Merit, after all, is the most obvious justification for

inequality that liberalism knows, so it digs its heels deeper and deeper—however, its nature changes in the process (Markovits, 2019).

The inability of meritocratic institutions to deliver “equality of result” (Bell, 1972, p. 40) has sparked two main corrective strategies. The first is a compensation for historical disadvantage, institutionalized through diversity and inclusion programs, which identify people through their membership in underprivileged groups (such as underrepresented minorities, first generation, or low-income students). For reasons that sociologists understand all too well, however, these strategies do not interact peacefully with ordinal technologies of sorting *individuals*, like grades and tests, which continue to *appear* more objective. This tension runs especially high when corrections for social disadvantage touch ordinal technologies directly: higher education, for instance, is full of examples of the “failed quantification” of race or social hardship (Barnard & Fourcade, 2020).²¹ A second solution has been to double down on the more clearly quantifiable aspects of merit, to push the frontier of commensuration outward further and further. The old meritocracy is moribund, long live the next one! For the first time in a long time, new prospects are on the horizon. Digital technologies have both enabled a broadening of economic and social incorporation *and* expanded the possibilities for classifying, sorting, slotting, and scaling people.²² New ways of measuring merit have sprung out of these systems, from financial responsibility to social influence, from friendliness to punctuality, from physical fitness to reliability. Both markets and states find themselves compelled to build up and exploit this efficient, proliferating, fine-grained knowledge in order to manage individual claims on resources and opportunities. Social inclusion seems to depend not only on being incorporated into these systems, but on behaving and performing according to their rules, on *demonstrating merit within them*.

3 | ORDINALITY

As formal citizenship in finance and especially digitality expands, exclusions become more visible. Industrial capitalism has its industrial reserve army and its Lumpenproletariat (Marx, 1990). Financial capitalism has its stubborn cash economy and its *Lumpenscoretariat* (Fourcade & Healy, 2013). Digitality, too, has its expansive no man's lands²³ and its savvy loci of resistance (Vertesi, 2014). But inclusion into the digital infrastructure also bears social and individual costs. Collectively, it depends on an underbelly of underpaid “ghost workers” who toil in the bowels of the system. They are the millions of click laborers who clean the data flows on digital platforms and make the digital myths come true on a second by second basis. They are the digital precariat who executes the myriad of microtasks that power “artificially intelligent” systems, while awaiting the robots that will make them irrelevant (Casilli, 2019; Gray & Suri, 2019).

Personally, the citizens of public and private digital systems (including the invisible precariat itself) must render themselves legible through obligatory onboarding, frequent interactions, and passive surveillance—most of the time not chosen or consented to. The technological argument for this kind of “engagement,” as tech firms put it, is familiar enough. It goes something like this: Computers have magnified the ability of organizations to process large numbers of things and people in a short amount of time (Beniger, 1986; Gandy, 1993). However, these systems often perform quite poorly, especially when dealing with human behavior. More data is needed to increase the accuracy of predictions and the efficiency of the sorting process. Convenience, faster service, and enhanced mobility within and across systems will ensue.

As a result, close-up exposure has become a non-negotiable prerequisite of social integration across a wide range of private, but also public domains. Surveillance inheres in the condition of digital citizenship. Digital government, like digital capitalism, demands that everyone be under observation.²⁴ But the moral threshold of surveillance, the coercive pressure to participate, and the potentially harmful effects are higher for those populations whose lives depend on the extension of public or private services (Benjamin, 2019). Algorithmically managed social policies typically require intrusive pre-qualifying information, obligate claimants to frequent checks into the

system, and are monitored by opaque fraud-detecting systems that inevitably end up targeting the most vulnerable (Eubanks, 2017, Henley & Booth, 2020).²⁵

Second, digital citizenship (including financial citizenship) dwells in ordinality. Computers are by nature oriented to sorting: they “order” the world by spewing out priorities and queues.²⁶ They rank, score, and use reward functions that operate through cybernetic feedback loops (Yeung, 2017). Implemented out there in the world, user-facing algorithms, both private and public, organize important aspects of social, economic, and political life. They redefine the relevant categories by which *the social process itself* operates, the hierarchies that organize it, and the valuations that stand behind these hierarchies. The nature of citizenship, and the rights associated with it—that is, the ability to participate in various activities and *the terms under which such participation takes place*—become increasingly defined by one's position on some sort of ordinal scale, a process I have called elsewhere “ordinalization” (Fourcade, 2016). For instance, Australia's welfare recipients who “fail to meet their required activities” receive “demerit points” that put them at risk of income support suspension (Henrique-Gomes, 2019). In the market, credit card companies favor customers with long histories, high and varied usage of different credit types, rather than prudent spenders who tend to be invisible.²⁷ TaskRabbit privileges workers who complete more tasks—not simply those who complete well the tasks they take on. And social media companies care little for someone who does not post, comment, message, and otherwise interacts with others. Her rare or irrelevant contribution will disappear into the algorithmic vortex, making her invisible to her social world, and curtailing her access to a full online social life (Bucher, 2018; Duffy & Pooley, 2019).²⁸

4 | INDIVIDUALIZATION

Historically, the development of citizenship is often associated with the decline of criteria of gender, race, property, religion, ethnicity, caste (and more) as core markers of the deservingness to vote, rule, or hold office. In the United States for instance, citizenship was independent of personal virtue because nominal categories—color, labor status, or gender—already supplied the relevant markers of worth. The unfolding of citizenship in this country—as elsewhere—displays a never-ending “quest for inclusion,” a gradual extension of dignity and rights once reserved to wealthy white males only (Shklar, 1989). But as formal equality progressed and the boundaries around citizenship faded, differences *among* citizens were thrown into sharper relief. As Yasemin Soysal (2012) pointed out in this very spot and journal some 8 years ago, the liberal elaboration of personal autonomy and rights increasingly demanded that moral distinctions be drawn at the individual level. For instance, in both the European social project and its immigrant integration agenda, the burden of solidarity has shifted from the state to the person: the duty to realize one's full potential *as an individual* implies productive work engagement, skill upgrading, knowledge of laws and values, and civic participation.²⁹ Margaret Somers' (2008) description of the transformation of welfare in the United States—from an unconditional status motivated by shared fate to a contingent privilege dependent on personal worth and economic value—is consonant with this description.

Does the precise tracking, aggregation, and reification of people's behavior across multiple domains represent just another iteration of the individualization of citizenship? Perhaps. It is, indeed, important to go back to individualization to understand ordinalization's revolutionary appeal. The focus on behavior, and behavior only, contributes to destabilize ossified advantages associated with categorical distinctions between people. As mentioned earlier, the diffusion of ordinalizing technologies, such as the credit score, in the United States is very much tied to the history of anti-discrimination legislation (Krippner, 2017; Poon, 2013). Ordinalization undergirds a democratic promise to judge individuals in a nominally egalitarian manner that will reveal the truth of personal desert. At the same time, Young's warning against the demoralizing effects of such schemes remains valid. The notion that inequalities can ever be “just” or “deserved” remains very much a mirage, and a particularly pernicious one at that.

The first problem is that ordinalization is fundamentally a-sociological in theory, if not in practice. Because behavior (including financial behavior) is often patterned *and classified* precisely along those categorical dimensions

that the system pretends to ignore (this is, after all, what a social structure is!), ordinal citizenship often reproduces those very categorical inequalities that it was meant to circumvent, albeit through different means.³⁰ The politics of ordinality is famously articulated around notions of data justice, statistical profiling, disparate impact, and algorithmic bias rather than outright prejudice (Barocas & Selbst, 2016; Harcourt, 2015b). But because “statistical discrimination” looks fairer, and because the collectives that actuarial technologies delineate are fluid and aggregative rather than categorically or tangibly grounded, solidarity may be more difficult to achieve. At a minimum, it requires a fundamental rethinking of the social basis of mobilization (Krippner, 2019; Simon, 1988).

The second problem, going back to Young’s critique, is that ordinalization is inherently moralizing. Whatever their actual purpose, technologies of social commensuration and social sorting are hierarchical in nature. They always end up producing standards of moral deservingness and social desirability. In human society, any priority order, any queue or ranking system is also a moral order—or, as Barry Schwartz (1978, p. 7) put it, an “order of moral demand.” Nowhere, perhaps, is this truer than in the domain of credit and debt, which—as Friedrich Nietzsche (2013) remarked long ago—is one of the most potent sites for the social distribution of feelings of superiority, moral desert, shame, and guilt. And, thus—as we increasingly invite the logic of ratings and scores into our lives via dreams of inclusion and expanded citizenship—we lend ourselves to the belief that the scores we fetch, and the outcomes they determine, represent something intrinsic about ourselves. Experimental evidence, for instance, shows that reified measures tend to reinforce beliefs that social positions are somehow deserved (Accominotti & Tadmon, 2020). As such, they often become causes of intense personal concern and strategizing,³¹ and contribute to the broader legitimation of inequalities (McCall, 2013; Mijs, 2019).

The third problem is that such beliefs conceal the real nature of ordinal meritocracies. As I have suggested above, the logic of algorithmic engines, especially private ones, is fundamentally actuarial (Bouk, 2015; Gandy, 1993; Lauer, 2017). They are designed to extract value, rather than to create standards of merit. Sometimes the two goals are aligned, but not always (Fourcade, 2017). The distinction is important analytically. In *The Constitution of Liberty*, Friedrich Hayek explains it rather matter-of-factly: “[We] expect in our dealings with others to be remunerated not according to our subjective merit but according to what our services are worth to them,” in other words their market value (2011, p. 161).³² Algorithmic sorting is primarily oriented to the needs of specific extractive projects (Fourcade & Healy, 2017, p. 24). This is why, for instance, there is not one credit score, but thousands—each precisely tailored to the particular economic purpose it is meant to serve. Or why the company Fitbit recently released a tracker for employees and health insurance members only. How these devices treat their subjects depends (at least in part, if not primarily) on the latter’s ability to generate capital—in the form of profits, data, savings, or (in some cases) political advantage. This means that people’s movements up and down the ordinal scale may have little to do with their own actions, and everything to do with changing system rules. Ordinal stratifications are culturally powered and *naturalized* by ideologies of merit, but materially anchored by inequalities of value.

5 | HIGH DIMENSIONALITY

A world regulated by algorithms overwhelms its subjects with ethical injunctions toward self-optimization (Ziewitz, 2019) and self-appreciation (Feher, 2018). But how this work on the self must be carried out is increasingly obscure. The data “sensing” practices (Johns, 2017) that support computational sorting have become tremendously complicated. Digitally-savvy organizations, unlike analog ones, are driven by the ambition to work with high dimensional data, sifting through a heterogeneous patchwork of sources—geolocation, photographs, public records, workplaces, grocery stores, courthouses, social services, fitbits, social networks, web browsers, and much more.³³ The domain of credit scoring, particularly in the Global South where personal credit files are notoriously “thin,” is teeming with fintech start-ups that promise to produce risk predictions with creatively sourced data.³⁴ Rather than demanding specific kinds of inputs, new computing techniques have the ability to discover patterns

and correlations with “virtually no pre-established conceptions” about data structure (Boelaert & Ollion, 2018, also see Anderson, 2008). Everything potentially bleeds into everything else. In a world of “almost anything goes,” where, to quote Louise Amoore (2009, p. 24), “every minute and prosaic ‘behaviour’, every aspect of a way of life potentially becoming a part of the classification,” what the algorithms “sees” in the end, and especially *how* it sees, is impossible to fathom. Since the outcomes of machine learning computation are by nature opaque even to their own designers (Burrell, 2016), populations have found that they are poorly equipped to game the actuarial systems that rule their lives, let alone contest their decisions.

Institutions are developing a new way of apprehending the social world, anchored in prospectively feeling the reality *on the ground*,³⁵ identifying needs inductively and governing opportunistically, using whatever data are available.³⁶ Such a regime develops knowledge from the bottom up, by “paying attention” rather than implementing its vision from the top down. It works probabilistically, by identifying patterns and deviations from the norm in large datasets, working through what Amoore (2013) calls a “politics of possibility” that visualizes unknown futures, to be either feared or desired.³⁷ In practice, the subject of government is not the person anymore but the personal fragment, the “measurable type” (Cheney-Lippold, 2017), who must be positioned along the path to individual and collective “preparedness” by an eclectic array of algorithmic vectors.³⁸

Identities are no longer just claimed or granted, they are inferred from behavior and theorized by data engines—even categories such as race, ethnicity, gender, or sexuality may be reframed as statistical probabilities. The way algorithms see and classify me may differ starkly from the way I see and classify myself—but that “algorithmic truth” about myself is increasingly consequential economically, socially, and politically. It propels what Cheney-Lippold calls *Jus algorithmi* or “right of the algorithm.” Take national citizenship, for instance. As we move from physical to digital space, algorithms discern where people belong culturally from everyday online behavior—and decide where to direct them (Bridle, 2016). This virtual citizenship, co-constructed with private parties and dependent on the infrastructure of the internet, has already taken a life of its own in the bowels of the U.S. government machine. The files leaked by Edward Snowden in 2013 revealed secretive NSA monitoring of digital communications. One algorithm was tasked with assessing the concrete (rather than formal) state belonging of internet users. Anyone whose algorithmically inferred foreignness fell below 50% could be treated as a foreigner. In practice, this meant they could be legally surveilled (Cheney-Lippold, 2016)—and lose the protections of formal citizenship even when they held a U.S. passport.

We have seen that—for all practical purposes—credit scores in the United States regulate the conditions of “financial citizenship,” as well as the terms of institutional incorporation in many nonfinancial domains. Increasingly, this includes traditional sites of “citizenship,” such as national affiliation and social rights. On February 24, 2020, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security started implementing its new “public charge” rule that proposed using credit scores and reports to help determine the eligibility of immigrants applying for a green card or U.S. citizenship.³⁹ The rationale behind the new policy is that a low credit score signals a risk of using public supports in the future, but it also evokes the broader role that credit scores have come to play as markers of social fitness and reputation. Financial status, however narrowly measured, thus bleeds into citizenship rights (both national and social) in a very direct way.⁴⁰ The other example—coming from a very different political tradition—is China, where digitization, financialization, measured worth, and social citizenship are entangled in an even more formal and public manner. In the Chinese government’s plan to implement a “social credit score” for every citizen, data shared through public-private MoUs will serve to regulate people’s ability to access a wide range of public and private services—things like broadband speed, public transportation, foreign travel visas, social benefits, access to elite restaurants, and the quality of schooling offered to a person’s children. This score will be primarily anchored in one’s history of payments and record of legal compliance, although any digital system connected to it will presumably loop back into the scoring engine (see Loubère & Brehm, 2019; Matsakis, 2019).

The project builds on a series of similar ventures by corporations and a myriad of pilot experiments by provincial and local authorities receiving credit information from dozens, sometimes hundreds of subunits, with varying degrees of tech sophistication (Liu, 2019). These efforts have produced a cacophony of “blacklists” and “red

lists," deployed to shame and punish those citizens deemed "untrustworthy" while granting small benefits and public recognition to those who follow rules and complete their financial and legal obligations in a timely fashion (Ahmed, 2019). But a broader ambition, for both private and public actors, is to tie pervasive digital data collection and linking across platforms to the development of and widespread deployment of AI systems (Lewis, 2020). These create the possibility of more fine-grained, but also more opaque, measures of worth, tailored not only to bring various aspects of the individualized self into sharp relief but also to distribute rights and privileges accordingly, and thereby reprogram individual behavior in the name of collective "harmony."

6 | THE LIFE OF A CIVILIZED BEING

So where are the means to the "life of a civilized being" to be found today? If digital systems only know and manage fragments of ourselves, they still maintain the cultural fiction of a knowable, purposeful, and agentic individual who can be measured, classified and "civilized." Ordinal citizenship thus depends, first and foremost, on the *willingness to cultivate* a digitally mediated, dividualy managed and technologically assisted self. In practice, the political project to produce this fiction has taken many different forms. One solution rests on straightforward coercion—both normative (through social pressure) and physical (through restricted mobility). In the city of Rongcheng, China, a civil servant tells a journalist from *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, who has come to inquire about his city's pioneering role in social credit: "We want to civilize people." He proudly cites the founding document of the Office of Honesty of the City of Rongchen: "Allow the trustworthy to roam everywhere under heaven while making it hard for the discredited to take a single step" (Strittmatter, 2017). While there is some evidence that early (and mostly corporate) projects in this domain were quite popular, their growing inscription in one of the most authoritarian states in the world has given supporters a reason to pause.

Another path, powered by behavioral economics and market design, rests on the use of choice architectures and incentives to govern individual and collective behavior (Agamben, 2014; Rose, 1999). Good citizenship rests, primarily, on institutions' efforts to instill new dispositions. This may include reporting suspicious threats through a website or feeding pictures of uneven pavement to city officials. But it mostly implies unfolding ourselves as financial, digital, and biological projects that will be nudged toward some institutionally desirable state, by means of cybernetic feedback or behavioral modification (Schüll, 2016; Zuboff, 2019). Importantly, the price system looms large in this loop. The ordinal citizen's duties might include walking a certain number of daily steps, hydrating regularly, or simply wearing a fitbit, so her insurance risk may be assessed or priced precisely. As a worker, she may be relentlessly rated by everyone. Her salary may depend on obscure algorithms deeply embedded in her computer that break down her workflow, her emotional state of mind, her communicative ability, or her connections to others. Relevant measures may include her likelihood of quitting her job or her cultural fit with the company, pricing her not only according to performance but also "willingness to accept." As a financial citizen, she must use credit quite a lot, but responsibly—or face the market consequences. And, last but not least, she possibly finds it necessary to rely on paid services and derivative apps to optimize herself on multiple digital scales. This regime has already generated its own discontents, legal challenges, and organized resistance, particularly in the domain of work (e.g., see Feher, 2018; Irani & Silberman, 2013; O'Neil, 2016), but again the sheer multiplication of ad-hoc ordinal logics across multiple domains of life makes a unified challenge difficult to envision, let alone implement. When algorithms determine the value of each and everyone, how do we sustain beliefs in equality? When outcomes look like the result of individual actions (people get what they deserve), how do we maintain meaningful forms of solidarity?

Finally, it is possible that even with sophisticated props this ordinally managed citizen never fully comes into view to herself.⁴¹ As new streams of data come along, the machinery that could sustain such an effort has become impenetrable, amorphous, and unsettled.⁴² The rules of ordinality change often—perhaps in an effort to circumvent "Goodhardt's law,"⁴³ or as part of ongoing power plays in algorithmic systems (Ziewitz 2019). This

makes scored positions “algorithmically precarious” (Duffy et al., 2020) and creates uncertainty about both the government of subjects and the legitimate direction of self-conduct. As the game of ordinal citizenship becomes increasingly hard to play, tech hammers one last nail in the coffin of liberal ideology. Why not give up on freedom altogether and outsource every action to a machine that strives to know you better than you know yourself? (Harari, 2015) In a speculative video leaked to the online tech magazine *The Verge*, the head of design at Google’s moonshot unit, Nick Foster, envisions a world where people farm out all decision making to digital devices. Google seamlessly takes over, organizing your life and designing products “just for you” from a ledger of your past “actions, decisions, preferences, movement, and relationships.” As the process goes on to include everyone across multiple generations, the algorithm scans other people’s ledgers to detect gaps in your data, produce the means to fill those gaps, thereby making your ledger “richer.” In the final step, the ledger—a digital version of our social DNA—is given purpose as the algorithm works to reinforce those behavioral traits that it finds desirable at the level of the species, so that future generations, properly nudged by their own digital assistants, can benefit from the algorithmically-processed wisdom of their predecessors. This is probably not what “sharing to the full in the social heritage” was meant to be. But it may be the political horizon that frames how we will think about it in the future.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data derived from public domain resources.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ As Goldberg shows for the United States, the centuries-long expansion of rights that Marshall describes was never linear. For instance, social rights were treated “as an alternative to civil and political rights rather than as a foundation for them” (2008, p. 109) well into the twentieth century (also see Fischer, 2008; Fox, 2012; Somers, 2008).
- ² As Glenn (2000, p. 4) writes, “In Marshall’s vision, social citizenship was important, not only for its own sake, but because it ‘filled out’ what Marx considered the hollow rights of liberal citizenship.”
- ³ See Kymlicka (1995), Rose and Novas (2005), Epstein (2007), Lakhani and Timmermans (2014), Dumbrava (2017), Bloemraad et al. (2019), Hirsch and Khan (2020).
- ⁴ Typically, marginalized racial groups, women, and the poor (James, 2013; Riles, 2018; Wherry et al., 2019).
- ⁵ Mossberger et al. (2008), Hintz et al. (2018).
- ⁶ Rose and Novas (2005), Epstein (2007), Nelson (2016), Lee (2017).
- ⁷ Also see Rose and Novas (2005), Fourcade (2016).
- ⁸ The trend described here parallels the “instrumental turn” pertaining to national citizenship identified by Joppke (2019) and others.
- ⁹ This shift toward the market has been appealing politically because it satisfies—at least nominally—liberalism’s embrace of the sovereign, empowered individual, as expressed in two key cultural idioms of democracy: *equality* of opportunity, on the one hand, and the *freedom* to live one’s life as one sees fit, on the other hand (Friedman, 1982; Lerner, 1972; Rose, 1999).

- ¹⁰ In the ambitious world of fintech where “every tech company wants to be a bank—someday, at least,” (Barber, 2019) everything is game to predict credit risk: phone call history, GPS data, friends’ lists, political campaign donations, social media postings, and personal photographs.
- ¹¹ The state’s role is reduced to designing weakly enforced institutional safeguards such as literacy standards and programs, informed consent, safety, and security rules. (Lazarus, 2013).
- ¹² See Soederberg (2014), Lavinias (2018), Fourcade and Gordon (2020). For instance in India today the adoption of welfare e-payments (supported by a biometric identification infrastructure known as Aadhaar) in the name of financial inclusion, government effectiveness and anti-corruption efforts, is helping build the scoring infrastructure that now fuels the expansion of credit.
- ¹³ In a 2009 decision striking the anti-file sharing law HADOPI, the French Constitutional Council ruled that “free access” to online communications services is a human right that cannot be withheld without a judge’s intervention.
- ¹⁴ Digital industries more generally are very much entangled with the state everywhere, in the form of crucial seed funding (O’Mara, 2019), infrastructural investments, a favorable legal-regulatory environment (Cohen, 2019), and sometimes even revenue sources (digital finance, e.g., benefits from the generalization of income supports and retrenchment in basic public services that force people to go into debt).
- ¹⁵ In 2015 the Brookings Institution, an influential Washington-based think tank, unveiled a vast international project to promote financial *and* digital inclusion. The twin mentions in the project title (financial/digital) indexed the organization’s claims that, in the words of the authors of the 2017 report on the subject, “(1) financial inclusion is a key ingredient for sustainable development; (2) ‘Fintech,’ the intersection of technological innovation and the financial sector, possesses tremendous potential to accelerate progress toward financial inclusion” (Lewis et al., 2017, p. 2). This hyperbolic language reaffirms the centrality of microfinance to the development project and to the empowerment of women, but—after it arguably failed to deliver either—reinvigorates its promise through the synergy with digital and mobile technology (Kusimba, 2018). The convergence between financialization and digitization “is at the center of narratives of ‘Africa rising’” (Donovan & Park, 2019). Kenya, where international and state organizations have enthusiastically supported the rapid expansion of the mobile money system M-Pesa, is often praised as the poster child for this new wave of financial inclusion. But predatory lending and data collection practices are wreaking havoc on financially insecure populations, and there is little evidence of redistributive effects (Natile, 2020).
- ¹⁶ Michel Foucault put it well:

The power of normalization imposes homogeneity; but it individualizes by making it possible to measure gaps, to determine levels, to fix specialties and to render the differences useful by fitting them one to another. It is easy to understand how power of the norm functions within a system of formal equality, since within a homogeneity that is the rule, the norm introduces, as a useful imperative and as a result of measurement, all the shading of individual differences. (Foucault, 1995, p. 184)

- ¹⁷ An educated citizenry was deemed essential to supporting political and civil rights, too.
- ¹⁸ Piketty (2014), Markovits (2019), Giridharadas (2018).
- ¹⁹ “If the rich and powerful were encouraged by the general culture to believe that they fully deserved all they had, how arrogant they could become, and, if they were convinced it was all for the common good, how ruthless in pursuing their own advantage.” (Young, 1994, p. 89) Ironically, the career of Young’s own son, Toby, both at university and afterwards, bore out his father’s predictions with a vengeance—as, indeed, did Michael Young’s own efforts to get him into Oxford. I thank Kieran Healy for pointing out this fact.
- ²⁰ Comparing the 1950–1970 period to the 1980–2000 period in the United States and France, Thomas Piketty (2020, p. 56) shows that the 10% most educated have moved from voting Republican/for the right to voting Democrat/for the left, while the 90% least educated have experienced a movement in the inverse direction.
- ²¹ In a famous case involving the University of Michigan, the U.S. Supreme Court in 2003 rejected the use of quantified measures to account for race in college admissions, while allowing race to be taken into consideration as part of a holistic evaluation process. (Hirschman et al., 2016) The U.S. College Board’s recent proposal to add points for “adversity” to its flagship product, the SAT reasoning test, caused such a stir that it was pulled shortly after its unveiling and replaced with a variable providing information on the student’s “environmental context.” In New York City, a 2019 proposal to scrape the entrance exam into elite high schools—widely seen as leading to racially unfair outcomes—died in the legislature. (Shapiro & Wang, 2019) And, the same fate seems to be awaiting a recent proposal by the French

government to award bonus points to disadvantaged (scholarship or *boursier*) students taking the famously difficult examination into the *grandes écoles*. These conflicts pit two different (and incompatible) understandings of fairness against one another: as blindness to social difference, or, instead, as awareness of that difference.

- ²² These two trends might be very much connected: In a classic article, sociologist Georg Simmel argued that as groups expand, they have a tendency to differentiate internally.
- ²³ As of 2019, nearly half of the world's population was not using the internet. Most of the offline population was located in poor countries in Africa and South Asia, where the gender gap in internet usage was also largest and growing fastest (data from itu.int).
- ²⁴ Estonia's model e-government, for instance, "calls for active, informed subjects who are willing to constantly interact with authorities" (Björklund, 2016).
- ²⁵ Consider, for instance, this media report about the management of the unemployed in Australia:

Once deemed deserving, unemployed workers are referred to one of the 1,600-plus private employment service providers to undertake activity-testing. Unemployed workers are responsible for managing and submitting records of their activities online. This can include entering a daily code confirming attendance at job service providers, recording details of jobs applied for (regardless of whether they are available or appropriate), and reporting fortnightly income. Thus, the administrative burden of work testing is shifted to the unemployed. (North, 2020)

- ²⁶ Indeed the French call them *ordinateurs*, in reference to the creation of order out of chaos. (Incidentally the original proposal for translating "computer" in French was feminine, "l'ordinateuse électronique.")
- ²⁷ That is, someone who never uses their credit card (even when managing their finances conservatively) may find that their credit score is low.
- ²⁸ Similarly, your Uber driver ranks you on punctuality and friendliness, but Uber (the company) ranks you on your behavior within the system, from canceling too many rides to failing to provide feedback. Uber states on its website: "The rating system is designed to give mutual feedback. *If you never rate your drivers, you may see your own rating fall.*" In extreme cases, unfitting behavior *as rated within the app* may lead to exclusion from the platform, for both drivers and passengers. But ratings' most likely effect is differentiated service, such as reducing or lengthening the waiting time for an available car (or a customer), or matching driver and user according to rating. Finally, there is always the possibility of using the price system to reward (or punish) the well (or poorly) rated—although there is no evidence that this solution has been implemented.
- ²⁹ On this point, also see Ong (2006).
- ³⁰ This is what I have called elsewhere (Fourcade, 2016) "phantom de-categorization."
- ³¹ See Strathern (1997), Espeland and Stevens (1998), Fourcade (2016), Christin (2020).
- ³² This is what Leslie McCall (2013, p. 143) calls the "Just deserts" model. Also see Sen (2000) for a clear distinction between merit arising from incentives (what Hayek calls "value"), and merit arising from appropriate action.
- ³³ As a recent series of articles on "Automating Poverty" in *The Guardian* showed, this is also true of public sector organizations. Efficiency-seeking governments throughout the world are implementing new computational tools that mine voluminous amounts of public and private data to identify patterns of risk (of fraud, of harm) and allocate benefits, surveillance, and resources accordingly.
- ³⁴ In India, for instance, the credit-checking startup CreditVidya "identifies clients using their biometric ID in combination with their internet browsing history and other data, to assign credit scores for users who have no record of loan repayments." (Doshi, 2017).
- ³⁵ That reality is profoundly mediated by the digital apparatus, however.
- ³⁶ For instance, Evgeny Morozov (2013) reported that "a 2013 report by Westminster council and the Local Government Information Unit, a thinktank, calling for the linking of housing and council benefits to claimants' visits to the gym—with the help of smartcards."
- ³⁷ "Algorithms precisely function as a means of directing and disciplining attention, focusing on specific points and cancelling out all other data, appearing to make it possible to translate *probable* associations between people or objects into *actionable* security decisions." (Amoore 2009, p. 22).

- ³⁸ In joint work with Kieran Healy (2017), I have suggested that a new form of capital, call it Übercapital, or Eigencapital, arises from one's position and trajectory according to various digital scoring, grading, and ranking methods. Also see Rouvroy and Berns (2013), Gerlitz and Lury (2014), Lakoff (2017).
- ³⁹ The United Kingdom also uses information about debt and bankruptcy in its decisions on citizenship applications.
- ⁴⁰ Investor citizenship, a form of citizenship that is fully fungible in money, arguably represents an extreme form of this financialization of rights (see, e.g., Joppke, 2019).
- ⁴¹ As Rouvroy and Berns put it, "algorithmic governance, however, neither produces nor provides an affordance for any active, consistent and reflexive statistical subject likely to lend it legitimacy or resist it." (2013, xvii).
- ⁴² This opacity makes one thing clear: none of this was ever really about merit. If it were, the rules would be clear—and they could be followed (Hayek, 2011). The *idea* of merit was nothing but an efficient psychological vehicle, blowing the fog of legitimacy—and the score was its material incarnation, its instrument.
- ⁴³ Originally formulated by British economist Charles Goodhardt in the context of monetary policy and generalized by Marilyn Strathern (1997) as "Goodhardt's law," the adage states that "When a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a good measure." Also see Espeland and Sauder (2007).

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Institutional underpinnings, global reach, and the future of ordinal citizenship

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I had the opportunity to attend Marion Fourcade's highly stimulating 2019 BJS lecture on the transformations of liberal citizenship in the digital age. Between then and its printing in these pages (Fourcade, 2021), a big chunk of our lives indeed moved online. The Coronavirus pandemic has not only accelerated the great digital drive but also laid bare the vulnerabilities of core citizenship institutions such as education, health, work, and democracy. If technological systems are "sticky" (Castaldi et al. 2018), we should expect that the current shift to digital existence and its challenges are likely to be a long haul.

In *Ordinal Citizenship* Fourcade offers us the conceptual tools necessary to grasp these transformations and their economic, social, political, and psychological consequences for the ordinary citizen. Reading it in juxtaposition with the broader trajectory of citizenship in the last half century, I find myself greatly affined with her conceptual analysis and reflections, although with different observations on the broader institutional context, comparative reach, and possibilities of ordinal digitality. My comments are written to elicit further clarity and discussion of these points.

1 | PROLIFERATION OF SOCIAL CITIZENSHIPS

Fourcade's starting point, as it is for many of us who write on citizenship, is TH Marshall, and particularly social citizenship. For Marshall, social entitlements and welfare rights constituted the "inevitable capstone" of citizenship development necessary in order to prevent the social and economic exclusions that earlier provisions of civil and political rights, of their own volition, could not. This consequently would ensure social cohesion and solidarity, as well as a productive economy and market. Although Marshall saw social citizenship as a means for full inclusion in society, he regarded formal equality of citizenship and class-based inequalities as compatible; thus, he is often described as a liberal egalitarian.

Fourcade references the liberal theory as an umbrella framework in anchoring her arguments (e.g., Somers, 2008). I find it instructive to keep in mind the partly overlapping, partly conflicting trajectory of political

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liberal and economic (neo)liberal forces that shaped citizenship rights in the postwar world order (Soysal, 2012a, 2012b). Citizenship's journey and achievements have been uneven. In the expanding postwar international rights regime, both social rights of the individual and civil rights and civic freedoms came to be codified as universalistic human rights. The core pillar of the international social rights regime, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), came into effect legally from the mid-1970s on, as neoliberal economic policies were beginning to make their way in western societies, albeit differentially, and thus challenging the postwar gains of the welfare state. Between 1976 and 2005, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the ICESCR's sister treaty, fitted in with broader democratization trends and boosted the institutionalization of civil and political rights worldwide, while socioeconomic rights were incorporated into country constitutions, mainly in "aspirational" terms (Cole, 2013). Faced with a particularly aggressive global neoliberal capitalism and its ensuing crises, the meaningful and substantive implementation of social rights faltered, more in some regimes than others, and more in some rights than others.

Still, the talk of citizenship has flourished and gained new significance; new rights have been formulated, covering more social groups and more aspects of people's social lives. Citizenship has moved beyond the grasp of the state and come to implicate the relationship of the individual not only with the state, but also with corporations, bioscience, medicine, religion, the ecosystem, and even the cosmos. This is partly to do with the state devolving itself of some of its responsibilities (but not necessarily its regulatory role) to the "market," as Fourcade suggests. But I would also stress that the global frameworks of human rights, with their universalistic (and individualistic) language of equal treatment, have greatly facilitated the expanded citizenship talks and claims. If we add human rights as a term to the *ngram* graph Fourcade (2021, p. 43) provided, it dwarfs all the citizenship categories shown.

Fourcade's ordinal citizenship captures the grammar of these new citizenship entry points as they encounter the digital technologies which are energetically transforming social and economic domains. Ordinal citizenship approximates one aspect of the Marshallian ideal of citizenship: it incorporates more and more individuals into the corpus of citizenry. But it fails on all others: far from circumventing inequalities and ensuring solidarity, it paves the way for new status boundaries, social divisions, and moral effects (more on this below).

2 | CONTEXTUALIZING ORDINAL CITIZENSHIP

Fourcade locates ordinal citizenship in the unfolding of two processes: financialization and digitization. These two forces move in tandem, penetrating, and refashioning an array of social domains and transforming social policy into financial interest and data. The ubiquitous credit system brings these developments into the stark light, as elaborated here and in her earlier work with Kieran Healy (2017). Individuals are drawn into this world of transactional relationships and data algorithms: their behaviors are tracked and aggregated to be commodified by the market and regulated by biopolitics. The digitally mediated and entrepreneurial self, the ordinal citizen, is born.

I am in agreement with this analysis. Lost in its framing however are the broader institutional and cultural roots of the proactive and agentic individual implicated in ordinal citizenship. I have alluded to these broader foundations in the previous section, and they have been long established in the literature, but let me recap here.

The second half of the 20th century, and in particular its last decades, saw the rise of the empowered and right-bearing individual, who came to be institutionalized and standardized through the interacting dynamics between national and transnational courts (e.g., the European Court of Justice), instruments of international organizations (e.g., the International Conventions on Human Rights, the UN's Human Development Index), the expansion of education, and particularly higher education worldwide and the growth of scientific and professional authority and expertise (Drori et al. 2003; Frank & Meyer, 2020; Joppke, 2010; Soysal, 1994). The legal and cultural elaboration of universalistic personhood disembeds the individual from ascriptively defined categories of the gender, race, ethnicity, and nation—collective categories that underlined earlier models of citizenship (Soysal, 1994). Relatedly, the individual is bestowed with agency and "actorhood": the rational and purposeful individual authorized to act on their identities and claims, requiring ever expanding organization of social life around them (Frank

& Meyer, 2002; Jepperson & Meyer, 2000). The emergent citizenship model celebrates this “thick” version of the individual, responsible not only for their own well-being but also that of society in ever expanding domains. Standardized models and recipes for this individual are widespread in (social) sciences and education; school children the world over are taught how to enact it as future citizens (Lerch et al. 2016; Soysal & Wong, 2007). The metaphor of “Light Citizenship” (Joppke, 2010) appears incongruous.

Fourcade’s (2016) deliberation of the ordinalization of things is solidaristic with broader institutionalist accounts, however, the script of ordinal citizenship itself as narrated in the current piece is markedly overpowered by financial and technological imperatives. She makes a crucial point: digital technologies and their application enable new (and effective) ways of datafication, classification, and ordering of every human experience in every life domain—they are not simply the infrastructure of ordinal citizenship but also progressively elaborate stratified hierarchies of agency and value. As such, the nexus of the institutional constructions of agentic empowerment together with the stratificational potential of digital ordinality should yield better conceptual and empirical purchase when studying the evolving order of citizenship.

And, yet bringing to the fore the broader institutional foundations and their globalization is important both to grasp the reach of this citizenship regime beyond its liberal strongholds and to contemplate its fault lines. The liberal and then, neoliberal shaping of the postwar world order, which fueled the “amplification of ordinality” (Fourcade, 2016, p. 182), has come under increasing attack by outbursts of populism, nationalism, and authoritarianism. These currents may undercut the global authority of science and the university that sustains the global knowledge economy (Frank & Meyer, 2020, Schofer et al., 2020), and consequently reshape the course of some of the citizenship trends Fourcade observes here.

3 | ENACTING AND “FEELING” ORDINALIZATION

Ordinal citizenship and its technologies, argues Fourcade, rely on the perpetual inclusion of individuals from different backgrounds, while, in the guise of meritocracy, entrapping them in a race of performance and demonstration of worth. This should propel more “self” and more aspirations and expressions of the self. To the extent that the script of the agentic individual is widely held, however, we should expect this self and its projections to be highly standardized.

Let me discuss this by bringing in the field of higher education as an example. As a foundational societal institution, the university underlies the scientific theorization and cultural models of self agency, which are embedded in its organization of knowledge and broader functions (Frank & Meyer, 2020). World university rankings, now a ubiquitous feature of the higher education field, carry these generalized models to the global level. University rankings are algorithms that are premised on the ideal image of university, against which the performance of universities (on the spectrum of “excellence”) is measured. As such they diffuse templates and expectations of not only universities but also its students as purposeful, capable and proactive actors. As widely researched, this generates aspirations and relatedly isomorphic organizational effects: positioning themselves globally, universities adopt similar missions, administrative structures, and professional identities (Baltaru & Soysal, 2018; Espeland & Sauder, 2012; Krucken & Meier, 2006). How about students?

In my comparative research on higher education students we find pertinent evidence. We conducted a large-scale survey of students enrolled in tertiary education in China, Japan, Germany, and the United Kingdom, which comprised experimental and more standard survey questions on the agentic individual among others.¹ Our analyses revealed remarkable similarity on average among all student groups in their self-projections: about 80% of students in each group identified themselves as achievement oriented, independent-minded, and creative—dimensions often identified and prescribed as agentic actorhood (Soysal & Cebolla-Boado, 2020).² We found the same for self-efficacy (one’s belief that they can achieve their goals, whatever difficulties they may encounter or have). The multi-sited nature of the data makes these findings compelling: young, educated people in East Asia and Europe articulate highly standardized selves and capabilities.

How do these agentially configured selves “feel” when they are measured? When the ratings and scores and outcomes they determine do not match the empowered selves they enact? Fourcade emphasizes the moralizing effects of ordinalization. The “apparently objective” measuring and benchmarking tools of digital technologies invite moral desert, self-blame, and personal concern and anxiety, she argues. But how universal are such feelings? How do individuals in differing societal, political, and possibly generational (Katz, 2018) contexts understand, feel and position themselves vis-à-vis ordinal technologies? What is the subjective experience of the ordinary Chinese citizens of China's unfolding social credit system, for example?

A rare ethnographic study conducted in Shanghai by Xin Yuan Wang (2019) found indifference and even positive perception toward the introduction of the social credit system. Wang's research participants were aware of the pervasiveness of the personal data to be collected and processed by the system and its potential personal consequences. However, rather than perceiving it as a state mechanism for surveillance and control—confinement of own agency, they saw it as a means for managing personal insecurity and uncertainty and trusting others—an expression of projected agency. Wang (2019) sees continuity between the underlying logic of the “western” origin credit system and the “Chinese folk religion,” which upholds “personal responsibility and judgement by one's own deeds.” This might add further moral weight to “credit worthiness,” summoning feelings. But it is also possible that individuals' enactment of own agency might interpret the correlate feelings, particularly as they “experience” the social credit system as a personal solution to the current crisis of public trust in China (e.g., fear of personal fraud and scams, and mistrust of food and pharmaceutical industries).³

How individuals enact and feel ordinal citizenship is an important question of which we do not yet have profound understanding and empirical bearing: more research, comparative and bringing in insights from cognitive sociology and sociology of emotions, needs to be done.

4 | THE POWER OF ORDINAL DIGITALITY

For the majority of the global population, (legal) citizenship status is distributed by accident of birth, which Schachar (2009) famously described as “birth lottery.” *Jus sanguini* and *jus soli* are two modes of this lottery, through which states regulate access to their territory (stamped with passports and ID cards) and determine who belongs to the collective body of the citizenry and has its associated privileges.

Ordinal citizenship, as discussed by Fourcade, requires no membership pass; detached from tribal conventions of blood and soil and their moral burden, it is open to everyone, and enrolment is voluntary.⁴ It envisions active, participatory, and productive individuals, digitally measured and scored. As such ordinal citizenship comes close to an online version of *jus domicile*, as it is increasingly implemented, for example, in points-based immigration schemes.

Yet, like other citizenship forms, ordinal citizenship is not free from “moral injunctions” either; not only by the state but also by the market (Fourcade, 2021, p. 10). Algorithmically assigned scores and ratings on the basis of everyday online behavior determine one's financial and social fitness and thus status and market value. Using biometric algorithms, but also a vector of other digitally available data, states separate the risky from the non-risky, the trustworthy from the non-trustworthy and “native” from “foreigner,” reasserting their authority over the allocation of identities, benefits and resources. Despite the expanded inclusive nature of its membership status (due to eliminating the inherently discriminatory criteria of access), ordinal citizenship nevertheless generates classifications and divisions.

An important point emerges. Does ordinal digitality forge new social divisions and stratifications, or do they align with and reinforce already established ones? Do we find new patterns of inclusion and exclusion or does ordinal citizenship simply capture existing inequalities and amplify them? Fourcade is not completely clear on this. If new strata are emerging, they possibly cut across other existing ones.⁵ We presumably need new symbolic and

material indicators, with online and offline dimensions, across multiple domains, to observe and measure such social strata; the challenge is paramount.

Another point. TH Marshall had anchored his ideal of citizenship in a world of well-defined class structures, distinct nation-states, and stable labor market and welfare institutions. The ordinal citizens' world could not be more different. If inequalities are increasingly shaped online and if socio-technical systems "think" without national constraints, should we not consider their impact and possibilities on a global scale? If states are no longer the only distributors of rights and identities, citizenship struggles need to adjust.

And, here comes the uphill battle. Fourcade points out to two obstacles. First, the digital algorithms that decide ordinal citizens' status are opaque, but because they are statistically produced, they appear objective, making their contestation difficult. Second, the collectives that algorithms aggregate are based on bits and pieces of the individual and her activities in different domains of social life; they do not afford basis for meaningful solidarities and mobilization. I would add a third one. If ordinal citizenship exists only with continual feed of individual data into the digital ecosystem, both opting in and opting out is linked with status differentials and disadvantage. These differentials and stratification lines would cut through and across national boundaries, rearranging the conventional bases of identity and solidarity.

Thus, "data politics," the access, ownership, legitimization and control of data, becomes the focal point of digital contentions (Ruppert et al., 2017). Data collection, profiling, decision making, and surveillance practices operated by the market and state have come under greater scrutiny. The General Data Protection Regulation of the European Union, which came into effect in 2018, has introduced new individual rights to data privacy, anonymity, and transparency (including information about the criteria that algorithms use in decisions and their consequences [Susarla, 2019]), with ramifications beyond EU territory. New tech companies have emerged, promising more decentralized and individual control over data collection and share, and more trustworthy global digital futures.⁶

All these interventions do two things at once. On the one hand, they stimulate the right-bearing and digitally empowered individual actor, on the other hand, they charge them with the responsibility of actively engaging with and curating the digital platforms in order to self-protect. They also possibly further the understanding that once fairly and correctly applied digital systems can recognize the "true" self and direct her to appropriate interests, tastes and resources. This is what underlies ordinal citizenship and it is the one Fourcade warns us against.

I take Fourcade's perceptive intervention as a reminder that we cannot understand digital systems and their consequences for citizenship independently of their broader political, economic, social, and cultural constituents. Ultimately citizenship struggles depend on the *will* to forge identities and solidarities around which claims for legal, symbolic, and material equality are mobilized. Digital technologies might provide the infrastructure for novel forms of solidarities and mobilizations by "global e-citizens," and in the future "cloud communities" in cyberspace might be where meaningful membership and belonging are exercised, as envisioned by Orgad (2018)—an alternative vision to that proposed by Google (Fourcade, 2021, p. 27). As the coronavirus pandemic locked our lives online, protestors the world over took to the streets to join the Black Lives Matter movement to demand justice in the United States and at home. For the time being, this still gives us the best hope and means for the "life of an equal being."

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ The survey, with a sample size of 8,500, implemented a structured sampling approach, based on university ranking and size, and in China additionally stratified by provinces.
- ² Knowledge economies anticipate such traits to impact success in education, labor markets, and overall life goals; as such they are on the prescription menu of all sorts of international organizations.

- ³ McDonnell et al. (2017) argue that resonance happens not because of familiarity or habituality of “cultural objects and modes of action” (e.g., the credit system); rather they are “experienced” by actors as resonant because they offer solutions at times of high uncertainty.
- ⁴ Except, Fourcade notes, when it is organized as a state project, as in China's social credit system. However, even then there is (theoretically) an voluntary element as the social credit score is based on an ecosystem of public but also private databases, such as Tencent's Tencent Credit and Alibaba's Sesame Credit (sign-in and opt-out being based on consent). There are reports that Tencent and Alibaba (who hold the largest customer database among their peers) are so far refusing to pool their data with Baihang, the government-backed personal credit scoring system (*Financial Times*). Alibaba and Tencent refuse to hand loans data to Beijing. September 19, 2019 <https://www.ft.com/content/93451b98-da12-11e9-8f9b-77216ebe1f17>.
- ⁵ In other work, Fourcade (2016, p. 186) mentions “subprime borrowers” as one such stratum, “possibly anchoring new forms of mobilization and consciousness”.
- ⁶ For example, Hu-Manity (<https://hu-manity.co>) and Inrupt (<https://inrupt.com>), the latter by no other than Tim Berners Lee, the founder of world wide web.

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From liberal to neoliberal citizenship: A commentary on Marion Fourcade

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Abstract

I argue that Marion Fourcade's "ordinal citizenship", which is an obsession with scoring and ranking, is part of a larger change of citizenship, from liberal to neoliberal. This is a citizenship whose equality promise has been hollowed-out by the inequalities of global capitalism, and in which not only redistributive benefits (once called "social rights") but even the access to citizenship itself (qua naturalization) are tied to individual merit and performance. If T.H. Marshall had hailed the evolution of liberal citizenship, with its social rights crown, as one from "contract to status", thus reversing H.S. Maine's famous "movement of the progressive societies", the arrival of neoliberal citizenship marks the "reverse reverse", back from status to capitalism's original position of contract.

KEYWORDS

citizenship, liberalism, naturalization, neoliberalism, social rights

In 1974, Ralf Dahrendorf, one of the great postwar liberals, warned that citizenship was "in danger of overreaching itself" (1974, p. 673). In principle, there was "no other idea in human history" to combine better "the aspiration of man's need for equality and men's desire for liberty" (*ibid.*, p. 676). In reality, at the peak of postwar affluence, and echoing Tocqueville, Dahrendorf deemed the citizen's thirst for "equal rights of participation" so insatiable that she would break-out of the confines of her home domain, which is the political, and as "The Citizen" roam into the other sectors of a functionally differentiated society: the economic, the military, even the religious, and thereby undermine their specific logics and essentially non-participatory orders. Paradoxically, the citizen unbound clamored for "sectoral citizenship"—"economic citizen," "citizen in uniform," "church of citizens," "all contradictions in terms" as Dahrendorf tells us (*ibid.*, p. 695). These were key slogans at the time.¹ And not just equality but

fraternité, the third and most elusive part of the French revolutionary triptych, was The Citizen's lodestar, in effect undercutting freedom and, with it, the "equilibrium of equality and liberty" that "citizenship," in principle, seemed to have been made for (ibid., p. 673). Dahrendorf was too subtle to use the word, but he feared that citizenship was the Trojan Horse of socialism, blurring the line between equal rights and equal status, equality of opportunity and equality of results,² and bring about a society of "total immobility" (ibid., p. 691) and atrophied choices.

Dahrendorf provided his diagnosis of hyper-egalitarian and freedom-threatening citizenship in a half-distancing homage to Thomas H. Marshall's *Citizenship and Social Class* (1950). In retrospect, Marshall's famous essay must be seen as a manifesto of liberal postwar sociology, holding that capitalism could last if matched with citizenship, which he defined as "a kind of basic human equality associated with the concept of full membership of a community" (1950, p. 8). For Marshall, this condition was only reached with the 20th-century rise of "social citizenship rights," "the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society" (ibid., p. 11). Social rights, as Marshall further noted, "imply an invasion of contract by status, the subordination of market price to social justice, the replacement of the free bargain by the declaration of rights" (ibid., p. 68). Still, as Marshall's was a liberal but not a socialist manifesto, social citizenship was no end to capitalism—"We are not aiming at absolute equality" (ibid., p. 77). What would remain is "legitimate social inequality" (ibid., p. 9), a kind of truce between the "equality of citizens" and the "inequality of classes" (ibid., p. 12). Marshall was not unaware, in cautious anticipation of the "meritocracy" tale by Michael Young (1959), that through including the right to education, citizenship would "operate() as an instrument of social stratification" itself. Though he did not go nearly as far as Young to detect meritocracy's dystopian implications, nor did he see its class-camouflaging and -reproducing implications (as did, for instance, Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

An early postwar liberal, Marshall was betting on the self-limitation of liberal citizenship, as a compromise with but not attack on capitalism. It is this liberal self-limitation that Dahrendorf, writing a quarter-century later, in the aftermath of the 1960s' movements, and at the height of massive strike waves and an alleged "motivation crisis" in "late capitalism" (Habermas, 1973), was not so sure about. At that moment, the neoliberal counter-revolution was just around the corner, utterly unforeseen by both (all three, for that matter).³

If Dahrendorf or Marshall could see the equally dark and imaginative diagnosis of "ordinal citizenship" now provided for us by Marion Fourcade (2021), they would not think that it covers the same object: citizenship. Because, what in the meantime has occurred, is the transformation of citizenship, and of the societies from which it springs, from liberal to neoliberal. What occurred, in a nutshell, is neither the "cancerous growth" of citizenship's equality claims throughout societal sectors, as Dahrendorf feared (1974, p. 678); nor did capitalism's truce with democracy in the form of encompassing social rights prove enduring, defying Marshall's hope that "every man" might become "a gentleman," as he put it in the language of his time (1950, p. 4). Instead, what occurred is the hollowing-out of citizenship's equality promise by the inequalities of global capitalism, the tying of recompensing rewards to individual desert and performance, and the evaporation of the opposite notion that what the individual may rightfully expect of society "does not depend on (her) economic value" (ibid., p. 43).

To depict this outcome with help of the liberal v. neoliberal distinction, as I shall suggest in this essay, is admittedly contestable. Not a few would hold that what happened in the past half-century is actually liberalism all the way through. This is the view, for instance, of Thomas Piketty, whose fulminant analysis of the explosion of inequality in today's (once again) "proprietary" capitalism, for which he essentially blames a delusional social-democratic left giving in to a "third way," rests on an understanding of "liberalism" as "sacraliz(ing) the market and ... disembedding of the economy" (2020, p. 795, fn.132). Apart from the left-Foucaultian sect that continues to embrace it with gusto, the juste academic milieu seems to have discarded "neoliberalism" as the clumsy *Kampfbegriff* of yesteryear (without necessarily going down the Pikettian binary liberalism v. socialism line). Of course, liberalism is a church with many creeds (see Ryan, 2012). But it is important to clearly set apart the Hayek-Nozickian libertarian social-justice-deniers, the "neoliberals" in short, from the liberal mainstream. From J. S. Mill to Rawls, this liberal mainstream must be considered social-democratic, sometimes of course before the word, in that it sought to strike a balance between liberalism, the quest for freedom, and democracy, the quest for equality.

In his masterful “theory of liberal democracy,” Stephen Holmes (1995) has shown that the classical liberal writers endorsed not only democracy but also welfare, out of a “deep liberal commitment to psychological security” (ibid., p. 37).⁴ In a nutshell, liberals have not just endorsed “any order,” that the neoliberals are satisfied with, but a “just order” (ibid., 240f). By contrast, the neoliberal Friedrich Hayek (1982) staked his hope in little more than the thin rule of law (“nomocracy”), whatever its pedigree (he actually trusted more on tradition than on positive law-making in this respect), and he abhorred as dirigiste and freedom-thumping “teleocracy” any attempt to move from the setting of “rules” to the pursuit of “ends” in government. For Hayek, “social justice,” which Marshall captured with his notion of social citizenship, is but a “mirage,” “revolt of the tribal spirit” against a market society (dubbed “Great Society”) that does not bear to be strangled by a “common purpose” (ibid., p. 144); the quest for social justice even boiled down to psychic disorder, the “dislike of people who are better off than oneself, or simply envy” (ibid., p. 99).

What Fourcade (2021) calls “ordinal citizenship,” is a post-Marshallian neoliberal citizenship, a citizenship that has undergone the “reverse reverse,” as it were, back from status to contract, capitalism’s original position, thus adopting a market logic. Hayek would have smiled. The point of it is providing access to the market rather than protection from it. Social policy has long taken this direction (see below), its purpose being not to “decommodify,” as Gøsta Esping-Andersen had defined the old logic of welfare as a right (1990), but to re-commodify the individual—either progressively, as in the “social investment” variant found in the clearest form in egalitarian Scandinavia (Hemerijck, 2013), or regressively, as in the Victorian-style resumption of “workfare” policies in Anglo-Saxonia (King, 1995).

Ordinal citizenship is best illustrated with the example of equal access to credit, which has “many of the hallmarks of a hard-fought social right” (Fourcade, 2021, p. 5), particularly in the chronically welfare-deficient United States. The demand for equal access to credit, which previously was denied to entire social categories, on the basis of sex and race, is directed not toward the state but private institutions, banks, and credit card companies, which reflects a “multipolar world” in which the “all-absorbing social state” has retreated in favor of market actors (ibid., p. 4). Thereby a “transactional” logic is impressed on citizenship. The claim for inclusion is still made in the name of citizenship (Krippner, 2017, p. 2 speaks of “economic citizenship”), but the citizen has also morphed into “the customer, the client or the digital user” (Fourcade, 2021, p. 4). Most importantly, however, the access to credit, in its current form in the United States, is not categorical (“nominal,” as Fourcade [2016] would say), available to all citizens (or rather, and that has been the scandal, only to ascriptive subsections of the citizenry, white males). Instead, it follows a “positional” or “ordinal logic”: a person’s creditworthiness, and the amount of credit that she can receive, is determined by her “credit score,” which in turn reflects one’s credit history and financial-cum-behavioral characteristics. Amazingly, in the United States, this has been the result not of economic optimization but of social struggle, conducted in the idiom of citizenship. Previously, especially women (but also minorities) were excluded from the possibility of obtaining a private credit. Feminist mobilization in the 1970s changed this, bringing about the current actuarial and quantitative system of “credit scoring,” done by specialized private companies (such as FICO). However, “credit scoring merely substituted proxy variables for protected classes that could not be scored directly” (Krippner, 2017, p. 21). This yielded similar group-level exclusions yet under a legitimate, “individualized” cover. At the same time, credit scoring demobilized “women” as a category who actually had fought for the new individual-level system. What previously could be experienced, and mobilized against, as a “consequence of discrimination,” now appears as “the cumulative effect of (a woman’s) poor choices,” for which there is no one else but she to blame (ibid., p. 24).

One sees, ordinality goes together with meritocracy. Its “focus on behavior, and behavior only,” and reverse shunning of “categorical distinctions of people,” lives up to a “democratic promise to judge individuals in a nominally egalitarian manner that will reveal the truth of individual desert” (Fourcade, 2021, p. 19). But, as Fourcade aptly observes, this is a “fundamentally a-sociological” and “inherently moralizing” undertaking. It also “conceal(s) the real nature of ordinal meritocracies,” which is to “extract value” (ibid.). In an ordinal-cum-meritocratic optic, “there is no such thing as society,” as one could say with Margaret Thatcher, only “individual men and women.” The ordinal circle is sealed by the fact that these “individual men and women,” far from being averse

to it, happily participate, volunteering to provide the requisite data. Fourcade calls it “individualized biopolitical enrollment” (ibid., p. 4). It often verges on narcissistic digital “self-exposure,” with “little need today to discipline us” (Harcourt, 2015, p. 17). Pointing to the mass-level opportunism that goes with it, Steffen Mau calls the result a “*Mitmachgesellschaft*,” a participatory society of sorts, “in which everyone can and even shall evaluate everyone else all the time” (2017, p. 242). Ordinal citizenship, Fourcade concludes, “depends on the willingness to cultivate a digitally mediated, individually managed and technologically assisted self” (2021, p. 25).

The gist of ordinal citizenship is scoring and ranking, an obsession with numbers and metrics to measure individual behavior, abstracted from one’s ascriptive group, and making reward dependent on the outcome, that is, one’s “score.” It is enabled by an alliance of market and technology, markets for everything (including renting out your forehead, as reported by Sandel, 2012), and digital technology providing and processing the data that simultaneously facilitate and constrain the ordinal citizen’s life.

Importantly, ordinality rests on a liberal basis. It judges and sorts people by what they do rather than what they are. It thus goes along with (or, as in the case of the U.S. feminist credit movement, is even the result of) a progressive anti-discrimination agenda. But its point is to “help people help themselves” (Fourcade, 2021, p. 11). Fourcade calls this a “liberal panacea” (ibid.). In my view, it is more properly called “neoliberal”—and I suspect that she would agree.

While opinions may be divided over the right labeling, liberal v. neoliberal, a more fundamental question is: Is ordinal citizenship really “citizenship”? As a legal institution, citizenship is by definition categorical: either you are a citizen or you are not, there is no third possibility, and thus no ranking that is the nature of ordinality. Rogers Brubaker called citizenship “the great remaining bastion of strong categorical inequality in the modern world” (2015, p. 45). Indeed, all other legally mandated categorical inequalities, most importantly those of sex and race, are formally shunned and they have declined. Generally, a distinction must be drawn between “difference” and “inequality” as two fundamentally different types of social division, the first being “horizontal” and the second “vertical” (Brubaker, 2015). This does not mean that both are not connected. On the contrary, its implication with a categorical difference is the mark of “durable inequality” (Tilly, 1999). But the path of causality is from the categorical difference (which today, with the mentioned exception of citizenship, is not legal but informal) to inequality, not the other way around. The notion of “ordinal citizenship” suggests the opposite causality. It suggests an invasion of market-based inequality, a ranking according to “more or less participation in social goods” that is the mark of social inequality and stratification (Stichweh, 1997), into the citizenship construct itself, though now as a result of strictly individualist (“meritocratic”) processes (at least in appearance). However, ordinal ranking and scoring are not limited to citizens—legal permanent residents and the holders of kindred legal (immigrant) statuses are subjected to it just as much. Citizenship (and the other mentioned statuses) is (or are) a social division of a different kind: not “vertical,” and thus subject to a “more or less” logic, but “horizontal,” where the only question is whether one is “in” or “out” (Brubaker, 2015, p. 10). As said, this does not mean that citizenship’s horizontal divisioning has no implications for inequality. But the “categorical inequality” of citizenship that Brubaker speaks of refers to inter-, not intra-societal inequalities, say, between the citizens of Switzerland and Swaziland. These inequalities, of course, are not primarily generated by citizenship, they are merely perpetuated by it. They are visible, for instance, in the staggering fact that merely being born in the United States multiplies a person’s income 93 times (Milanovic, 2016, p. 133). Branko Milanovic calls this advantage the “citizenship premium” (ibid.). It has never been bigger than today. The great paradox of contemporary citizenship is that this external advantage (in the case of a “good” citizenship, like the American or almost every rich country’s) coexists with the negative internal fact of a massive loss of value of the same citizenship; for this loss of value, the adjective “ordinal” (but other neoliberal processes also; see below) stands.

Fourcade (2021) takes “citizenship” mostly as a metaphor for intra-societal claims-making, as which it has mainly served in the tradition of T. H. Marshall. This is the citizenship optic of “Frauen, Tamilen, Pandas,” to quote the inimitable sarcasm by Niklas Luhmann (1986), which dates from citizenship’s more effusive, pre-globalization period (for a serious extension of citizenship claims to sub-human life, see Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2011). Fourcade

does not take citizenship as the legal institution that, of course, it primarily is. Thus the question arises whether the legal institution of citizenship itself has undergone some of the “ordinal” processes so aptly described and assessed in her essay. Unsurprisingly, the answer to this must be no, because this would contradict the categorical nature of citizenship. Legal citizenship just can never be “less or more”; either it “is” or it “is not.”⁵ Strictly speaking, “ordinal citizenship” is an oxymoron, confounding two incompatible modes of social division; an analogy would be “class citizenship,” whose successor it, in a way, is.

However, some of the larger neoliberalizing processes that underlie the “ordinal” diagnosis but are not exhausted by it, and that may not be “ordinal” in the strict sense of ranking and scoring, are still observable in the legal institution of citizenship. The most obvious case is certain restrictive changes to the post-birth acquisition of citizenship, usually called “naturalization.” In a liberal understanding, naturalization must be equally possible irrespective of one’s ascriptive markers, most importantly sex and race, on the basis of which practically all states (in the case of sex) or some states (in the case of race) in the Western world have discriminated well into the second half of the 20th century. But a liberal understanding goes further. It conceives of naturalization as just one moment in an infinite process of integration, which is to be supported by it but otherwise is outside the reach of government control. Even more importantly, sheer time passing, in terms of legal residence time, is the thin liberal prerequisite of naturalization. Joseph Carens (2013) called it “social membership,” acquired through the combination of place and time, that is, through simply living in a place for a certain amount of time.

More recently, a more exacting understanding of naturalization has taken hold. It is best characterized as “earned citizenship” (see Joppke, 2021a). It rests on a liberal fundament, in that it is not a return to the categorical (sexist or racist) exclusions of the past; and in that naturalization is an individual-level process from which no one, in principle, can be excluded on the basis of ascriptive markers. But apart from this, earned citizenship takes on distinctly neoliberal colors: it foregrounds the element of individual merit and desert that had been low to non-existent in the liberal past. The new rhetoric is that naturalization is not a tool in an infinite process of integration, but the end-point of, or even “prize” for, successful integration, formally measured and examined by the government. “Authoritarian liberalism” was German early 20th century jurist Hermann Heller’s word for the neoliberal creed (2015 [1933]), which had always been conjoined by a strong state, and it shows in the citizenship and immigrant integration policies crafted in its image almost a century later. Accordingly, earned citizenship rhetoric goes along with more demanding behavioral requirements as conditions for naturalization. The old trust that time passing suffices for rendering an immigrant “natural” (a bizarre fiction to begin with) and thus ready for citizenship, is gone.

The single most debated new conditions are cognitive-cultural, in terms of civic integration and language courses and tests that an applicant for citizenship must take or pass first (for an overview, see Bauböck & Joppke, 2010). While a crypto-nationalist intention may undergird these new requirements, it would be mistaken to see them as a return to cultural assimilation. Their diction, qua learning and tests, is cognitive more than cathetic and identificatory, and the particularly important language component points at a pragmatic rationale, to make newcomers a functioning and self-sufficient participant in mainstream institutions, especially the labor market. Much less attention has been given to new penal-law and economic naturalization requirements. On the penal-law side, there was a time when convicted murderers could become citizens, even in the United States with its biblical sense of justice. Now, to stay with the American example, an “aggravated felony” not just forever excludes an immigrant from U.S. citizenship, but even makes her in principle deportable (so that many immigrants with a less than spotless legal vest no longer dare to apply for citizenship). “Aggravated felony” sounds grave, but under contemporary U.S. immigration law even trivial shoplifting is an instance. More directly identifiable as “neoliberal” are new economic requirements, either making naturalization itself more expensive or making anyone who once received social benefits or is unemployed illegible for citizenship—and sometimes both. In this respect, citizenship becomes quite literally “earned.” An extreme case of making naturalization more expensive, and explicitly connecting this with a neoliberal rationale, is the United Kingdom. At the welfare state’s height, in the 1960s, the attitude among Home Office bureaucrats was that fees should be low, “not ... to form a barrier to worthy applicants of

humble means" (Fargues, 2019, p. 343). In the early millennium, the fees have skyrocketed, to become not a small investment for the normative family of four (even children have to pay separately). Importantly, to set the fees high above the actual cost of the procedure serves a symbolic purpose, to express and reinforce the "importance" and "value" of British citizenship (*ibid.*, p. 345).

The increasing conditionality of citizenship acquisition, across the cognitive-cultural, penal-law, and economic registers, confirms one key characteristic of ordinal citizenship: the "focus on behavior, and behavior only" (Fourcade, 2021, p. 19). But there is an additional twist to it. In the liberal past, the average citizen was the benchmark of naturalization, the person of "humble means," to reiterate the above-quoted 1960s UK Home Office bureaucrat; in the United States, with its "good moral character" requirement, the "average man of the country" used to be the legal standard (Lapp, 2012, p. 1586). In contrast, in the neoliberal era, new citizens are expected not to be "average" but "ideal" or "super-citizens" (see Badenhop, 2017). British Immigration Minister Phil Woolas, under whose watch "earned citizenship" was invented in the United Kingdom, put it this way: "As a point of principle ... if you don't break the law and you are a citizen, that's fine. But if someone is applying to be a citizen to our country, we don't think that you should only obey the law but show you are committed to our country" (Anderson, 2015, p. 187). Expecting new citizens to be "super-citizens" is complementary to a new-millennium immigration policy that, across the rich OECD world, prioritizes high-skilled immigrants (see Joppke, 2021b).

Essential to earned citizenship rhetoric, and perhaps the sharpest contrast to a liberal understanding of citizenship, is the notion that citizenship is not "right" but "privilege." Phil Woolas, again, expressed it adroitly: "(T)he system of earned citizenship ... establishes the principle that British citizenship is a privilege that must be earned" (Home Office, 2008). The notion of "privilege" stems from an old regime context when "citizens" were "subjects." Why then its contemporary reappearance? Of course, under international law, the determination of citizenship is a sovereign state function, which technically makes it a "privilege." But a constant cannot explain variation. More apposite is to see the notion that citizenship is "privilege" as re-nationalizing affirmation of the superior value of the citizenship-granting political community, in a moment where boundaries and identities are threatened by globalization and migrations. The re-nationalization of citizenship, whose intention is upgrading, co-exists uneasily with its simultaneous neo-liberalization, which, in social policy respect, amounts to the downgrading of citizenship. Friso van Houdt et al. (2011) have called the resultant amalgam "neoliberal communitarian citizenship."

Conversely, the typically liberal understanding of citizenship is that it is "right." For Hannah Arendt (1948), and resumed by Margaret Somers (2008), citizenship is the "right to have rights." This is paradoxical, if not contradictory. Arendt wanted to say that to have rights requires membership in a state, without which people are "rightless, the scum of the earth" (1948, p. 341). However, if citizenship is a status to which certain rights are attached, it cannot itself be a right. International law implicitly acknowledges this fact when granting the "right to a nationality"—while acknowledgment of the dread of statelessness as addressed by Arendt, this is pointedly the right to "a" but not to *any particular* nationality. Citizenship as a right does exist in some countries for certain categories of long-settled or second-generation immigrants, such as in the Netherlands or Germany (but interestingly not in the motherland of liberalism, Britain). But it is virtually absent in contemporary citizenship reforms, which mostly dwell in "privilege" rhetoric, with the exact intention of tilting an understanding of it as "right."

While the rights v. privilege binary sets them sharply apart, a bridge between liberal and neoliberal understandings of citizenship is conceiving of it in terms of a contract. This points to reciprocity that is not quite captured by the rights v. privilege binary, whose two horns are unilateral. However, one must retort that, at heart, citizenship is non-contractual like the state that is handing it out, because one is usually born into it, and thus a member without having chosen to be a member, via territorial or blood-transmitted birthright citizenship. The contractual state of liberal Enlightenment philosophy, from Hobbes on, has always been a fiction, though a necessary fiction (after Hobbes) to demarcate the democratic from the monarchical state. Only naturalization, the exception to the rule in the distribution of citizenship, has always been contractual, and thus a reciprocal quid-pro-quo. As a consequence, many would doubt the "neoliberal" pedigree of the discussed conditionalizing of citizenship, and find it perfectly in line with the liberal qua contractual tradition.

However, from a contractual understanding of citizenship one will never arrive at Marshallian social citizenship, and thus at the classic model of liberal citizenship after World War II. Some have therefore questioned that the United States has ever known social citizenship—for Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon, this is an “almost oxymoronic” notion (1992, p. 46), because of America’s legacy of contractual “civil citizenship,” within which welfare is either by way of a contract (in its contribution-based “social security” mainstream) or charity (that is connoted with stigma), but never a right. Margaret Somers (2008) correctly considers the “contractualization of citizenship” the signature feature of a neoliberal regime, which “reorganize(s) the relationship between the state and the citizenry, from noncontractual rights and obligations to the principles and practices of quid pro quo market exchange” (ibid., p. 2). While unaware of the “earned citizenship” discourse, which was born just when her book went into print, Somers unknowingly hit the right key: as she observes, under a neoliberal regime, “social inclusion” and “moral worth” are no longer “inherent rights but rather earned privileges that are wholly conditional upon the ability to exchange something of equal value” (ibid., p. 3).

These reflections point at a second key domain in which to observe neoliberal citizenship, next to naturalization, which is social policy. We thereby return to the internal dimension of citizenship addressed by Fourcade’s ordinal citizenship diagnosis. Fourcade slights the role of the state, arguing that in a “multipolar world” other institutions, like markets and new technologies, have emerged as new sites of citizenship struggles. However, certain social policy trends are crucial for understanding neoliberal citizenship. This is where the proliferation of contractual thinking is most grating, and in a distinctly more neoliberal than liberal tone. Discussing a further turning of the “workfare” screw in British social policy under David Cameron, the so-called “Universal Credit,” Bridget Anderson (2015, p. 188) has coined the polemical notion of “worker citizenship.” This is a demoted kind of citizenship in which the receipt of minimized unemployment benefits, which are no longer status-preserving but bare-life maintaining, is conditional on the demeaning and openly disciplinary obligation of actively having to look for work and accept work even if it is below one’s qualification and legitimate-expectation level. Incidentally, citizens and immigrants are equally affected by this regime. In Germany, the workfarist “*Fördern und Fordern*” (Supporting and Demanding) was first invented for citizens and then extended to the integration of new immigrants. *Fördern und Fordern* operates in contractual terms. The “*Eingliederungsvereinbarung*” (inclusion agreement) of social policy (requiring the unemployment benefit recipient to “actively cooperate” in his or her labor market reintegration, and to accept any “*zumutbare*” [reasonable] work offer) has served as a model for the “*Integrationsvereinbarung*” (integration agreement) of integration policy, in which migrants oblige themselves to learn the German language or find a job in return for being allowed to reside. Because, from a citizen perspective, this amalgamation of the treatment of citizens and immigrants is a demotion, Brian Turner is correct to conclude that “We are all denizens now” (Turner, 2016).

Marshall’s social citizenship rested on the priority of status over contract, which is exactly reversed under neoliberalism. This raises the question of how the Marshallian moment was possible in the first. The answer is: because of nationalism. The unspoken secret of liberal citizenship is nationalism. Somers (2008, p. 3), somewhat cryptically, argues that true citizenship, understood in Arendt-Marshallian terms, rests on “shared fate among equals.” Anxious to avoid any reference to nation and nationalism, Somers grounds it in “civil society,” that elusive “third sphere” between market and state (ibid., p. 30). But “shared fate” connotes suffering and sacrifice, which are typically exacted by war. And this is difficult to think apart from nation and nationalism. Marshall leaves no doubt in this respect. His history of citizenship rights, from civil to political to social, is “by definition, national” (1950, p. 12). Citizenship, and not just its most demanding social dimension, “requires a ... direct sense of community membership based on loyalty to a civilization which is a common possession,” and its rise runs parallel to “modern national consciousness,” even “patriotic nationalism” (ibid., p. 43).

At the same time, the reverse side of rights, which is duties, is difficult to sustain over time. “(T)he Dunkirk spirit cannot be a permanent feature of any civilization,” concedes Marshall (1950, p. 80), invoking William Beveridge’s metaphor for the mentality that made the postwar British welfare state possible. This points at the inevitable return from status to contract, which in Henry Sumner Maine’s 19th century diction has been the “movement of the

progressive societies" anyway, bringing about the neoliberal citizenship of our time. In a discussion of the surprising emergence of direct cash transfers to the poor in the global south, anthropologist James Ferguson (2015) intriguingly argues that, next to contract and charity, there is a third, more solid grounding for welfare in the notion of a "rightful share" or "demand sharing." But it seems to grow out of a unique context of abundant mineral wealth unrightfully exploited by colonialism, which is characteristic of certain parts of Africa, so that their citizens today can claim to be "rightful owners of a vast national wealth ... of which they have been unjustly deprived through ... racialized dispossession" (ibid., p. 26). This is no model for the global north, whose wealth derives from work, not natural resources. And if "sharing" is a general feature of human sociability, as Ferguson argues (ibid., p. 176), and a "righteous claim for a due and proper share" is grounded in nothing more than membership (in a national collectivity) or even simply presence" (ibid., p. 184), this dodges the question what makes one a "member" in the first and it appears unduly optimistic with respect to the "presence" factor.

The return to a contractual, neoliberally thinned citizenship is no capitalist conspiracy but perhaps the price to pay for the persistent internationalism and openness that contemporary societies seem to be committed to, not least with respect to migration (though one will have to see how much the universal border-closing response to the 2020 Corona pandemic has weakened this commitment). Note that Hayek, while cynically authoritarian if this was required to protect market freedoms from the onslaught of democracy (see Chamayou, 2018, ch. 23), was also a fervent opponent of nationalism, deeming it one of the "two greatest threats to a free civilization" (the other being socialism) (Hayek, 1982, p. 111). Conversely, a "liberal society," for Hayek, notably held the promise of "conceding to the stranger and even the foreigner the same protection of rules of just conduct which apply to the relations to the known members of one's small group" (ibid., p. 88).

In sum, ordinal citizenship is only one, albeit important piece in a larger puzzle of neoliberal citizenship that is still evolving.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ In a way, "sectoral citizenship" remains with us, as the adjectival citizenships (now more likely to be "sexual", "ecological", "multicultural", "cosmopolitan", etc.) of so-called "citizenship studies", in which citizenship figures mostly as platform for activist claims-making (see the paradigm-setting volume by Isin & Turner, 2002). The "mushrooming of citizenship discourse" is also the opening line of Marion Fourcade's impressive reflection on "ordinal citizenship" (2021, p. 1), even though it takes an entirely different direction.
- ² Dahrendorf (1974) approvingly cites Daniel Bell's classic essay on "Meritocracy and Equality", which attacked Rawls' second justice principle, the "difference principle", as "socialist ethic" and the "end of classic liberalism" (1972, pp. 56–57). This attack rests on a truncated view of the liberal tradition (for a more adequate view, see Holmes, 1995). In retrospect, Bell's expectation that postindustrial society would be a "just meritocracy" in which those in power have "earned their authority" (Bell, 1972, p. 66), appears not just wishful but more neoliberal than liberal (as elaborated in the following). For a compelling destruction of the "meritocracy trap", see Markovits (2019).
- ³ The story of the neoliberal counter-revolution, at the level of economic doctrine, has been well-told in an earlier essay by Marion Fourcade (Fourcade-Gourinchas & Babb, 2002).
- ⁴ This is also the gist of Edmund Fawcett's (2014) more recent history of the liberal "idea".
- ⁵ Of course, in the past women were not allowed to vote or to pass on their citizenship to their children, which suggests a "less or more" of formal rights or privileges within the same citizenship (or nationality) status. But this really points to a categorical exclusion (on the basis of sex) that, in part, has been exactly remedied by ordinal citizenship. The case of access to credit in the US, studied by Krippner (2017), is again the best example.

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States against citizens: On the (limited) value of market citizenship

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I recently co-authored a book with Jennifer S. Hirsch on “sexual citizenship,” a concept which “denotes the acknowledgment of one’s own right to sexual self-determination and, importantly, recognizes the equivalent right in others” (Hirsch & Khan, 2020). As I read Marion Fourcade’s brilliant lecture, the long-held ambivalence Hirsch and I shared in our use of the word “citizen” welled up in me. When we settled on it, and as our publisher pushed for the title, *Sexual Citizens*, we were well aware of the problems with the idea of “citizenship.” Initially, we had named the concept something else—sexual efficacy—hoping to build on both the concepts of self- and collective-efficacy. We wanted to convey how sexuality was a project of self-determination, but not one that people made independent of their broader context. We argued that sexuality was a community project that involved the development of individual capacities, the fostering of social relationships founded in respect for others’ dignity, organizational environments that educated and affirmed the sexuality of all people, grounded a culture of respect. We saw the state, community organizations, and families as having failed in its fundamental role of developing in these individual, relational, organizational, and cultural capacities for sexual citizenship. Sexual assault, we argue, is partially explained by that failure.

Using citizenship was more of a pragmatic than intellectual decision. Our book was written for a general audience and we decided that few outside a community of scholars would easily grasp the concept of “efficacy” as opposed to “citizenship.” Still, immediately after introducing the term in our text, we were defensive:

Sexual citizenship isn’t something some are born with and others are born without. Rather, sexual citizenship is fostered and institutional and culturally supported. We do not use the term sexual citizenship as it is sometimes used, to call attention to the states’ designation of people as citizens or noncitizens, allocating rights and benefits dependent on sexual identity. Rather, we mean a socially produced sense of enfranchisement and right to sexual agency.

Much has been said about the problems of citizenship. Fourcade reminds of these and her analysis outlines additional grounds for concern, arguing that “demands for citizenship have reoriented toward socio-technical systems that are most visibly dominated by private institutions.” Layered onto to the problems of the state-citizenship are, increasingly, the problems of market-citizenship. Drawing on her own work and that of others, she notes how financialization and digitization are offered up as our contemporary saviors, helping solve a variety of problems from opportunity to

equality, and even collective action. But Foucade outlines the challenges of some of these consequences of these purported saviors, by expressing the challenges of an emerging “ordinal citizenship.”

The ordinal citizen's duties might include walking a certain 26 number of daily steps, hydrating regularly, or simply wearing a fitbit, so her insurance risk may be assessed or priced precisely. As a worker, she may be relentlessly rated by everyone. Her salary may depend on obscure algorithms deeply embedded in her computer that break down her work flow, her emotional state of mind, her communicative ability, or her connections to others. Relevant measures may include her likelihood of quitting her job or her cultural fit with the company, pricing her not only according to performance but also “willingness to accept.” As a financial citizen, she must use credit quite a lot, but responsibly –or face the market consequences. And, last but not least, she possibly finds it necessary to rely on paid services and derivative apps to optimize herself on multiple digital scales.

These great transformations have changed what Fourcade calls the “moral economy of citizenship.” By this, Fourcade means two things. First, that rights beget duties, and that the expansion of citizenship comes with a new set of moral injunctions that we all must follow; in her analysis, those injunctions are not simply how one acts in civil and political society, but, increasingly, how one acts within markets. Second, where citizenship was once thought of as a “lumping” force, bringing difference together under a veil of shared status, today it is increasingly a “splitting” force; financialization and digitization are interacting with citizenship to create social divisions—which is to say new categories that can serve markets by creating new types of people who are expected to consume in particular ways.

My work with Hirsch presents sexuality as part of a new moral economy of citizenship—understanding it as one among an ever-expansive set of injunctions about how we act within civil, political, and market society. That work also views it as coming with a set of obligations for how we treat each other in, to use an unpopular word, “private” life. While the right to self-determination may seem obvious to us today, we must remember that sexual self-determination, and the obligation of an equivalent set of rights in others, is relatively new and still not fully established. We need only think about the limits that still exist among married partners and their capacity to claim their own right to sexual self-determination over the wants of their partners (Abu-Odeh et al., 2020). In the United States, for example, until 1975 every state in the country considered a husband's rape of his wife an exemption to rape statutes. To this day, wives in South Carolina must report a rape by their husband within 30 days, and the offense must involve a weapon or a threat of grievous bodily harm for it to be considered rape. In English common law, rape was only established as possible within marriages in a 1991 case and explicitly prohibited in statute by the Sexual Offences Act of 2003.

The right to sexual self-determination, or as Hirsch and I call it, “Sexual Citizenship,” is a moral imperative that is, ultimately, contemporary. My question in this essay is whether it is subject to the kinds of ordinal impulses Fourcade outlines in her essay, and if not, how it has escaped such demands of self-care and individual action that potentially erode solidarity and universalism.

There is much I learned from Fourcade and little I disagreed with. But reading her insights did make me think about the value of private spaces for marginalized groups, and their capacity to create capacities that states purposefully and structurally deny. While not a particularly popular position within sociology, I want to make a more positive argument than Fourcade does for private institutions. I do so fully acknowledging the limits of private institutions and that Fourcade herself does not foreclose their emancipatory potential. She does not make an argument against markets; she instead outlines a series of concerns about them. The implication of my reflection is that solidarity and universalism may be exclusionary of minoritized groups and that private spaces have served, from time to time, as places for those groups to nonetheless develop shared identities and thereby assert their rights and moral standing.

1.1 | The organized state-sponsored denial of sexual citizenship

In our work Hirsch and I find that sexual assault is an almost predictable consequence of the systematic denial of young people's sexuality. In the United States, the federal government has long conveyed to its citizens that sex is a problem; a, in the words of one of our mentors, "dirty rotten nasty thing that you should only do to someone you love after you're a married." The Reagan administration's "just say 'no'" campaign was not initially about drugs; it was about sex. The Adolescent Family Life Act of 1981, otherwise known as the "chastity" program, was written primarily to discourage premarital sex and promote sexual ignorance. President Clinton's 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (known as "welfare reform") mandated that public institutions "abstinence from sexual activity outside marriage as the expected standard for all school age children." More recently, a Democratically controlled Congress under President Obama continued to fund abstinence-only programs under the rebranding as, "sexual risk avoidance."

All of these reflect a near widespread belief among elected officials that it would be better if adolescents did not have sex at all. The aim of national policy is sexual ignorance, not sexual citizenship. In the broader literature as well as in our own work we found that this disproportionately affected the most disadvantaged students. By formal rules, LGBTQ+ youth are often not given sexual education that is inclusive of their identities and practices (only 5 out of the 50 states in the US mandate that LGBTQ+ sex ed be provided; 7 states explicitly prohibit the mentioning of LGBTQ+ experiences). Poorer students are far less likely than others to receive comprehensive, age-appropriate sexuality education (Brener et al., 2003). Both of these reflect a broader normalization of inequality within public education. This state-organized ignorance has real harms. The broader research I have been a part of has found that such failures to provide young people with sexual education which builds skills and capacities within them to refuse sex significantly increases their chances of being raped (Santelli et al., 2018); and this may also explain the higher likelihood of being assaulted among LGBTQ young people, and those who have difficulty paying for their basic needs (Mellins et al., 2017).

This is part of a more general state denial of the citizenship of the more marginal. In several states those convicted of a felony who have served their sentences are still denied the right to vote, and recently courts in the United States have ruled that those convicted of a felony can be compelled to pay all their fines before being allowed to vote—effectively disenfranchising millions of disproportionately Black Americans. Over 20% of the Black populations in Tennessee, Florida, and Virginia cannot vote because of these rules, and over 25% cannot vote in Kentucky (Uggen et al., 2016). It might be extreme, but the United States is hardly unique in its structured organization against its citizens. The most important parts of the institution of the state—the presidency with its electoral college, the senate's purposeful non-representative design, and the supreme court's removal from any democratic influence—are insulated from citizens. And in turn, the state frequently acts to limit rather than promote the efficacy of its citizens. As Rogers Smith has outlined in the seminar work of his "multiple political traditions" thesis, which argued for the concurrent multiplicity of political traditions (beyond Tocquevillian liberalism) (Smith, 1993), the pathway of rights has not been progressive, but instead one wherein they have been extended and retracted (Smith, 1997). In the American case, the experiences of Black Americans, from Reconstruction to Jim Crow, and from the voting rights act to the current hostility to their capacity to vote, show such processes clearly.

Nothing in Fourcade's essay is inconsistent with this, nor, I suspect, would not disagree with any of this. But for me, it is important to note the problems of state citizenship that are neither the state's definition of some as non-citizens nor the appropriation of citizenship by markets. Instead, it is the state's active role in denying citizenship. This is most pronounced when looking at minoritized groups. And it raises the important possibility of how non-state actors can help moderate some of those effects. In order to see this, I turn to the case of sexual minorities.

1.2 | Taking the emancipatory capacity of markets seriously

Fourcade is, fundamentally, interested in the twin dynamics of stratification and inclusion. This has long been an interest of mine—how it is that we can have more inclusive yet more unequal institutions (Khan, 2011) and how separated groups do not necessarily experience the blurring of boundaries when they are included in or share a space (Accominotti et al., 2018). One suggestion from this latter work is that market organizations may have provided an opening for opportunities of inclusion that other social institutions denied. Exploring the dynamics of the NY Philharmonic and how it created a context of “segregated inclusion,” Accominotti, Storer, and I argued that, “people could pay for their seats at the Philharmonic. Unlike social clubs—into which one had to be accepted—or marriages—which families typically had to approve—cultural institutions operated on the market, making them uniquely suited for the kinds of inclusion dynamics that we observe.” Markets provided opportunities that other social institutions were organized to deny.

I do not aim to join McCloskey (2010) in full-throated defense of the moral virtues of market liberalism. Critical race scholarship has shown how capitalism “underdeveloped Black America” (Marable, 1983) and how banks helped state institutions undermine Black home ownership (Taylor, 2019). Market discrimination against women, sexual minorities, immigrants—all minoritized groups—has been extensively documented. But just as these are important to acknowledge, it is important to also explore those contexts wherein markets might provide some opportunities, where they can allow for the cultivation of rights of self-determination that the state might deny.

It is important to be clear about this point in relationship to Fourcade: her argument is not about the differences between state citizenship and market citizenship. Instead, it is about ordinal citizenship, which works both in and through states and markets. Fourcade argues that ordinal citizenship “implies unfolding ourselves as financial, digital and biological projects that will be nudged toward some institutionally desirable state, by means of cybernetic feedback or behavioral modification (Schüll, 2016; Zuboff, 2019). Importantly, the price system looms large in this loop.” And as such the point I am making is less of a critique and more of ruination.

The case of sexuality is particularly instructive. Drawing upon John D’Emilio’s classic account of the “homophile movement” from the 1940s to the 1970s, we can see the oppressive nature of the state, the vibrant centrality of social movement organizations, and the importance of private spaces for the movement toward what might eventually be called “gay liberation.”

D’Emilio (1983) demonstrates the enormous degree of oppression that minoritized sexualities experienced in the United States in the mid part of the 20th century. McCarthyism was as much about sexuality as it was communism, as far more people lost their jobs during McCarthyite purges for being alleged homosexuals than for being alleged communists (and indeed, the communists were themselves rather hostile to homosexuals). D’Emilio suggests that there was no homosexual community before 1940. He argues that three things were critical to the emergence of a homosexual “minority” in the 1940s—(a) World War 2, which created massive homosocial contact and allowed people to realize that they were not alone; (b) The Kinsey report, which helped create scientific, medicalized knowledge of homosexuality that, “Persons with homosexual histories are to be found in every age group, in every social level, in every conceivable occupation, in cities and on farms, and in the most remote areas of the country”; and (c) gay bars in urban centers which helped create a sense of collective identity.

It is this last piece that I wish to focus on—not to argue that private institutions were sufficient to create a sense of one’s rights to sexual expression, but that they, at the very least, played an important role. Nor do I wish to suggest they were a panacea. They tended excluded women, racial and ethnic minorities, and those with gender-variant identities.

But we might take, as an example, the critical turning point of the Stonewall riots. The Stonewall Inn was, like most of the gay bars in lower Manhattan, owned by the Genovese crime family. It was a distinctly “private” institution—patrons had to sign their names to enter, indicating their membership in a club. Police were bribed to stay away—Duberman (1993) estimates that local precinct received nearly \$2000/week to leave the bar and other associated mafia spots alone (see also: Armstrong & Crage, 2006). Still walking into The Stonewall Inn was

not safe or easy, famous patrons were sometimes subject to periodic terrors by the Genovese crime family, which threatened to “out” them if they did not pay extortion fees. Stonewall was a firetrap with only one entrance/exit and no running water—glasses were cleaned with dirty water which leads to Hepatitis outbreaks associated with the bar. The Riots were mostly a protest against police brutality, but they were also staged against organized crime's ownership of gay nightlife in New York.

I could not, then, in earnest, argue that markets made gay identity and that they did so in unambiguously positive ways. First, Stonewall was far from a market-based organization; it was a private club, owned by the mob, purposefully hidden away from any open consumption. This was hardly unique as a gay bar. But the hundreds of similar establishments across the nation played a major role in developing within the queer community a collective identity, and a sense of their equivalence to heterosexuals in their rights sexual citizenship. Sexual citizens were heterosexuals, and these movements, born in private spaces, sought to queer that notion.

The problems of private institutions are clear, but so too might we anticipate their potential promises. Those promises are particularly the case when states are organized not to extend but to deny rights. We might ask about the contexts wherein sexual politics, under the guise of universalism (of the “traditional” family, or of “natural” sexuality) has been an exclusionary project, defining minoritized groups outside the scope of the collective and aggressively defending those bounds. Sexual minorities, in particular, have been and still are actively denied their citizenship—by families, organizations communities, states, and not infrequently, markets. But private institutions have played a dual role, capitalizing on exclusion to support the creation of shared identities which become markets to be exploited. That exploitation is real. But so too is the sense of rights that emerge within these newfound groups. Fourcade makes a compelling and clear case for the oppressive potential of markets within ordinal citizenship. And I can not help but wonder if there might also be some small space and some set of conditions that could be emancipatory for some.

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The aesthetics of hierarchy

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Social and political philosopher Elizabeth Anderson's (2017) book, *Private Government*, opens with the evocation of an all but inconceivable time when the market was "left":

The ideal of a free market society, Anderson writes, used to be a cause of the left. By "the left," I refer to egalitarian thinkers and participants in egalitarian social movements, starting with the Levellers in the mid-seventeenth century, continuing through the Enlightenment, the American and French Revolutions, and pre-Marxist radicals of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In the United States, the association of market society with egalitarianism lasted through the Civil War. (Anderson, 2017, p. 1)

It would be an understatement to say that the free market society these old-time activists yearned for failed to deliver on its egalitarian promises. Anderson's provocative argument, though, is that early egalitarian radicals were not ignorant of the ills free markets might bring about when it came to inequality in income or wealth. Given the known tendencies of markets to fuel economic inequality, then, what stake did they see in promoting private property and free trade?

To understand this, Anderson continues, we must get beyond a narrow interpretation of egalitarianism in terms of current ideas about distributive justice. Egalitarianism, more fundamentally, is about dismantling or taming social hierarchy. (Anderson, 2017, p. 8)

Because free markets rested on a principle of equality between the parties to a market deal, markets were perceived as engines of destruction of the old hierarchies of rank and privilege that formed the beating heart of early modern England or Ancien Régime France (see also Fontaine, 2014). Even as the churn of the industrial revolution created its own brand of blatantly unequal, hierarchical social order over the course of the 19th century, it seemed as though markets themselves might not be to blame. The unfettered concentration of capital, the ever-expanding grip of a few monopolistic corporations, and the multiplication of ranks within them, could pass as the culprits instead. Unleash the true power of free markets and all of these would soon be eliminated, paving the way for a bona fide society of equal citizens.

Marion Fourcade's "Ordinal Citizenship" is the brilliant diagnosis of a new development of market society, wherein the ideal of a rank-free society of equals, which used to come as a promise of free markets, is now being

crushed by the very logic upon which markets operate. In Fourcade's view, the inner machinery of contemporary markets, combined with our willingness to outsource to markets and private corporations the provision of many of the rights and prerogatives that define individuals' inclusion into a community of citizens, has a tendency to recreate the kind of tiered citizenship systems that were the hallmark of old aristocratic societies. By letting markets take care of citizens' inclusion, that is, we inch away from the democratic ideal of equal citizenship for all.

Fourcade's diagnosis builds on a central insight first laid out in a series of earlier articles (Fourcade, 2016, 2017; Fourcade & Healy, 2013, 2017): modern markets have become engines of moral classification. In an economy that is growing more knowledge-intensive by the day (Thrift, 2005), corporations increasingly make profits off of their ability to predict individual behavior. To get there, they need to sort consumers, insurance subscribers, or mortgage applicants into categories of risk, solvency, purchasing power or creditworthiness.

That market actors would rely on an infrastructure of predictive scores and categories that classify consumers in their eyes is not new. Josh Lauer's (2018) history of the consumer credit rating industry, for example, goes as far back as the 1840s. Novel to modern markets, however, is *how* they build these classifications: through the analysis of troves of individual-level behavioral information, made available by the all-around digitization of contemporary lives. Think of the wealth of behavioral data going into a credit score, for example: one's entire history of credit applications, credit denials, credit utilization, late or missing payments, bankruptcies, etc. In fact, any trace of human activity that can be stored on a computer is now game for algorithmically rating and ranking individuals in the eyes of the market—or of the state for that matter.

Fourcade's key insight comes from unpacking the moral implications of this technical shift: because modern classifications seem to rest on nothing but behavioral information, positions within them are increasingly experienced as morally deserved—the outcome of prior good or bad individual actions and decisions. Algorithmic forms of classifications, therefore, recreate their own hierarchies of moral standing, and data-powered markets, far from ushering in a “free society of equals,” have become machines to stratify individuals by degrees of greater or lesser worthiness. Subjects were once ranked among those who prayed, those who fought, and those who labored (Duby, 1981); we now sort and include citizens based on the value of their credit score. How, then, are we to guarantee equal citizenship for all? How can a system of citizenship provision rooted in the measurement of moral worth not yield first- and second-class citizens? And, how are we to maintain solidarity *across* classes of citizens when membership in a class looks like it rewards individual actions and choices?¹

*

In the rest of this paper I want to highlight a different pathway whereby algorithmic classification undermines ideals of equality and threatens to restore aristocratic-like forms of social stratification. Glimpses of this pathway surface at several junctures in Fourcade's argument, yet for the most part it remains in the shadows of her central account. The present piece instead looks to unearth this pathway and to outline its contours in greater detail.

The crux of my analysis consists in asking: where do algorithmic forms of classification get their power to produce legitimate social hierarchies out of a body of supposedly equal citizens? Part of this power, I concur with Fourcade, arises from their tendency to present positions in the hierarchies that they create as the deserved outcomes of individual choices. My suggestion, though, is that another part of data-based forms of classifications' power comes from their tendency to persuade us that it *makes sense* to sort people into hierarchies of worthiness in the first place. Algorithmic forms of classification, that is, do not just make positions in the hierarchies that they create pass as legitimate. They also work to undermine the very belief Anderson's radicals placed at the heart of their egalitarianism: that human beings are fundamentally equal in their worthiness.

To envision this, I argue, we need to shift perspectives on two elements of the picture we are looking at here. We first need to focus on citizens, not as the subjects being rated and ranked by algorithmic techniques of classification, but as *observers* of the ratings and rankings these techniques generate in the social worlds citizens inhabit. Second, we need to look at data-powered ratings and rankings, not as morally meaningful indexes of one's character, but as *aesthetic* entities. By aesthetic I do not mean to say that ratings and rankings are particularly beautiful or pleasant to watch. I just want to stress that they are objects of perception to citizen-observers. In the following paragraphs I flesh out these two analytical moves in greater detail. I then show how they suggest a different pathway through which data-powered classifications create legitimate hierarchy out of supposed equality: by exposing citizen-observers to artificially sharp and clear-cut hierarchies, they make them take the idea of a hierarchy of human worthiness for granted.

1 | CITIZENS AS RIGHTS HOLDERS AND CIVIC OBSERVERS

There are two broad ways one can think of citizenship. As a set of rights warranting individuals' inclusion into a community of peer citizens, first. This view, which is the one Fourcade adopts, regards citizens as the depositories of citizenship, as those upon which it is bestowed. Yet citizenship is not just a form of social standing associated with a series of rights and prerogatives. Another way of thinking about it is as a form of civic behavior—as one's mindfulness of collective affairs. This is the definition we have in mind when we praise a colleague for their citizenship in the workplace, for example. Citizens in this second view are the sources of citizenship, they are the ones volunteering it, the ones in whom it originates.

This civic form of citizenship comes in many flavors, from one's attentiveness to the day-to-day life of one's community to the casting of one's vote in an election, all the way to one's active engagement in a deliberative public sphere (Habermas, 1989). Beyond these differences, I here want to follow Adut (2018) in stressing that all brands of civic citizenship share one minimal feature: in them, citizens are observers of their social environment. To exercise citizenship in the civic sense, actors minimally need to be mindful of the collective worlds they inhabit, and therefore to have a vision—however limited and however flawed—of what these worlds are like. To go back to my earlier example, workplace citizens have a vision of how their workplace is organized. Citizens deliberating healthcare reform likewise bring to their discussion a vision—whether accurate or not—of how healthcare works, of who pays for it, of which groups it primarily benefits. (Note that being mindful of one's social environment is not a tall order, so that all of us routinely exercise civic citizenship to at least a minimal degree.)

That citizens in the civic sense have a vision of their social environment does not mean that they have direct access to it, however. In fact, most of the time our perception of collective affairs is shaped by a set of prisms we observe these affairs through. The news media is one obvious such prism. Increasingly, algorithmic forms of classification are another. As the latter become more ubiquitous, they mediate our vision of an ever-larger share of our social environments: of our colleagues in the workplace, when their performance is evaluated through data-based techniques; of the set of schools we might want to send our kids to, which test-based approaches rank for the quality of the education that they provide; of the charities that may receive our donations, the efficiency of which can now be rated algorithmically.

The question therefore arises: how does the constant exposure of citizens as civic observers to algorithmic forms of classification shape their vision of the social world they inhabit? In answering this, I believe one might benefit from looking at the outputs of algorithmic classification not just as moral indexes of individuals' character, as Fourcade does, but also as aesthetic objects. What are the aesthetic properties of these objects? What type of gaze on the social world do they cultivate in citizens as civic observers? And how might this make citizens more accepting of aristocratic-like social hierarchies?

2 | PUTTING THE WORLD IN ORDERS AND PUTTING IT IN ORDER

Perhaps the most extraordinary characteristic of the ratings and scores produced by algorithmic techniques of classification is that they are simple. To an onlooker they present themselves as clear and straightforward: someone's credit score is their credit score, unambiguously captured on a scale of 300 to 850 in the case of a general-purpose FICO score. If we were to use aesthetic language, we might want to say that scores have a sharpness, a crispness, or a clean-cutness to them. As objects in the world—and unless they come with a confidence interval or a methodological appendix, which they rarely do—they look neat and definitive. Yet let us think again of the mass of messy and heterogeneous information a credit score is based upon: not just one's credit history, but increasingly one's income and employment history, address history, electoral roll status, or record of court judgments. If we take one step back, it feels almost unfathomable that these diverse pieces of information, pointing in different and likely contradictory directions, would be meaningfully summarized into a single, crisp and clean-cut figure. And yet this summary is precisely what we get from an algorithmically generated credit score.

If we look at them as aesthetic objects, then, the real magic of data-powered ratings is not that they appear as records of prior actions and decisions, thereby obfuscating the social forces behind these actions and decisions and casting themselves as mere reflections of one's individual character. The real magic lies in the aura of faux precision through which scores and ratings conceal the messiness, ambiguity, and multidimensionality of the evidence behind the constructs they claim to measure. This was obvious to individuals confronted with early attempts to classify them algorithmically: when the Simulmatics corporation pioneered the business of sorting U.S. citizens into predictive categories in the hope of forecasting their political and consumer behavior, for example, people did not question the predictiveness of these categories, but whether it made sense to try and summarize individuals into predictive categories in the first place. They frowned at the idea of being unambiguously sorted into a computer's "boxes," and an Oregon newspaper worried that Simulmatics was reducing "the voters—you, me, Mrs. Jones next door, and Professor Smith at the university—to little holes in punch cards" (cited in Lepore, 2020, p. 126).

In sum, I am arguing that algorithmic techniques of classification, when applied to sorting people by degrees of risk, creditworthiness, or performance, do more than one thing. On the one hand, they create *orderings*—hierarchical sortings which, because they appear to be rooted in nothing but individuals' purposefulness and agency, can pass for legitimate hierarchies reflecting these individuals' unequal moral worth. Yet these techniques also do something else—something that appears in plain sight if we look at their outputs as aesthetic objects: by vacuuming up the fuzziness and ambiguity inherent to the empirical data they base themselves upon, they inject artificial *orderliness* into the way the world appears to outside observers. Ordinal classification, in short, does not just put the world in orders—to use Brandtner's (2017) eloquent phrase. It also puts it in order.

Let me make two quick points before moving on to how this injection of order might work to bolster the legitimacy of worthiness hierarchies. First, the idea that algorithmic engines of classification inject order into the representations of the world they generate echoes classic accounts in the history and sociology of measurement and statistics. Alain Desrosières (1998) thus famously argued that statistical categories group into conventional "classes of equivalence" empirical entities that we would regard as unique and incommensurable if we were to look at them from the strict perspective of phenomenological experience (also see Espeland & Stevens, 1998; Hacking, 1986; Scott, 1998). The only slight difference is that algorithmic scoring does not create order by way of grouping heterogeneous things. It suspends our disbelief, not that different things are the same, but that any one thing can be meaningfully captured by a tidy rating.²

Second, I should stress that my argument does not relate to algorithmic forms of classification alone. That the latter have a tendency to "put the world in order" comes from the fact that they strive to capture complicated constructs—such as performance or creditworthiness—through crisp and clean-cut things such as ratings and scores. From this it follows that any classification system that obscures the complexity of the evidence it rests upon likewise brings artificial orderliness to the image of the world that it creates. This is what happens when we

grade a batch of essays, for example, or more generally when we claim to measure the complexity of academic performance with marks and IQ scores (Carson, 2007): when we read essays at first, what strikes us is that they are complex feats that are difficult to grade with much precision. In fact, we may wonder whether it makes sense to boil them down to a grade at all. Yet ultimately we do grade them, we give them these crisp and tidy ratings—because we have to in order to make the school system work.

The propensity of classification systems to put the world in order, in short, is not specific to algorithmic forms of classification. In closing this point, though, I should note that neither is their tendency to present the positions they sort people into as the deserved outcomes of these peoples' abilities and character (Fourcade's argument). After all, it was Pierre Bourdieu's (1973) key insight, well before algorithms took over our lives, that school evaluations legitimate social hierarchies by naturalizing academic merit and obfuscating its social circumstances. The production of legitimate social orderings, as well as the production of artificial orderliness, are elementary features of classification systems that long predate our digital age. The datafication of modern social life certainly works to supercharge these features, yet as far as mechanisms are concerned there may not be much new under the social sun.

3 | THE HIERARCHICAL GAZE

It is now easier to envision the second pathway through which algorithmic forms of classification may produce legitimate social hierarchies out of a body of supposedly equal citizens. When citizens as civic observers are exposed to the hierarchies these classifications generate—hierarchies of risk, of creditworthiness, or of academic merit, to cite but a few—they do not just see hierarchies. They also experience artificial orderliness in the way individuals in these hierarchies rank relative to one another. When merit is measured as a crisp score, for example, everyone looks like they can be positioned neatly and unambiguously on a scale of merit (there may be ties, but they will be unambiguous ties). As a consequence, I suggest, observers will be less inclined to question the meaningfulness of ranking on such a scale to begin with. If on the contrary individuals' relative positions were fuzzy and equivocal, for example because different individuals would fare inconsistently on two sub-dimensions of merit—say, English and math—that would not be averaged into a single score, observers would be more likely to wonder whether it makes sense to rank individuals by merit at all.

Along similar lines, when multiple agencies compete to rate and rank individuals in a field, they are likely to return contradictory judgments that will undermine their ability to suggest the existence in their field of a meaningful hierarchy of greatness (Accominotti, 2021). In fact, “if there are too many competing assessment agencies, the entire business of ranking may lose its legitimacy” (Healy, 2017, p. 516). If in contrast there is a single, clear ranking in a field, it will work to suggest to outside observers that greatness is a trustable thing, that different people have more or less of it, that it makes sense to think of it in hierarchical terms.

This idea was actually not lost on sociologist Michael Young, who coined the term for what is perhaps the utmost producer of legitimate hierarchies in contemporary societies—that is, meritocracy. Young's most potent critique of meritocracy, in *The Rise of the Meritocracy* (1958), was not that meritocracy is unfair—that it is biased against certain groups in the way it rewards merit and ability (it is). Neither was it that it tends to naturalize merit by obscuring its social circumstances (it does). Instead it was that meritocracy, through its simplistic assessment of merit, has a tendency to create unduly reified hierarchies—merit-based hierarchies, to be sure, but hierarchies still—where all there is to see is the messy variety and multidimensionality of human worthiness.³

By producing clear-cut hierarchies, then, algorithmic forms of classification do more than presenting positions in these hierarchies as deserved and therefore as legitimate. They also subtly assert that it is warranted to sort people into hierarchies of worthiness in the first place—that there is such a thing as a meaningful hierarchy of merit, of risk, or of creditworthiness. To put it in aesthetic terms, they cultivate a hierarchical gaze in the eyes of those experiencing the world through the sortings that they create.

The cultivation of this gaze matters, finally, because it threatens the very beliefs that form the bedrock of a true society of equals—namely, citizens' embrace of the idea that their fellow citizens should not be regarded as inherently unequal in terms of their worth and deservingness, and hence that they should not be given unequal rank in society (Waldron, 2012, 2017). The ever-increasing exposure of citizens as civic observers—that is, of any one of us really—to the outputs of algorithmic forms of classification chips away at precisely these beliefs. By dissipating any ambiguity from the way we experience worthiness in the world around us, it trains us to think of different people or different achievements as of truly different worth—as of different kinds indeed. It therefore removes one of the most powerful barriers standing in the way of a rank-based, aristocratic-like society: the deep notion that various citizens have more in common than they have that tells them apart.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ This, of course, does not mean that citizenship was equal for all prior to the rise of data-powered forms of classification. In fact, citizenship has long come in shades: up until the 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution, for example, white men and women born in the United States were commonly assumed to be citizens, yet white women lacked the basic right to vote enjoyed by white men. Likewise, while free black Americans were granted citizenship status in some northern states prior to the Civil War, they certainly did not enjoy full equality before the law—nor did African-Americans between the end of Reconstruction and the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Jurists in the antebellum South often referred to freeborn Blacks as “quasi-citizens” (see Foner, 2019, p. 4).
- ² On the contested meaningfulness of precision in numerical measurement, see the essays collected in Wise (1997).
- ³ For more recent takes, see Frank (2016) and Sandel (2020). For an account of how the delineation of crisp hierarchies of merit fuels inequality in the rewards received by the winners and losers of meritocratic contests, see Accominotti and Tadmon (2020).

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The unbearable rightness of being ranked

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My first reaction to these wonderful comments is immense gratitude for the carefulness and sincerity of their authors' engagement with my work. My second one is humility, for they have better summarized my own ideas than I ever could. They also critique, qualify, and expand on these ideas in ways that I find profoundly generative. This is the case with Fabien Accominotti's discussion of the aesthetic power of hierarchy, Shamus Kahn's cautious endorsement of the emancipatory possibilities of market citizenship, Christian Joppke's firm repositioning of ordinal citizenship within the episteme of neoliberalism, and Yasemin Soysal's reminder about the institutional conditions that made it possible in the first place. More than a point-by-point "reply," my essay couches in writing the many thoughts that my reading of these four papers stimulated. I will begin with Soysal and Joppke, since they provide the big picture background of the story I am trying to tell, and work my way up to address the more specific points made by Kahn and Accominotti.

Yasemin Soysal's incisive response rightly points out that the "legal and cultural elaboration of universalistic personhood" in the post-World War II era is an essential precondition of the development of ordinal citizenship. Indeed, as Kieran Healy and I (2017, p. 20) have suggested elsewhere, what makes abundant behavioral data "worth collecting and integrating is a powerful cultural abstraction—the notion of an efficient, purposive and knowable actor (Jepperson & Meyer, 2000)." That actor is now becoming legible not only to institutions but also to *itself* by way of scores, categories and dashboards that record, track, compare and contrast. How much these devices actually matter—in other words, how those subjected to it actually experience and engage being ordinalized—is an empirical question, however. As Soysal's examples of international university rankings and Chinese social credit show, the phenomenology of ordinality is ambiguous, alternating between surveillant panic and blissful irrelevance. For all their universalistic ambition, the reach of ordinal infrastructures is still very far from complete. And for all my emphasis on finance and digitality—two quintessentially global systems—both Soysal and Joppke remind us that citizenship continues to be primarily anchored in traditional institutions, such as the law and the sovereign state.

At the same time, both have written eloquently about the fact that even national citizenship has become heavily moralized. In a typically neoliberal fashion, it is being increasingly framed through the language of contract rather than status, deservingness rather than rights, and individual behavior rather than social condition (Joppke, 2021; Somers, 2008; Soysal, 2012). What I am suggesting here is that new kinds of record-keeping about individuals, enabled by computers, are giving further purchase to these processes. Biometrics, digital profiles, and data loggings have transformed the infrastructure for individual identification and security. More aspects of behavior have become legible, either on their own or as inputs into digital signatures and patterns. Analytic tools

sifting through social media, sensor and geolocation data—and much more—open up a space for what Amoores (2013) calls a “politics of possibilities,” where inclusion in some social community or identification with some relevant social category depends on patterns that demonstrably exist in the data, ranked according to some metric of desirability. How this still embryonic politics of ordinal citizenship might evolve—and what kind of counterpolitics it might elicit—is uncertain, though. The future is not foreclosed. We know, for instance, that people spontaneously react to the categories and numbers that reify them in ways that may bolster their efficacy—but sometimes also dampen it (Espeland & Sauder, 2007; Hacking, 1999). The oppressive, but also the emancipatory potential of ordinal technologies lies in the eminently unsettled dialectic between performativity and resistance to ordinalization—a point fully acknowledged by Soysal in the conclusion to her essay.¹

In his masterful response, Christian Joppke brings to light—perhaps better than I did myself—the fundamentally oxymoronic nature of the concept of ordinal citizenship: the intrusion of meritocratic criteria, arbitrarily scaled and measured, into the making of the supposedly all-encompassing status category of the citizen; and the funneling of demands for inclusion and justice through market-based channels. What makes ordinal citizenship neoliberal rather than purely liberal today is not simply the increasingly obvious shift from need to merit in cultural representations of the individual: after all, liberalism accommodated itself quite well to the rise of the meritocracy, as Young observed in his acerbic critique. Rather, it is the increasingly tight dependence of merit on *market worth*. Joppke is right to flag empirical illustrations of this evolution: having valuable skills, offering investment prospects, not depending on public welfare, and being able to pay high fees have become essential criteria to obtain national citizenship in a number of countries. With respect to social citizenship, the generalization of workfare proceeds from a similar logic of visibility-cum-productivity. Joppke, however, believes that these features of modern citizenship are much more the product of the “persistent internationalism and openness that contemporary societies seem committed to” than of the transformation of capitalism by digital technologies. Perhaps, but I would hastily add that digitization is one of the main channels through which the global forces he centers in his account express themselves. Second, we must still reckon with the fact that this genie is out: we cannot ignore it as irrelevant or pretend it is still bottled up. Instead, we must engage it on its own terms—examine what it allows, what it supports and what it forecloses. Only then will we be able to challenge it, reform it and (hopefully) bend it to our collective will. My argument is that digitization has led to the proliferation of quantitative measures and point systems in every domain, including in the management of both national and social citizenship.² And where Joppke sees this kind of ordinalization as only one, and perhaps only a minor, piece of the broader advance of neoliberal political rationality, I see it as an evolving and increasingly ubiquitous *form*, which may harbor many different ideological contents—neoliberalism being only one of them.

One thing is sure. These contents depend, most of all, on the broader political economy that organizes the production and exchange of behavioral data about individuals. As I have argued, private corporations currently loom large in these circuits: they define the shape of the data collection process in ways that primarily serve their own economic purposes. And thus, I “make a case for the oppressive potential of markets within ordinal citizenship,” as Shamus Kahn observes. I unabashedly do. Perhaps counterintuitively, though, I also acknowledge (in a manner that is very much in line with Kahn's own penetrating remarks) that part of that oppression works by expanding opportunities. Corporations seeking to make profits, in any line of business, will naturally seek to scale up, to expand beyond their historical margins, to turn previously untapped borrowers, users, or customers into reliable market participants. Hence the importance of the idiom of citizenship, access, inclusion, in all of these eminently capitalistic endeavors.³ My purpose is not to deny the empowerment and freedom that may come with the right to borrow or surf the web, but to recognize the inscription of these feelings and newfound capacities in a broader political economy, which they are the product of *and* contribute to (re)produce. Yes, markets have often served as a welcome and even emancipatory escape, allowing marginalized groups to enjoy a modicum of normalcy against ugly state-sponsored exclusions. But—as Khan's example of the Stonewall Inn eloquently demonstrates—that kind of inclusion never comes cheap. Whether it is the mafia boss blackmailing the gay celebrity or the loan shark extracting a hefty fee from the Black borrower, money, coercion, and humiliation are all part of the story, too.

Furthermore, even this kind of violence pales in the face of those routine exclusions that are native to the market itself. For all their imperfections and sometimes their cruelty, wherever social rights have been implemented they have worked to offer relief from lack of access to the labor market or to critical goods, such as healthcare or education. Even those valuable forms of citizenship that might be well served by the market, such as Kahn's "sexual citizenship," can only be enhanced by the basic decommodification operated by the state.

Last but not least, Fabien Accominotti's little jewel of a rejoinder brings to light the real-world power—and the real danger—of ordinalization processes. Rather than asking what scores, ratings, and rankings do, he returns to the meta-order question of why we care so much about them. We often assume that these measures exert a powerful hold over us because they come in the form of numbers. Common critiques decry a reliance on crude simplification, structural opacity, routine failures to predict, and lack of objectivity (Esposito & Stark, 2019). Not so fast. Accominotti reminds us that what is important about these devices—particularly when applied to people and to human institutions more generally—is that they take for granted the necessity and *production* of order and, by entrenching themselves, naturalize and reify that order. What is important about scoring is quite simply the fact that *it is there*, allowing us to see the social world as a space of comparability and thus hierarchization. Ordinalization is so much more than a practical engine for the production of social positions. It is also, to use Accominotti's brilliant phrase, an "aesthetic." The political implications are essential. Any institution that strives for orderliness, with its ideology of clean measurement of differences, has difficulty imagining a community of equals. I struggled with that very same question, although I did not articulate it as forcefully and eloquently. As I wrote in the conclusion, "when algorithms determine the value of each and everyone, how do we sustain beliefs in equality? When outcomes look like the result of individual actions (people get what they deserve), how do we maintain meaningful forms of solidarity?" My faint hope is that universal policies and universal public goods, which take equality of status rather than difference in achievement for granted, will suddenly become (again?) an attractive alternative to the proliferation of small m meritocracies—not only because they are so much easier to administer, but because living in an ordinal society may simply be unbearable.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ In a world of machine learning, this recursivity between human and computer is actually automated and much more continuous (Fourcade and Johns 2020).
- ² Some of these are not new. Canada famously translated economic and demographic criteria into a point system (as part of an official effort to end racial discrimination).
- ³ I am with Karl Marx here, who better than anyone acknowledged that "the bourgeoisie ... must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connexions everywhere." If anything, the abundance and cheap circulation of information magnifies this essential tendency of capitalism toward global expansion.

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The intergenerational transmission of language skill

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Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between parents' and children's language skills for a nationally representative birth cohort born in the United Kingdom—the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS). We investigate both socioeconomic and ethnic differentials in children's vocabulary scores and the role of differences in parents' vocabulary scores in accounting for these. We find large vocabulary gaps between highly educated and less educated parents, and between ethnic groups. Nevertheless, socioeconomic and ethnic gaps in vocabulary scores are far wider among the parents than among their children. Parental vocabulary is a powerful mediator of inequalities in offspring's vocabulary scores at age 14, and also a powerful driver of change in language skills between the ages of five and 14. Once we account for parental vocabulary, no ethnic minority group of young people has a negative “vocabulary gap” compared to whites.

KEYWORDS

education, ethnicity, inequality, intergenerational, language, vocabulary

1 | INTRODUCTION

Social class differences in language use have been central to some of the major sociological theories regarding the intergenerational transmission of educational advantage. For Bourdieu, “linguistic competence” is central to educational and social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu, Passeron, & Saint-Martin, 1994). Despite this,

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measures of linguistic attainment have rarely been used in empirical operationalizations of Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction (Sullivan, 2001). Bernstein also placed substantial weight on the differences in language use by middle and working-class children, arguing that this affected their ability to succeed at school (Bernstein, 1971, 1973, 1975). Language knowledge is clearly an important prerequisite for school learning, and language difficulties have been linked to a range of adverse outcomes (Law, Rush, Schoon, & Parsons, 2009). However, most empirical studies have neglected the role of parental language skills. This means we do not know to what extent parental language skills are transmitted to the child, or how important parental language skills are in explaining socioeconomic gaps in children's language skills.

Perhaps the most widely cited empirical source on the question of the relationship between parents' and children's vocabularies is Hart and Risley's (1995) observational study. Hart and Risley's research on 42 families in one U.S. college town found strong social class and black-white differences in the range of vocabulary used by parents when talking to their children. Their headline finding that "professional class" children had been exposed to 30 million more words than "welfare children" had by age three (Hart & Risley, 2003) has been enormously influential, despite the drawback of a small and unrepresentative sample. (To be clear, the 30 million figure does not refer to unique words, but the total barrage of speech to which the children were exposed, including repetition). The study is contested (Golinkoff, Hoff, Rowe, Tamis-LeMonda, & Hirsh-Pasek, 2018; Sperry, Sperry, & Miller, 2018), but important, given the lack of evidence in this field. We are aware of only one previous large quantitative study which assesses the role of parental vocabulary in shaping class and race differences in children's vocabularies (Farkas & Beron, 2004).

1.1 | The current study

We exploit unique new data on the vocabulary scores of both parents and children in a nationally representative UK birth cohort study. A distinctive feature of the study is that mothers, partners, and children took an equivalent vocabulary test when the children were aged 14. This allows us to build on the existing evidence base in a number of important ways. First of all, we are able to establish the vocabulary gaps that exist for both parents and children according to social class and ethnic group using a nationally representative birth cohort study. Second, we address the extent to which socioeconomic and ethnic gaps in children's scores at age 14 are driven by differences in the parents' scores. Third, we assess the extent to which the role of the home environment and the child's own cultural capital are reduced once parental vocabulary is taken into account. Finally, given that language scores on school entry are a strong predictor of later language acquisition (Duncan et al., 2007), we assess whether parental vocabulary is associated with a growing language gap for children between the ages of five and 14.

2 | BACKGROUND

2.1 | The development of language gaps

Socioeconomic differentials in both verbal and general cognitive attainment emerge early in life, and widen during the pre-school and school years (Becker, 2011; Byford, Kuh, & Richards, 2011; Chiu & Chow, 2010; Douglas, 1964; Farkas & Beron, 2004; Feinstein, 2003; Fogelman & Goldstein, 1976; Law, McBean, & Rush, 2011; Law, Rush, King, Westrupp, & Reilly, 2017; Layte, 2017; Ready, 2010; Sullivan & Brown, 2015a; Sullivan, Ketende, & Joshi, 2013). The vast majority of the literature examining the relationship between parental and child vocabulary is focused on the early years, possibly because it is during this period that the greatest challenges are met (Cartmill et al., 2013; Fernald, Marchman, & Weisleder, 2013; Rowe, 2012). Yet social class differentials in vocabulary continue to grow during adolescence and even into mid-life (Sullivan & Brown, 2015a, 2015b).

2.2 | What explains socioeconomic language gaps?

From the perspective of cultural reproduction theory, the ability to understand and use “educated” language is a vital part of the advantage that is transmitted by high-status parents (Bourdieu, 1977). In this sense, language can be seen as part of the cultural capital that is transmitted within the home. But there is an ambiguity within Bourdieu's work regarding the role of language—is language a fundamental building block of learning, or is it simply a signal of class membership, which is arbitrarily rewarded by the education system? Of course, these are not mutually exclusive. It may be the case both that building vocabulary is vital for learning across subjects, and that educators sometimes arbitrarily reward styles of expression associated with elite groups. However, our focus is on language as a tool for communication and learning, and hence on quantitative differentials in vocabulary rather than on qualitative differences in styles of expression.

The concept of cultural capital has been operationalized in diverse ways. A useful distinction has been drawn between “status-seeking” and “information processing” forms of cultural capital (Ganzeboom, 1982). Information processing cultural capital leads to the development of knowledge and skills which are rewarded in the education system (Sullivan, 2002). Status-seeking cultural capital is rewarded via teacher bias rather than improved skills (Farkas, Grobe, Sheehan, & Shuan, 1990; Jæger & Møllegaard, 2017). We prefer the terms “literary cultural capital” and “non-literary” cultural capital to refer to cultural activities that relate to books and reading and those that do not. Studies that have separated the two have found that literary cultural capital has more influence on educational attainment (De Graaf, De Graaf, & Kraaykamp, 2000; Jæger, 2011; Sullivan, 2001).

Psychologists have also stressed the importance of the home literacy environment to children's language learning (Melhuish et al., 2008; Waldfogel & Washbrook, 2011). Three aspects of parenting have been highlighted as central to children's early language and learning (Rodriguez et al., 2009): (a) frequency of children's participation in routine *learning activities* (e.g., shared book reading, storytelling); (b) the *quality of caregiver-child engagements* (e.g., parents' cognitive stimulation and sensitivity/responsiveness); and (c) the provision of age-appropriate *learning materials* (e.g., books and toys). Studies have found substantial socioeconomic differentials in these parental inputs (Bassok, Finch, Lee, Reardon, & Waldfogel, 2016). However, studies assessing the role of the home literacy environment have not accounted for the role of parental language skills. This is important because it is likely both that parents who have strong language skills will be most comfortable engaging in activities such as shared reading, and also that they may be more effective at engaging their children in these activities than, for example, a parent who struggles with basic literacy skills (Sullivan et al., 2013). Evidence suggests that assortative mating according to verbal cognitive scores is notably higher than for non-verbal scores (Plomin & Deary, 2015).

Regardless of the theoretical perspective applied, empirical findings across the disciplines highlight the importance of the home literary climate. Whether books in the home are termed “embodied cultural capital” or “learning materials,” they remain a powerful predictor of educational outcomes (Marks, Cresswell, & Ainley, 2006). Both theoretical perspectives have merit, as books in the home are learning materials, but also reflect the value placed upon books and learning within the family, and represent a cultural display, signaling that the owner is a cultured person. Parental reading to children (Bus, Van Ijzendoorn, & Pellegrini, 1995) and children's own reading (Stanovich & Cunningham, 1998; Sullivan & Brown, 2015a) are powerful predictors of both language learning and wider educational outcomes.

2.3 | Ethnic differentials

Findings regarding ethnic gaps in both cognitive and educational attainment vary widely according to the minority groups considered and the particular national context (Alba & Waters, 2011). Much of the sociological literature relates to the U.S. context, where black-white test score gaps form in early childhood and widen during the school years (Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Quinn, 2015b). It is, therefore, important to be clear about the important differences

between the US and UK contexts. Waters et al. (2013) provide a useful overview of the main immigrant groups and differences in the United Kingdom and United States experience. Key points of difference are that black people in the United Kingdom, especially the black Caribbean group, have high levels of intermarriage and residential integration with whites compared to black people in the United States. In contrast, while Pakistani and Bangladeshi immigration to the United Kingdom began in the 1960s and 1970s, the widespread practice of transnational arranged cousin marriage maintains an ongoing "first generation" for many families, with associated lower tendency to speak English at home (Sullivan, 2010). In the United Kingdom, children of Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic backgrounds start at a disadvantage, but make greater progress during schooling than whites (Hoffmann, 2018; Strand, 2011; Sullivan et al., 2013), and white and black Caribbean working-class students are generally the lowest achievers at school (Strand, 2014). UK ethnic minorities as a whole are more likely than whites to gain a university degree (Modood, 2004), and all ethnic minority groups in the United Kingdom are more likely to enter university than their white peers with similar prior attainment (Belsky, Barnes, & Melhuish, 2007). Theories regarding social class differences in the transmission of educational advantages and disadvantages cannot simply be mapped onto ethnic differences. Particularly in the case of immigrant groups, the educational fates of children may not be as strongly tied to the parents' current status as class-based theories would lead us to predict.

3 | RESEARCH QUESTIONS

While researchers from a range of theoretical and disciplinary perspectives have emphasized the importance of inequalities in language development, a number of important empirical questions remain unanswered.

1. How large are vocabulary gaps according to childhood socioeconomic circumstances, ethnic group, and other factors?
2. What is the role of the home literacy culture in predicting child vocabulary and explaining SES gaps? We hypothesize that the home literacy culture predicts child vocabulary, net of socioeconomic background.
3. What is the role of the child's own cultural capital in predicting vocabulary and explaining SES gaps? We assess the roles of reading for pleasure (literary cultural capital) and playing an instrument (non-literary cultural capital). We hypothesize that reading for pleasure is an important predictor of vocabulary, whereas playing an instrument is less important.
4. How important are the mother's and partner's vocabulary in predicting the child's vocabulary, and does this substantially mediate SES and other differentials in the model? We hypothesize that parental vocabulary is of primary importance as a predictor of offspring's vocabulary, and mediates SES differences.
5. Which factors are relevant for progress in verbal scores between the ages of five and 14? We hypothesize that parental vocabulary, the home literary culture, and the child's own reading are predictors of vocabulary scores at 14, net of earlier vocabulary scores

4 | DATA AND MEASURES

The Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) is a national birth cohort study following the lives of 19,517 children born in the United Kingdom in 2000–2001 (Connelly & Platt, 2014; Joshi & Fitzsimons, 2016). The sample comprised all those born within eligible dates (September 1, 2000–August 31, 2001 in England and Wales; November 23, 2000–January 11, 2002 in Scotland and Northern Ireland), and resident in a stratified sample of electoral wards. The initial response rate was 72% of all families with eligible children living at nine months in the sampled wards (Plewis, Calderwood, Hawkes, Hughes, & Joshi, 2007). There have been six waves of data collection, at ages 9 months and 3, 5, 7, 11, and 14 years. The seventh, age 17 wave, is in the field at the time of writing. The study

is multi-disciplinary and contains rich repeat measures of childhood socioeconomic circumstances, child development, and child health. The MCS datasets are freely available to researchers internationally via the UK Data Service (<http://ukdataservice.ac.uk>). The CLS website provides detailed information and documentation on the study (<http://www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/mcs>).

Eleven thousand seven hundred fourteen households responded at the sixth wave of data collection (MCS6). This represents a response rate of 76% of those issued to the field at sweep 6 and just under 61% of the initial sample. Of these, cohort members in 10,781 households completed the vocabulary test. This group is our analytical sample. We use records for only one child per family (singletons and the first-born twin or triplets) to avoid having to account for the clustering of children within families. We exploit data provided by the “main respondent” parent (this is typically the mother, and we refer henceforth in the text to mothers rather than main respondents), the spouse or cohabiting partner (where applicable), and the child themselves, up to age 14. More information on data collection and attrition is available in the MCS6 technical report (Ipsos Mori, 2017).

We exploit data from birth to age 14, and, as in any longitudinal analysis, the problem of missing data must be addressed (Mostafa & Wiggins, 2015). It is well known that list-wise deletion/complete case analysis returns biased estimates, so we use multiple imputation with chained equations (25 imputed datasets) to “fill-in” values of any missing items in the variables selected for our analysis adopting Schafer's data augmentation approach (Schafer, 1997) under the assumption of “missing at random” (MAR). In order to maximise the plausibility of the MAR assumption we also include a set of auxiliary variables in our imputation model. In this instance, MAR implies that our estimates are valid if missingness is due to variables (auxiliary or substantive) that were included in our models (Little & Rubin, 2002). In addition, to take account of disproportionate, stratified clustering in the MCS sample design and attrition, models are adjusted for non-response and the MCS survey design. The combination of multiple imputation and non-response weighting restores the sample to be nationally representative of the UK population born in 2000–2001 (Fitzsimons, 2017). We impute the full sample, but delete cases for which the outcome is missing (Hippel & Paul, 2007).

4.1 | Measures

4.1.1 | Language skill

The mother, partner, and child's vocabulary scores were assessed when the cohort member was aged 14. Vocabulary is strongly associated with other dimensions of verbal ability (Baddeley, Logie, Nimmo-Smith, & Brereton, 1985). The vocabulary scores were derived from a shortened version of the Applied Psychology Unit (APU) Vocabulary Test, a standardised test produced by the University of Edinburgh (Closs & Hutchings, 1976), and used in previous studies including the 1970 British Cohort Study (BCS70). The APU Vocabulary Test directly examines vocabulary knowledge, through multiple-choice items in which a stimulus word has to be matched to a synonym from five alternatives. At the start of the test the stimulus words are very easy, for example, “begin” and become progressively more difficult; for example, “pusillanimous.” The final score is the sum of the correct answers, from a total of 20 multiple-choice items. The APU test has previously been shown to have good psychometric properties and is highly correlated with other tests of verbal intelligence (Levy & Goldstein, 1984). We provide information on the internal reliability and distribution of the vocabulary scores for each respondent in Appendix. Although the test was developed for teenagers, within our sample, the internal reliability scores are higher for the adult respondents.

4.1.2 | Socioeconomic and demographic factors

The socioeconomic and demographic information in our models includes the age (in months), sex and ethnic group of the child, and the region of the United Kingdom that the family lives in. Parents' education is the highest

TABLE 1 Mean vocabulary scores for young people, mothers, and partners (imputed and weighted)

	Sample %		% missing		Young person's vocabulary (mean and 95% CI)		Main vocabulary (mean and 95% CI)		Partner vocabulary (mean and 95% CI)	
	<i>n</i> = 10,781	Original <i>N</i>			<i>n</i> = 10,781	<i>SD</i> = 2.58	<i>n</i> = 10,781	<i>SD</i> = 4.32	<i>n</i> = 8,178	<i>SD</i> = 4.27
Overall					6.88 (6.78, 6.97)		10.32 (10.09, 10.54)		11.25 (10.97, 11.52)	
Age (months) quartile		10,781								
1st	27.8				6.81 (6.67, 6.94)		10.40 (10.11, 10.68)		11.16 (10.81, 11.50)	
2nd	21.2				6.88 (6.72, 7.04)		10.45 (10.15, 10.74)		11.42 (11.07, 11.76)	
3rd	24.0.9				6.91 (6.76, 7.06)		10.37 (10.07, 10.68)		11.44 (11.07, 11.81)	
4th	26.1				6.92 (6.79, 7.04)		10.07 (9.78, 10.36)		11.02 (10.65, 11.39)	
Gender		10,781								
Male	51.9				6.86 (6.74, 6.98)		10.33 (10.09, 10.57)		11.19 (10.91, 11.47)	
Female	48.1				6.90 (6.79, 7.01)		10.30 (10.04, 10.57)		11.31 (10.99, 11.63)	
Ethnicity		10,781								
White	80.4				6.96 (6.87, 7.06)		11.00 (10.80, 11.20)		11.99 (11.78, 12.20)	
Mixed	4.9				6.94 (6.62, 7.26)		10.58 (10.02, 11.15)		12.25 (11.49, 13.01)	
Indian	2.1				6.60 (5.95, 7.24)		7.44 (6.27, 8.60)		8.55 (7.55, 9.54)	
Pakistani	3.7				6.16 (5.90, 6.43)		5.88 (5.39, 6.36)		5.87 (5.18, 6.56)	
Bangladeshi	1.4				6.47 (6.15, 6.79)		4.53 (3.73, 5.33)		4.36 (3.61, 5.11)	
Black Caribbean	1.5				6.44 (5.86, 7.03)		7.96 (7.05, 8.86)		10.52 (8.59, 12.46)	
Black African	2.4				6.50 (6.20, 6.80)		6.77 (5.88, 7.65)		7.67 (6.05, 9.27)	
Other ethnic group	3.6				6.44 (6.10, 6.78)		6.53 (5.83, 7.24)		6.60 (5.72, 7.49)	
Country		10,781								
England	71.2				6.89 (6.80, 6.99)		10.51 (10.21, 10.82)		11.37 (10.99, 11.74)	
Scotland	8.4				6.84 (6.64, 7.03)		10.95 (10.56, 11.34)		12.21 (11.71, 12.70)	
Wales	5.0				6.62 (6.44, 6.80)		10.22 (9.88, 10.56)		10.97 (10.59, 11.35)	
Northern Ireland	4.3				6.83 (6.67, 7.00)		9.96 (9.51, 10.42)		11.02 (10.50, 11.55)	

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

	Sample % n = 10,781	Original N	% missing	Young person's vocabulary (mean and 95% CI) n = 10,781	Main vocabulary (mean and 95% CI) n = 10,781	Partner vocabulary (mean and 95% CI) n = 8,178
London	11.1			7.01 (6.74, 7.28)	8.75 (7.89, 9.61)	9.79 (8.76, 10.82)
Household education		10,771	0.09			
No qualifications	12.0			5.84 (5.63, 6.06)	6.52 (6.06, 6.99)	7.03 (6.19, 7.87)
Vocational only	3.1			6.04 (5.68, 6.39)	7.39 (6.82, 7.96)	8.60 (7.70, 9.49)
Other academic	2.2			6.34 (6.02, 6.66)	6.44 (5.80, 7.08)	6.29 (5.28, 7.31)
GCSEd-g	9.4			6.15 (5.92, 6.39)	8.07 (7.78, 8.38)	9.22 (8.72, 9.72)
GCSEa-c	34.2			6.57 (6.47, 6.68)	9.83 (9.64, 10.03)	10.43 (10.19, 10.67)
A level or HE diploma	8.5			7.12 (6.93, 7.32)	11.59 (11.28, 11.90)	12.08 (11.71, 12.44)
Higher Diploma	10.7			7.19 (7.01, 7.36)	11.35 (11.11, 11.58)	12.03 (11.78, 12.30)
First Degree	14.4			8.17 (8.02, 8.31)	13.96 (13.67, 14.25)	14.22 (13.94, 14.51)
Higher Degree	5.6			8.64 (8.34, 8.94)	15.10 (14.71, 15.49)	15.48 (15.09, 15.88)
Household social class		10,334	4.11			
Routine	9.0			5.99 (5.71, 6.28)	7.04 (6.61, 7.46)	8.08 (7.26, 8.90)
Semi-routine	15.0			6.26 (6.09, 6.43)	8.18 (7.83, 8.53)	8.68 (8.12, 9.24)
Lower superv./tech.	10.2			6.35 (6.19, 6.51)	8.51 (8.20, 8.81)	9.31 (8.85, 9.76)
Small empl./self-empl.	8.6			6.36 (6.15, 6.58)	8.63 (8.24, 9.02)	8.88 (8.35, 9.42)
Intermediate	12.3			6.80 (6.61, 6.98)	10.42 (10.16, 10.68)	10.84 (10.52, 11.17)
Lower manag./prof.	26.8			7.20 (7.09, 7.31)	11.80 (11.60, 12.00)	12.30 (12.08, 12.52)
Higher manag./prof.	18.1			8.14 (7.96, 8.31)	13.88 (13.55, 14.21)	14.35 (14.35, 14.91)

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

	Sample % n = 10,781	Original N	% missing	Young person's vocabulary (mean and 95% CI)	Main vocabulary (mean and 95% CI)	Partner vocabulary (mean and 95% CI)
Home owner		10,767	0.13			
Yes	55.5			7.30 (7.19, 7.48)	11.71 (11.43, 11.98)	12.25 (11.95, 12.54)
No	44.5			6.35 (6.23, 6.47)	8.58 (8.35, 8.80)	9.42 (9.06, 9.79)
Income (quartile)		10,732	0.45			
1st	30.3			6.13 (6.00, 6.27)	7.98 (7.68, 8.27)	8.58 (8.09, 9.06)
2nd	26.2			6.71 (6.58, 6.84)	9.46 (9.23, 9.69)	10.08 (9.75, 10.41)
3rd	22.8			7.18 (7.04, 7.31)	11.45 (11.24, 11.67)	12.03 (11.80, 12.26)
4th	20.6			7.69 (7.69, 8.03)	13.58 (13.26, 13.89)	14.09 (13.80, 14.38)
Main age (quartile)		10,779	0.02			
1st	27.3			6.19 (6.04, 6.33)	8.37 (8.13, 8.61)	9.55 (9.17, 9.93)
2nd	26.6			6.90 (6.79, 7.02)	10.00 (9.74, 10.27)	10.91 (10.57, 11.25)
3rd	23.4			7.26 (7.12, 7.41)	11.42 (11.14, 11.70)	12.07 (11.72, 12.42)
4th	22.7			7.29 (7.14, 7.43)	11.88 (11.52, 12.24)	12.50 (12.14, 12.85)
Partner age (quartile)		8,175				
1st	27.8			6.46 (6.31, 6.61)	9.01 (8.67, 9.34)	9.64 (9.26, 10.02)
2nd	21.8			7.09 (6.92, 7.25)	10.84 (10.44, 11.24)	11.47 (11.16, 11.78)
3rd	24.0			7.11 (6.88, 7.33)	10.92 (10.39, 11.46)	11.96 (11.60, 12.31)
4th	26.3			6.88 (6.68, 7.08)	10.45 (9.91, 11.00)	12.80 (12.29, 13.31)
Home language		10,773	0.07			

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

	Sample % n = 10,781	Original N	% missing	Young person's vocabulary (mean and 95% CI) n = 10,781	Main vocabulary (mean and 95% CI) n = 10,781	Partner vocabulary (mean and 95% CI) n = 8,178
English only	87.0			6.91 (6.82, 7.01)	10.86 (10.67, 11.05)	11.92 (11.72, 12.013)
Mixed or non-English	13.0			6.65 (6.47, 6.84)	6.66 (6.14, 7.17)	7.22 (6.57, 7.88)
Books in home		10,096	6.35			
<10	15.2			6.04 (5.88, 6.21)	7.21 (6.87, 7.55)	8.02 (7.44, 8.61)
11 to 25	15.3			6.37 (6.19, 6.55)	8.33 (8.01, 8.66)	9.42 (8.99, 9.86)
26 to 100	32.4			6.66 (6.54, 6.77)	10.02 (9.78, 10.27)	10.83 (10.55, 11.11)
101 to 200	18.7			7.27 (7.13, 7.42)	11.81 (11.54, 12.08)	12.55 (12.25, 12.84)
201 to 500	13.1			7.90 (7.69, 8.11)	13.60 (13.23, 13.97)	13.87 (13.53, 14.20)
>500	5.3			8.53 (8.14, 8.92)	14.50 (13.94, 15.06)	15.01 (14.53, 15.49)
Frequency read to child (age 3)		9,872	8.43			
Not at all	3.5			5.55 (5.21, 5.89)	6.21 (5.55, 6.87)	6.61 (5.63, 7.59)
Less often	2.3			6.05 (5.64, 6.47)	7.12 (6.55, 7.70)	8.51 (7.37, 9.64)
Once or twice a month	3.2			6.18 (5.84, 6.52)	8.42 (7.80, 9.04)	9.58 (8.46, 10.70)
Once or twice a week	15.8			6.34 (6.17, 6.51)	8.68 (8.34, 9.02)	9.49 (9.03, 9.96)

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

	Sample % n = 10,781	Original N	% missing	Young person's vocabulary (mean and 95% CI) n = 10,781	Main vocabulary (mean and 95% CI) n = 10,781	Partner vocabulary (mean and 95% CI) n = 8,178
Several times a week	19.1			6.74 (6.59, 6.90)	9.97 (9.69, 10.25)	10.91 (10.56, 11.26)
Every day	56.1			7.25 (7.13, 7.37)	11.42 (11.17, 11.67)	12.24 (11.97, 12.50)
YP reads (age 11)		10,060	6.69			
Never	7.6			5.94 (5.71, 6.18)	9.21 (8.82, 9.60)	10.02 (9.41, 10.63)
Less often	7.5			6.43 (6.20, 6.66)	9.87 (9.43, 10.30)	10.51 (9.91, 11.17)
At least once a month	10.5			6.58 (6.44, 6.68)	9.97 (9.62, 10.31)	10.71 (10.24, 11.17)
At least once a week	29.5			6.56 (6.44, 6.68)	9.93 (9.66, 10.20)	10.87 (10.55, 11.20)
Most days	44.8			7.41 (7.28, 7.54)	10.94 (10.64, 11.23)	11.91 (11.56, 12.27)
Plays musical instrument (age 11)		10,194	6.23			
Yes	38.4			7.36 (7.22, 7.50)	11.34 (11.01, 11.64)	12.06 (11.74, 12.39)
No	61.6			6.59 (6.50, 6.68)	9.70 (9.49, 9.92)	10.71 (10.42, 11.01)

Note: Missing means imputed.

qualification of either parent. Economic circumstances are captured in wave 1 of the survey in 2001–2002 (or wave 2 in 2004–2005 if not available at wave 1) by parental social class measured on the National Statistics SocioEconomic Classification (NS-SEC) scale (Goldthorpe & McKnight, 2006), home ownership, and log equivalised family income. The number of older and younger siblings is included, as older siblings have been shown to be advantaged both in terms of vocabulary and general cognitive outcomes (Black, Devereux, & Salvanes, 2005; Hoff-Ginsberg, 1998; Nisbet, 1953). Whether English is the main language spoken at home at wave 1 of the survey (or wave 2 where unavailable at wave 1) is included, as this may be related to both parental and child vocabulary scores. We include the ages of the mother, partner, and child in the model, as vocabulary is expected to increase with age, especially in the case of the child. In addition, the models control for single-parent household status at wave 6 (in 2015), and, if the mother's partner was present, whether they completed the vocabulary test or not.

4.1.3 | Home literary climate

Books in the home and the frequency of parental reading to the child at age three.

4.1.4 | Child's cultural capital

The child's own reading frequency and playing a musical instrument at age 11 (self-reported).

4.1.5 | Early cognitive scores

Cognitive abilities at age five were measured using three subscales of the British Ability Scales Second Edition (BAS II): naming vocabulary, picture similarities, and pattern construction. The three subscales capture core aspects of verbal and pictorial reasoning, and spatial abilities (Elliott, Murray, & Pearson, 1978; Elliott, Smith, & McCulloch, 1996; Hill, 2005; Jones & Schoon, 2008).

5 | RESULTS

We begin by describing mean parental and child vocabulary scores according to the other variables to be used in our models and assessing the correlations between cognitive measures. This is followed by a series of linear regression models, with child vocabulary at age 14 as the outcome. Finally, we present a path analysis as a formal test of the mediation of the effect of parental education on child vocabulary by parental vocabulary and other factors.

5.1 | Descriptive results

Table 1 presents raw (imputed and weighted) mean scores out of 20 in the vocabulary assessment, by respondent type (young person, mother, and partner). Young people achieved a mean score of seven out of 20 on average, while mothers and partners gained substantially higher scores (10 and 11, respectively). The standard deviation is also higher for the parents than for the child, reflecting a wider spread of scores.

We observe stark ethnic differences (based on the young person's ethnic identification) in adult vocabulary scores. The parents of white and ethnically mixed young people had the highest mean scores (between 10.6

and 12.2)—around two and a half times higher than the parents of ethnically Bangladeshi young people, who received the lowest mean scores (between 4.4 and 4.5). These differentials to some extent reflect the prevalence of first-generation immigrants among each ethnic group, for example, over 90% of Bangladeshi mothers were not born in the United Kingdom (Sullivan, 2010). As such, we would emphasize that minority parents' lower vocabulary scores are likely to reflect a lack of English fluency, rather than wider ability or attainment. The ethnic gaps in the young people's scores are far more modest, ranging between a mean score of 6.2 for Pakistanis and 7 for ethnically mixed and white young people. This means that ethnic minority youth (excepting the mixed group) tend to have vocabulary scores that are relatively close to those of their parents, and in the case of Bangladeshis and Pakistanis, they achieve higher average scores than their parents. Regional differences in adult vocabulary scores are also apparent, with those living in London scoring lowest, reflecting the city's ethnically diverse population.

There are strong gradients in parental vocabulary scores according to parental education, social class, and income. Among households where at least one partner had a higher university degree, mothers scored an average of 15 out of 20, compared to 6.5 for households where neither parent had any formal educational qualification. The education gaps are less marked for the offspring than for the parents. The children of university graduates scored 8.6 versus 5.8 for children in households with no qualifications. For families with no parental qualifications, the mean score for children (5.8) is only around one correct answer less than for mothers (6.5). Children of parents with a higher degree scored an average of 8.6 compared to 15. A similar pattern is observed for social class, household income, and home ownership—parental socioeconomic vocabulary gaps are larger than those for young people.

Not surprisingly, adult English vocabulary is considerably lower among those whose home language is mixed or non-English, compared to English only (6.7 and 10.9, respectively for mothers), but the difference among young people is negligible (6.6 vs. 6.9).

Turning to indicators of cultural resources, we see that both parents' and children's vocabulary scores are higher in households with higher levels of books at home and more frequent reading to the child. Young people who read frequently have relatively high mean vocabulary scores, whereas their parents' scores are less strongly differentiated according to this measure. The vocabulary gap between young people who play a musical instrument and those who do not is small (7.4 vs. 6.6).

Table 2 shows a correlation matrix of the young person, mother and partner vocabulary scores, and the child's early cognitive scores. The mother and partner scores are highly correlated, at around 0.5. This is in line with previous estimates of assortative mating for verbal intelligence (Plomin & Deary, 2015). Correlations of around 0.3 are observed between the young person and mother/partner. We also see higher correlations between earlier verbal cognition and age 14 vocabulary (0.36) than between early measures of spatial and pictorial reasoning and later vocabulary (0.25 and 0.20, respectively).

5.2 | Regression results

Table 3 shows a series of models predicting vocabulary scores at age 14. The outcome variable, parental vocabulary scores, and the child's prior cognitive scores are all standardized z-scores.

Model 1 includes socioeconomic and demographic information and provides an indication of the magnitude of the associations between these variables and the child's vocabulary scores before any potential mediating factors have been accounted for. Parental education is strongly linked to the child's vocabulary. Having an undergraduate (bachelors) university degree or a higher (postgraduate) degree (compared to no qualifications) provides roughly three times the advantage associated with having a parent with a higher managerial or professional occupation (compared to a routine occupation) when both are included in the same model. Income and home ownership are not significantly associated with vocabulary, taking the other factors in the model into account.

TABLE 2 Correlation matrix: Young person's, main and partner's vocabulary and young person's early cognition

	Young person vocabulary	Main vocabulary	Main vocabulary ^a	Partner vocabulary ^a	Naming vocabulary (age 5)	Picture similarities (age 5)
Young person vocabulary						
Main vocabulary	0.35 (0.02)					
Main vocabulary ^a	0.35 (0.02)					
Partner vocabulary ^a	0.32 (0.02)	0.43 (0.01)	0.53 (0.02)			
Naming vocabulary age 5	0.36 (0.01)	0.41 (0.02)	0.42 (0.02)	0.40 (0.02)		
Picture similarities age 5	0.20 (0.01)	0.19 (0.01)	0.19 (0.02)	0.18 (0.02)	0.34 (0.02)	
Pattern construction age 5	0.25 (0.01)	0.23 (0.01)	0.23 (0.02)	0.21 (0.02)	0.35 (0.02)	0.36 (0.01)
Observations	10,781	10,781	8,178	8,178	10,781	10,781

Note: Mean (SE). Missing observations are imputed.

^aCorrelations for main and partner vocabulary where the partner is present in the household at MCS6 (n = 8,831).

TABLE 3 Vocabulary at age 14 (standardized): Linear regression

	Model 1: Demographics		Model 2: Family cultural capital		Model 3: Child cultural capital		Model 4: Parental vocabulary		Model 5: Child cognition	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Age (months)	0.01***	(0.00)	0.01***	(0.00)	0.01***	(0.00)	0.01***	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)
Sex (ref: boys)	0.01	(0.02)	0.01	(0.02)	-0.05 ⁺	(0.02)	-0.04 ⁺	(0.02)	-0.06**	(0.02)
Ethnicity (ref: White)										
Mixed	-0.02	(0.06)	-0.02	(0.06)	-0.00	(0.06)	-0.02	(0.05)	-0.04	(0.05)
Indian	-0.21 ⁺	(0.09)	-0.14	(0.09)	-0.13	(0.09)	0.02	(0.09)	0.02	(0.08)
Pakistani	-0.18**	(0.06)	-0.11 ⁺	(0.06)	-0.11 ⁺	(0.06)	0.19 ⁺	(0.09)	0.18**	(0.06)
Bangladeshi	-0.12	(0.09)	-0.04	(0.09)	-0.06	(0.09)	0.19 ⁺	(0.09)	0.29***	(0.08)
Black Caribbean	-0.33***	(0.10)	-0.29	(0.10)	-0.31**	(0.10)	-0.19 ⁺	(0.11)	-0.13	(0.11)
Black African	-0.23**	(0.08)	-0.16 ⁺	(0.07)	-0.16 ⁺	(0.08)	0.01	(0.08)	0.07	(0.08)
Other Ethnic Group	-0.25***	(0.07)	-0.17 ⁺	(0.07)	-0.20**	(0.07)	-0.02	(0.07)	0.07	(0.07)
Country (ref: England)										
Scotland	-0.08 ⁺	(0.03)	-0.06 ⁺	(0.03)	-0.05	(0.03)	-0.06 ⁺	(0.03)	-0.06 ⁺	(0.03)
Wales	-0.11**	(0.03)	-0.10***	(0.03)	-0.09**	(0.03)	-0.07 ⁺	(0.03)	-0.08**	(0.03)
Northern Ireland	0.00	(0.04)	0.02	(0.03)	0.01	(0.03)	0.04	(0.04)	-0.00	(0.04)
London	0.11 ⁺	(0.05)	0.10 ⁺	(0.04)	0.09 ⁺	(0.04)	0.10 ⁺	(0.04)	0.11 ⁺	(0.04)
Partner present (ref: completed vocab)										
Partner present vocab missing	-0.04	(0.03)	-0.03	(0.03)	-0.03	(0.03)	-0.02	(0.03)	-0.00	(0.03)
Lone parent	-0.06	(0.05)	-0.02	(0.05)	-0.00	(0.05)	-0.09	(0.13)	-0.05	(0.11)
Highest Household academic qualification (ref: None)										
Vocational only	0.05	(0.08)	0.03	(0.08)	0.03	(0.07)	0.03	(0.07)	0.02	(0.08)
Other academic	0.16 ⁺	(0.09)	0.12	(0.09)	0.11	(0.09)	0.08	(0.09)	0.06	(0.08)
GCSEd-g	0.07	(0.05)	0.05	(0.05)	0.06	(0.05)	0.00	(0.05)	-0.03	(0.05)
GCSEa-c	0.17***	(0.04)	0.11**	(0.04)	0.11**	(0.04)	0.01	(0.04)	-0.04	(0.04)

(Continues)

TABLE 3 (Continued)

	Model 1: Demographics		Model 2: Family cultural capital		Model 3: Child cultural capital		Model 4: Parental vocabulary		Model 5: Child cognition	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
A level or HE diploma	0.31***	(0.06)	0.21***	(0.06)	0.19***	(0.06)	0.01	(0.06)	-0.04	(0.06)
Higher Diplomas	0.29***	(0.05)	0.18***	(0.05)	0.16**	(0.05)	0.02	(0.06)	-0.04	(0.05)
First Degree	0.61***	(0.06)	0.44***	(0.06)	0.38***	(0.05)	0.13*	(0.06)	0.10	(0.07)
Higher Degree	0.75***	(0.07)	0.53***	(0.07)	0.47***	(0.07)	0.16*	(0.07)	0.02	(0.06)
Household NS-SEC (ref: Routine)										
Semi routine	0.04	(0.06)	0.03	(0.06)	0.04	(0.06)	0.02	(0.06)	0.02	(0.06)
Low sup and tech	0.02	(0.06)	-0.00	(0.06)	0.01	(0.06)	0.01	(0.06)	0.01	(0.06)
Small emp and s-emp	0.02	(0.06)	0.00	(0.06)	0.01	(0.07)	0.01	(0.07)	-0.02	(0.06)
Intermediate	0.09	(0.06)	0.07	(0.06)	0.08	(0.06)	0.02	(0.06)	0.01	(0.07)
Lo manag/ prof	0.11+	(0.06)	0.07	(0.06)	0.08	(0.06)	0.00	(0.06)	-0.02	(0.06)
Hi manag/ prof	0.26**	(0.07)	0.18**	(0.07)	0.18*	(0.07)	0.06	(0.07)	0.02	(0.07)
Home owner (ref: do not own home)	0.01	(0.03)	0.02	(0.03)	0.02	(0.03)	0.02	(0.03)	0.01	(0.03)
Household income (log)	0.01	(0.02)	0.01	(0.02)	0.01	(0.02)	-0.02	(0.02)	-0.02	(0.02)
Mother's age	0.01**	(0.00)	0.01*	(0.00)	0.00+	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)
Partner's age	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)	-0.00	(0.00)	-0.00	(0.00)
Number of older siblings	-0.07***	(0.01)	-0.07***	(0.01)	-0.06***	(0.01)	-0.06***	(0.01)	-0.03**	(0.01)
Number of younger siblings	-0.02+	(0.01)	-0.03*	(0.01)	-0.03*	(0.01)	-0.03*	(0.01)	-0.02*	(0.01)
Speak other language at home (ref: English only)	0.08	(0.05)	0.10*	(0.05)	0.08+	(0.05)	0.18***	(0.05)	0.22***	(0.05)
Number of books at home (ref: <11)										
11-25			0.09*	(0.04)	0.08*	(0.04)	0.05	(0.04)	0.05	(0.04)
26-100			0.09**	(0.03)	0.08*	(0.03)	-0.00	(0.03)	-0.00	(0.03)
101-200			0.23***	(0.04)	0.19***	(0.04)	0.05	(0.04)	0.04	(0.04)

(Continues)

TABLE 3 (Continued)

	Model 1: Demographics		Model 2: Family cultural capital		Model 3: Child cultural capital		Model 4: Parental vocabulary		Model 5: Child cognition	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
201-500			0.38***	(0.05)	0.32***	(0.05)	0.13**	(0.05)	0.11*	(0.04)
More than 500			0.59***	(0.07)	0.52***	(0.07)	0.29***	(0.06)	0.27***	(0.06)
Frequency reads to child (age 3) (ref: Never)										
Less often			0.12	(0.10)	0.11	(0.10)	0.09	(0.10)	0.05	(0.10)
Once or twice a month			0.06	(0.08)	0.05	(0.08)	0.01	(0.08)	-0.02	(0.08)
Once or twice a week			0.14*	(0.06)	0.12+	(0.06)	0.09	(0.06)	0.03	(0.06)
Several times a week			0.20**	(0.07)	0.16*	(0.07)	0.11+	(0.07)	0.06	(0.06)
Every day			0.24***	(0.06)	0.19**	(0.07)	0.14*	(0.06)	0.05	(0.06)
Reads for pleasure (age 11) (ref: Never)										
Less often					0.12*	(0.05)	0.11*	(0.05)	0.08+	(0.05)
At least once a month					0.14**	(0.05)	0.13**	(0.05)	0.09*	(0.04)
At least once a week					0.12**	(0.04)	0.10*	(0.04)	0.08+	(0.05)
Most days					0.39***	(0.04)	0.35***	(0.04)	0.30***	(0.04)
Plays musical instrument (ref: does not play)					0.10***	(0.02)	0.10***	(0.02)	0.07***	(0.02)
Main vocab score (z-score)							0.19***	(0.02)	0.15***	(0.02)
Partner vocab score (z-score)							0.14***	(0.02)	0.11***	(0.02)
Naming vocabulary z-score (age 5)									0.20***	(0.01)

(Continues)

TABLE 3 (Continued)

	Model 1: Demographics		Model 2: Family cultural capital		Model 3: Child cultural capital		Model 4: Parental vocabulary		Model 5: Child cognition	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Picture similarities z-score (age 5)									0.03**	(0.01)
Pattern construction z-score (age 5)									0.09***	(0.01)
Constant	-2.80***	(0.48)	-2.98***	(0.48)	-3.19***	(0.48)	-2.47***	(0.45)	-0.86+	(0.45)
Adjusted R ²	11.33		13.38		15.32		18.02		22.05	

Note: Observations = 10,781.

Multiple imputation was applied to all missing data, including absent partners in single family households at MCS6.

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; + $p < .10$.

Young people who are identified as ethnically Indian, Pakistani, black Caribbean, black African or "other" have lower scores than whites. There is no difference between boys and girls. As expected, young people with older siblings have a significant disadvantage in vocabulary scores, while the existence and number of younger siblings make little difference. The country of the United Kingdom is included, with London split from the rest of England, as educational policy and practice vary across these regions, and ethnic compositions vary widely. Living in Scotland or Wales is associated with a disadvantage, and London with an advantage, in vocabulary once individual characteristics are controlled. Both maternal age (in years) and child age (in months) are positively associated with the child's vocabulary score. The age range of the MCS births extended over a full calendar year. The coefficient associated with a month in age (0.01) can, therefore, usefully be compared to other coefficients in the model. For example, having a parent with an undergraduate degree is associated with five times the vocabulary advantage associated with one year in age and a parent with a postgraduate degree is associated with over six times the advantage of a year in age.

Model 2 introduces family cultural resources, in the form of books in the home and reading to the child at age three. Both of these variables are positive predictors of the young person's vocabulary. In this model, having over 500 books in the home is associated with a similar vocabulary advantage to having a parent with a postgraduate degree, and equates to around five times the advantage attributable to a year in age. The introduction of family cultural resources into the model mediates the parental education and social class effects to some extent.

Model 3 includes the child's own reading for pleasure and playing a musical instrument. Playing a musical instrument is associated with a positive difference in vocabulary equivalent to ten months in age. Reading for pleasure most days is associated with a differential over three times greater than the differential attributable to one year in age. However, these child activities do little to reduce the effects of parental education, social class, and cultural capital.

In model 4, we introduce the mother's and partner's vocabulary scores. Both, especially the mother's, are strongly independently associated with the child's score. Including parental vocabulary reduces the apparent influence of parental education, reducing the coefficients for a degree and higher degree by about half, and reducing lower levels of education to statistical insignificance. Social class also becomes statistically non-significant in this model. The coefficients for the home literary climate are also substantially reduced, but the association with the child's own cultural activities is unaffected. While we treat parental vocabulary as a mediator of parental education, we acknowledge that a large portion of the gap in parental vocabulary is likely to be in place prior to parents

TABLE 4 Mediation of the relationship between parental education and offspring vocabulary via parental vocabulary

		Standardized coefficient	SE
	Total	0.291	0.015
	Total direct	0.069	0.017
	Total Indirect	0.222	0.014
Of which via	Mother vocabulary	0.101	0.010
Of which via	Partner vocabulary	0.059	0.009
	Other pathways	0.062	

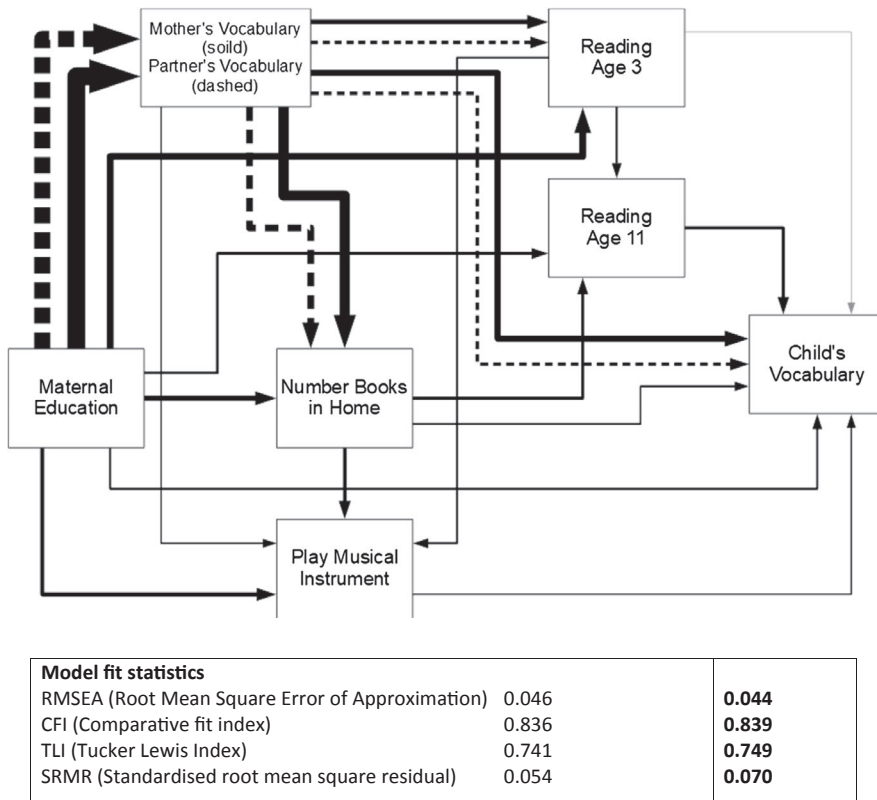


FIGURE 1 Path model: Simplified version of the regression model 4. Line widths proportionate to standardized coefficient values

gaining their highest educational qualification, and the fact that our measure of parental vocabulary is not time varying means that we cannot unpack the reciprocal relationship between parental vocabulary and educational attainment over time in this paper. Our interpretation of parental vocabulary as a mediator of parental education attainment simply means that part of the association of parental education on child vocabulary is explained by the higher vocabulary scores of more educated parents.

All ethnic differences become small and non-significant in this model, with the exception that the Bangladeshi and Pakistani groups have a substantial advantage over whites once parental vocabulary is controlled. This

suggests that Bangladeshi and Pakistani children have higher vocabulary scores than would be expected based on their parents' scores, which are the lowest of any ethnic group.

Our final model includes the child's prior verbal and non-verbal cognitive scores, naming vocabulary, picture similarities, and pattern construction at age five. As expected, these are strong predictors of attainment, particularly the vocabulary score. This model shows us which factors predict vocabulary at age 14 conditional on attainment at age five, bearing in mind that the age-appropriate vocabulary test at age five of course differs from the vocabulary test at age 14. Parental vocabulary remains highly significant, whereas parental education and reading to the child at age three become non-significant, their effect being fully captured by the child's cognitive scores at age five. The associations with books in the home and the child's own reading for pleasure are only slightly reduced, as these variables remain powerfully predictive of vocabulary at 14 conditioning on earlier cognitive scores.

As an indication of effect size, we converted the coefficients in this final model in terms of the raw test scores. Notable coefficients are as follows: a one standard deviation increase in verbal cognition at age five is associated with a 0.5 word increase in mean vocabulary scores (out of 20); a one standard deviation increase in maternal vocabulary is associated with an advantage of 0.4 words; a one standard deviation increase in partner's vocabulary equates to 0.3 words; more than 500 books in the home equates to 0.7 words; Bangladeshi ethnicity equates to 0.7 words; a non-English language at home equates to 0.6 words, and reading for pleasure most days at age 11 equates to 0.8 words.

In Table 4 and Figure 1, we provide a formal mediation analysis, based on a simplified path analysis version of the penultimate model (model 4), carried out in MPlus (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2010), shown in Figure 1. This simplified model shows the relationship between parental education and offspring vocabulary, mediated by maternal and partner vocabulary and other factors. Nearly a quarter (24%) of the relationship between parental education and child vocabulary is direct, with the remainder (76%) mediated by other factors in the model. The majority of this indirect effect (35% of the total effect) goes via maternal vocabulary, with an additional 20% via partner vocabulary. Maternal vocabulary is the most important mediator of parental education in the model. The effect of parental education is not fully mediated in this simplified model, whereas it is in the full regression model.

6 | CONCLUSIONS

Our central result is that parental vocabulary scores mediate a substantial share of the socioeconomic gradient in children's vocabulary at age 14. The importance of parental vocabulary is not surprising, but suggests that both the "cultural capital" and "home learning environment" literature have neglected a fundamental element of the learning resources that children have available at home—their parents' own knowledge.

The paper advances the field of research into socioeconomic differentials in young people's language skills by providing evidence on the "word-gap" based on large-scale, nationally representative data on both parents' and children's vocabulary scores. The raw inequalities that we find in parental vocabulary are startling. For example, parents with an undergraduate degree knew twice as many words on the assessment as parents with no qualifications. Though of course not directly comparable with Hart and Risley's (1995) small-scale study, which was carried out in another place and time, and using different methods, this difference is in line with the order of magnitude of the "word gap" found in Hart and Risley's work.

However, whereas Hart and Risley found similar social class differences in vocabulary for children as for their parents, we do not. The socioeconomic differentials that we found for young people at age 14 were marked, but substantially more modest than those found among their parents. Similarly, vocabulary gaps between ethnic groups were substantial in the parents' generation, but slight for the children. This gives some grounds for optimism, in that socioeconomic differentials in vocabulary are not transmitted wholesale from parents to children. Children are exposed to vocabulary, not just from their parents, but from a range of sources including friends,

teachers, books, TV, and the internet. Some of these wider exposures may mitigate the relationship between parental and child vocabulary. In particular, it is likely that schooling plays a role (Quinn, 2015a). However, it is of course possible that vocabulary gaps will widen substantially during the cohort members' life course.

Our models of children's vocabulary at age 14 show that parental education appears to be a more consistent driver than other aspects of socioeconomic position of differentials in children's vocabulary scores. The differentials due to parental education were somewhat reduced by accounting for the home literary climate. In contrast, the child's own cultural activities, particularly reading, matter but do not mediate the differential due to parental education. This challenges the traditional cultural reproduction framework, to the extent that the child's own cultural participation appears to have little to do with the reproduction of socioeconomic differentials in attainment.

We have shown that parental vocabulary is a vital mediator of differentials in children's vocabulary according to parental education, and parental vocabulary also partly explains the apparent link between the home literary environment and children's vocabularies. This suggests that the omission of parental vocabulary from most previous models of children's language development, and indeed of their educational development more generally, may have led to a skewed and incomplete understanding of inequalities in children's outcomes, exaggerating the role of parental resources and behaviors which proxy parental language competencies (and may well also proxy other associated cognitive abilities). Furthermore, parental vocabulary strongly predicts language at 14, conditioning on cognitive scores at age five, suggesting that its influence is not restricted to early childhood development.

There is an extensive international literature on ethnic differentials in vocabulary and other cognitive test scores (Belsky et al., 2007), and our findings on the role of parental vocabulary in accounting for ethnic differentials in children's vocabulary provide a novel insight. We found that some groups of ethnic minority parents had substantially lower vocabulary scores than whites, and Pakistani and Bangladeshi parents had lower English vocabulary scores than their children. Ethnic gaps among the children's generation were smaller, but, controlling for socioeconomic and demographic factors, the Indian, Pakistani, black Caribbean, black African, and "other" ethnic groups remained at a disadvantage in their vocabulary scores compared to their white peers. The outstanding negative differentials in young people's vocabulary between some minority ethnic groups and whites were fully explained by differences in parental vocabulary. Our analysis also suggests that speaking a language other than English in the home is generally positive, once other factors are controlled (Marian & Shook, 2012; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). There is great diversity between families with English as an additional language, which would demand an analysis primarily focused on this question to elaborate. Nevertheless, we can conclude that poor English language skills among parents present an obstacle for children, but this does not imply that the presence of an additional language in the home is detrimental in itself.

Despite the several strengths of our study, we acknowledge some limitations. First, attrition from the study since the baseline is just under 40%. We use Multiple Imputation to address this. Whilst it is difficult to know the extent to which there may be residual unobserved factors affecting attrition, in controlling for an extensive range of observables the issue is likely to be mitigated.

A second limitation is that we only have parental vocabulary measured at one time-point, when the young person is aged 14, and for some parents, particularly those from immigrant groups, this may not accurately reflect their vocabulary earlier in the child's life.

A third limitation of this paper is that we are only able to report on the intergenerational transmission of vocabulary. A full assessment of the role of language in the process of "cultural reproduction" would require an assessment of later educational attainment and occupational outcomes. We intend to investigate these in future work.

A fourth limitation is that we are unable to address genetic heritability (Plomin & Deary, 2015). Evidence from the Dunedin cohort (Belsky et al., 2016) suggests that children born into socially disadvantaged families tend to have slightly below average polygenic scores for educational attainment and that these scores predict cognitive, educational, and socioeconomic attainment. This is beyond the scope of the current study, but future studies will be able to exploit the fact that the age 14 wave of MCS collected saliva from children and parents for subsequent DNA extraction.

From a theoretical point of view, our findings support the view that language skills are an important part of the resources that more privileged parents possess and are able, to some degree, to transmit to their children. This can be seen as supporting a Bourdieusian “cultural reproduction” perspective to a degree, yet this process is far from deterministic. We also find some support for Modood’s (2004) notion of “ethnic capital” overcoming a lack of traditional cultural capital, notably in the case of ethnically Bangladeshi and Pakistani children, whose English vocabulary scores are higher than would be expected given their parents’ low scores.

In policy terms, our findings should temper the tendency of some political commentators to blame socioeconomic differences in learning on deficits in working-class parenting behaviors (Field, 2010; Telegraph, 2010). Our results suggest that children whose parents are less educated and those from particular ethnic minority groups may require additional input at school to support the development of a rich vocabulary, and encouraging independent reading is likely to be a useful tool in this regard, though we acknowledge that more research is needed to unpack the direction of causality between reading and cognitive and behavioral and emotional development. In the case of immigrant parents who lack English fluency, support for their English language development is likely to benefit their children, and this issue has increased in salience given the dramatic rise in the proportion of births to non-UK women since the millennium.

Finally, our findings emphasize the value of including measures of parental cognitive skills, including language skills, in birth cohort studies, and other datasets, both as an important explanator and as a vital control variable. More research is needed internationally to examine whether the role of parental vocabulary varies across national contexts.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

We are grateful to the Centre for Longitudinal Studies, UCL Institute of Education, for the use of these data and to the UK Data Archive and UK Data Service for making them available.

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APPENDIX

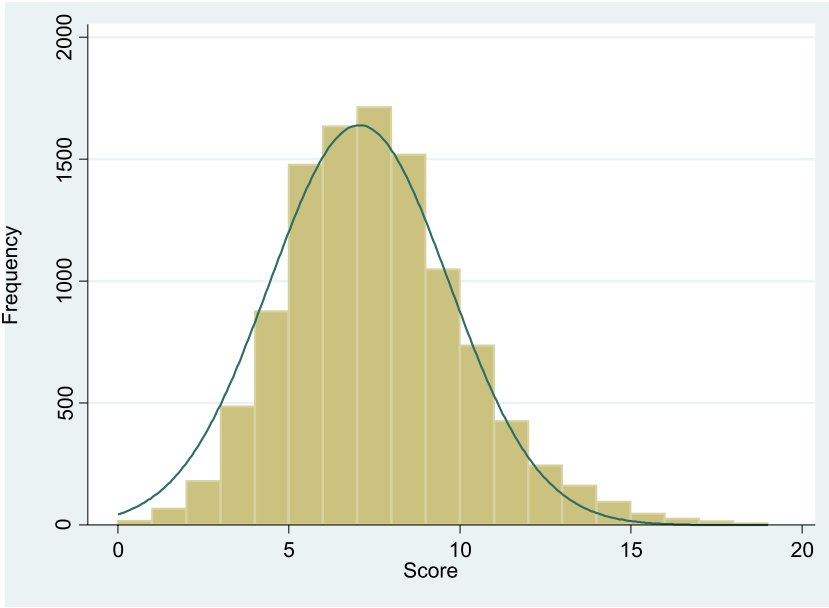


FIGURE A1 Young Person's vocabulary

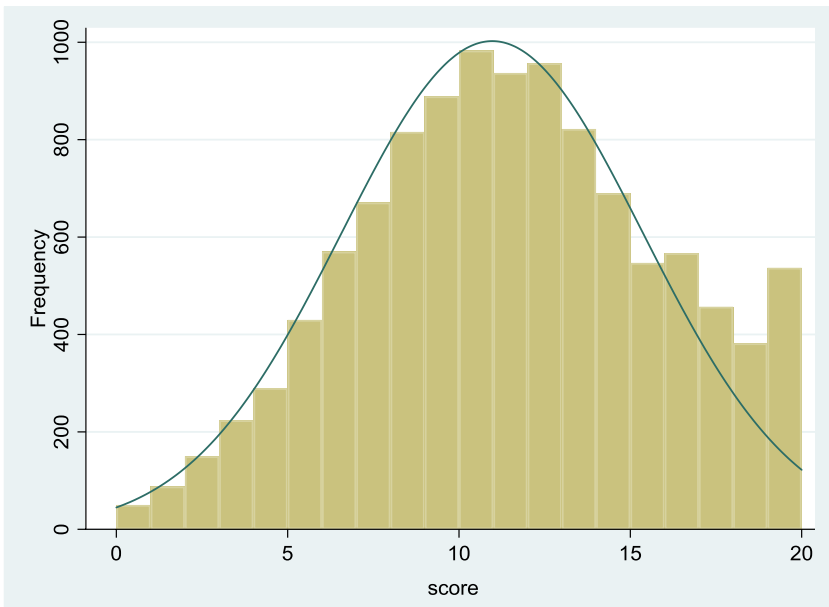


FIGURE A2 Mother's vocabulary

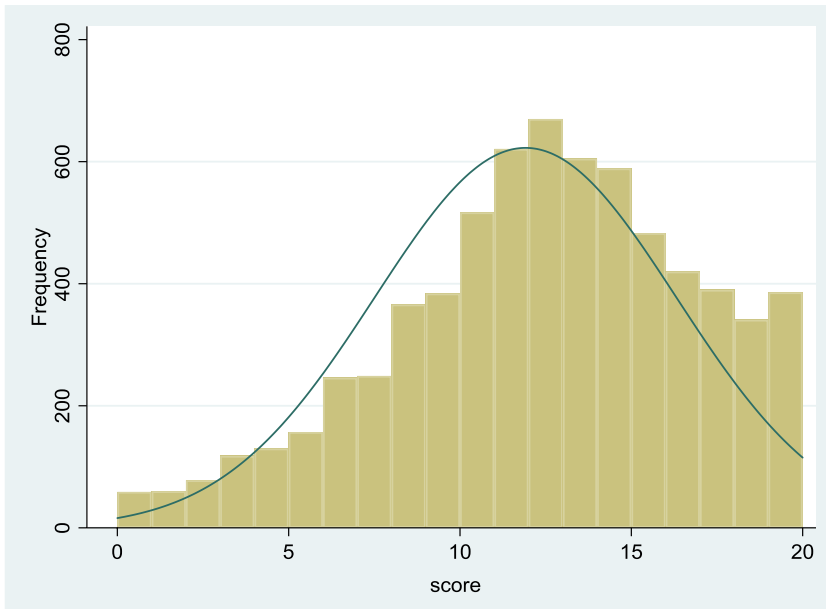


FIGURE A3 Father's vocabulary

TABLE A1 Vocabulary scores internal reliability (20 item scale)

	Young person	Mother	Partner
Cronbach's alpha	0.543	0.839	0.851
KR20	0.522	0.839	0.852
Skewness	0.508	-0.019	-0.397
Kurtosis	3.601	2.442	2.744

The case for studying the intergenerational transmission of social (dis)advantage: A reply to Gary Marks

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Our article “Understanding the mobility chances of children from working-class backgrounds in Britain: How important are cognitive ability and locus of control?” examines the role of cognitive ability and peoples’ sense of control over their lives in mediating the effects of individuals’ social background on their educational attainment and on their labor market position (Betthäuser et al., 2020a). The article takes as its starting point the persistent view in both academic and policy circles that most of the differences in the educational attainment and labor market success between individuals from different socio-economic backgrounds are due to differences in cognitive ability between them (see e.g., Marks, 2014; Murray, 2012). Using data from the 1970 British Birth Cohort Study,¹ we find that cognitive ability mediates a non-negligible yet limited amount of the effect of individuals’ social background on their educational attainment (about 35%) and their labor market position (about 20%). This means that about 65% of the effect of individuals’ social background on their educational attainment, and about 80% of the effect on their labor market position, is channeled by factors *other than* cognitive ability. Contradicting the claims by Murray (2012), Marks (2014), and others, this finding highlights that the intergenerational reproduction of social (dis)advantage that prevails in even the most developed societies is deeply unmeritocratic and unfair. Consequently, we see an urgent need for researchers to identify and for policy makers to address the channels through which individuals’ parental class background shapes their life chances, above and beyond its effects on individuals’ cognitive ability.

In his commentary on our article, Gary Marks (2020, p. 3) concludes that the findings of our article “are technically correct but unimportant.” He argues that examining the role of cognitive ability in mediating the association between individuals’ social background and their educational and labor market outcomes is not a relevant exercise, since there are “only moderate associations of class origins with educational and occupational outcomes” (p. 2). Instead, he suggests that research should focus on the importance of individuals’ genetic predisposition and cognitive ability in affecting individuals’ educational attainment and labor market outcomes (p. 2). In short, Marks

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takes issue, not with the substance and the findings of our article, but with the research question we pose and with our motivation for addressing it.^{2,3} Our reply, therefore, focuses on why, in our view, it is imperative for social scientists across different disciplines to critically examine the association between individuals' social background and their educational and labor market outcomes, and to understand the role of different factors—including cognitive ability—in accounting for this association.

We strongly disagree with the claim by Marks that there are “only moderate associations of class origins with educational and occupational outcomes” (p. 2). Research on social stratification and mobility in sociology, economics, and psychology has demonstrated that individuals' social background continues to yield a strong influence on both their educational and labor market chances (Bukodi and Goldthorpe, 2018; Chetty et al., 2014; Laurison & Friedman, 2016; Major & Machin, 2018; Von Stumm et al., 2009). To use the analogy of John Rawls (1971), the ticket that people draw in the “lottery of birth” continues to matter for their life chances. This is true even in the most democratically and economically advanced societies, such as Britain. To illustrate this, Figure 1 shows the extent to which individuals' social background affects their educational attainment. More specifically, it depicts the chances of individuals with the *same level of cognitive ability* but from *different social backgrounds* to attain an upper secondary or a higher level of qualification in Britain. We show this separately for women (right panel) and for men (left panel) and for different birth cohorts, spanning the last five decades. Individuals are split into three groups, based on their parents' social class, social status, and educational attainment. The most advantaged group (10% in the earliest cohort and 27% in the most recent cohort) are predominantly the children of parents in the managerial and professional salariat or at least in white-collar occupations who have tertiary- or at least upper secondary-level qualifications. The least advantaged group (50% in the earliest cohort and 30% in the most recent cohort) are predominantly the children of parents in wage-earning, mainly blue-collar occupations with no qualifications or at best only ones at a lower secondary level. What this figure clearly shows is that individuals' social background significantly shapes their educational attainment and that this is so even when we compare people who have the *same level of cognitive ability*. By way of example, a woman with an intermediate level of cognitive ability born in 1990, who comes from the most advantaged social background is, on average, about forty percentage points more likely to attain a qualification at the upper-secondary level or above, compared to a woman with the same level of cognitive ability who comes from the least advantaged social background. For men, this difference is even more pronounced. There is no doubt that this constitutes a very substantial effect on individuals' social background on their educational chances. And notably, this gap in the educational attainment of people coming from different social backgrounds has persisted over time. To claim that there are only moderate associations between peoples' social origins and their educational and occupational outcomes, as Marks does, is, therefore, a misrepresentation of the evidence. To suggest that this association does not warrant further research is unfounded and neglects the responsibility of researchers to focus on what in our view is one of the key challenges that societies continue to face: to equalize the highly unequal playing field faced by individuals from different social backgrounds.

The substantial gap in life chances between people from different social backgrounds is problematic both from a normative perspective and from an efficiency point of view. Seen from a normative perspective, it is socially unjust if individuals' life chances depend on ascriptive characteristics, which are out of their control, such as the social circumstances into which they are born (Rawls, 1971). From an efficiency perspective, it is undesirable that individuals' educational attainment and the type of job they have depends on their family background, rather than their ability and skills (Betthäuser, 2017; Gray and Moshinsky, 1935). In contrast to what Marks claims, these are important grounds for why it should be a top priority for researchers across different disciplines to study how and why peoples' social background continues to exert such a strong effect on their life chances. Examining, as we do in our article, the extent to which the gap in the educational attainment and labor market success between individuals from different socio-economic backgrounds are due to differences in cognitive ability between them is one important step toward this larger goal.

In his commentary, Marks claims that we “misrepresent the research [we] take issue with” (p. 2). Here we would like to ask the reader to examine the arguments made by Murray, Marks, and others, which we set out to

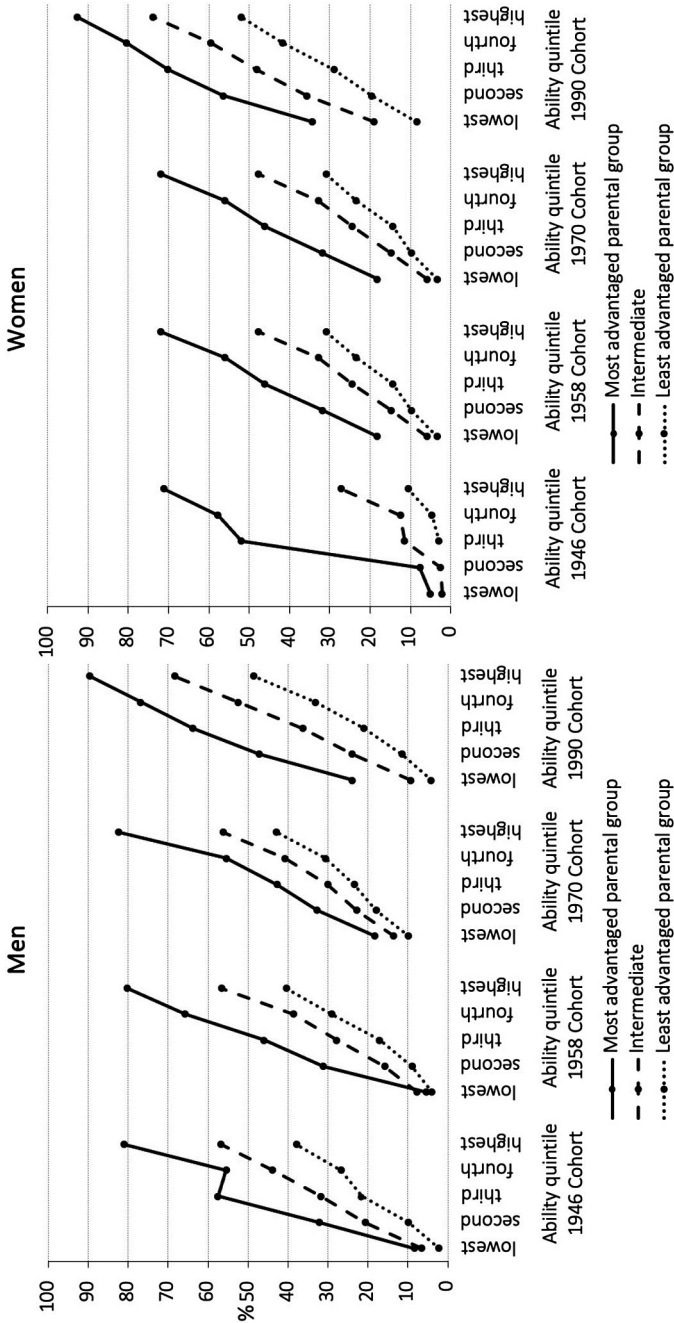


FIGURE 1 Estimated probabilities (%) of attaining upper secondary or higher level of qualification by parental group, cognitive ability quintile and cohort

test empirically in our article. As we note in the article, Murray argues that “the reason that upper-middle-class children dominate the population of elite schools is that the parents of the upper-middle class now produce a disproportionate number of the smartest children” (2012, p. 60). Murray suggests that this further explains why individuals in advantaged labor market positions largely come from higher social class backgrounds (2012, pp. 46–68). He also posits that the transmission of intelligence is largely genetic and is reinforced by increasing homogamy, that is, the growing tendency of people to form partnerships with individuals of similar social standing (2012, pp. 46–68). These views are echoed by a number of sociologists and social psychologists (see, e.g., Gottfredson, 2003; Marks, 2014; Plomin, 2018; Saunders, 1997, 2012). With regards to the effect of individuals’ social background on their educational attainment, for instance, Marks (2014, p. 88) writes that “the inclusion of [cognitive] ability in the analysis reduces the impact of socioeconomic background considerably and in some cases to statistical insignificance.” With respect to the effects of individuals’ social background on occupational and economic outcomes, he further contends that “the direct impact of socioeconomic background is even smaller, and smaller again after taking into account educational attainment and, to a lesser extent, cognitive ability” (Marks, 2014, p. 234). These arguments clearly advance the claim that the differences in the educational attainment and labor market success between individuals from different socio-economic backgrounds are due to differences in cognitive ability between them.

We believe that it is important to empirically test the arguments made by Marks and others, particularly because of their political potency. A large mediating role of cognitive ability can be (mis-) interpreted to imply that the pronounced inequality in educational and labour market attainment between individuals from different social backgrounds is somehow efficient or legitimate and does not require political intervention. For example, as we note in our article, Dominic Cummings, who was the special advisor to the British Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, and Chief Special Advisor to the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, contends that “differences in educational achievement are not mainly because of ‘richer parents buying greater opportunity’” and suggests that they are instead due to richer parents having more capable children than poorer parents (Cummings, 2013, p. 74). Cummings further argues that any policy that aims at equalizing educational opportunities and increasing the quality of education would *increase* the effect of children’s social background on their educational achievement, thereby questioning the importance of lowering the effect of children’s social background on their educational attainment as a policy priority (*ibid.*). In our article and our related work, we show that these arguments are unfounded and that equalising educational opportunities can substantially *reduce* the effect of children’s social background on their educational achievement and labour market chances (Betthäuser, 2017; Betthäuser et al., 2020a).

In sum, the evidence clearly shows that individuals’ social background continues to exert a strong influence on their life chances. Understanding how and why this occurs is of utmost importance from a scientific, from a normative, from efficiency, and from a policy point of view. As a step toward this larger goal, our article focuses on examining the extent to which differences in cognitive ability account for the gap in educational and labor market attainment between individuals from different social backgrounds. We find that cognitive ability plays a relatively modest role—a far more limited one than the Murray (2012), Marks (2014), and others suggest—in accounting for the substantial gap in life chances between individuals from different social backgrounds. Clearly, this raises the question through which other ways peoples’ social background continues to shape their life chances. We urge researchers from all disciplines to improve our understanding of this question through careful empirical analysis. Moreover, we believe that it is the responsibility of policy makers from across the political spectrum to use this knowledge to level the highly inequitable playing field that people from different social backgrounds continue to face.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ For further information on the 1970 British Birth Cohort Study and an in-depth description of the variables and measures we use in our analyses, please see Betthäuser et al. (2020b).
- ² On a more technical note, Marks observes that in our results “the figure of 35% for [the part of the social background effect mediated by cognitive ability] contrasts with the 50% estimate in a similar paper by Bukodi et al. (2019).” First, we would like to highlight that our earlier paper, which Marks refers to, finds that the percentage of the social background effect on educational attainment that is mediated by cognitive ability varies between 30% and 50%, depending on the specific birth cohort and the dimension of individuals’ social background considered. For the 1970 birth cohort, we find that about 30% of the parental class effect on individuals’ educational attainment is mediated by cognitive ability (Bourne et al., 2018, p. 16). The difference in the mediating role of cognitive ability that we find in this earlier paper, as compared to our present paper, is simply due to the fact that in our present paper—as stated in the title of the paper—we focus on the effect of coming from a working-class background, rather than a more advantaged background. By contrast, our earlier paper examines the role of cognitive ability in mediating the effect of a more general measure of parental social class on educational attainment (Bourne et al., 2018, p. 14).
- ³ Marks also claims that we “underplay the importance of education for occupational destinations [...]. Net of educational attainment, occupational origins have little impact on occupational destinations [...].” In contrast, we clearly state that educational attainment, as operationalized in our analysis, accounts for 30%–40% of the association between parents and their children’s social class position and that this depends on the social class cut-off we examine (p. 359). This is in line with past research on Britain (Breen & Karlson, 2014), and with evidence from other societies, such as Germany (Betthäuser, 2020). There is now a growing literature that seeks to examine the ‘direct’ effect of individuals’ social class background on their labor market position that is not mediated by their educational attainment (see e.g., Bernardi & Ballarino, 2016).

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Class and status in interwar England: Current issues in the light of a historical case

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Abstract

There has been much recent discussion concerning the conceptual and empirical viability and value of the distinction between social class and social status, and in particular as implemented in the work of Chan and Goldthorpe. The present paper addresses certain of the issues that arise on the basis of a historical case, that of class and status in interwar England, with reference to housing, sports club membership, and dress. It seeks to show that, contrary to what has been claimed by various authors, the distinction can be effectively made and is indeed necessary to an understanding of these features of the social history of the period; that it is differential association that has to be seen as constitutive of status stratification, rather than differences in lifestyle; and that increased status striving, anxieties, and segregation, with adverse psychological consequences, can result from a narrowing as well as from a widening of class inequalities.

KEYWORDS

dress, housing, social class, social status, sports clubs

1 | INTRODUCTION

The motivation for this paper derives from recent discussion of the relation between social class and social status. I refer in particular to

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1. the claim of Bihagen and Lambert (2018) that, contrary to what Chan and Goldthorpe have supposed (e.g., Chan & Goldthorpe, 2004, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2007d, 2010), it is not possible for class and status to be effectively “disentangled,” either conceptually or empirically;
2. the claim of Flemmen et al. (2019) that in the work cited above Chan and Goldthorpe (CG) have “misconstrued” the distinction between class and status and that a superior, “neo-Bourdieuian” alternative focused on differences in lifestyles is available; and
3. the assumption made by Wilkinson and Pickett (2010, 2019) that the degree of status stratification is highly correlated with economic inequality, so that as the latter widens, status striving, status anxieties, and in turn status segregation correspondingly increase.

In this introductory section, I briefly restate the position that CG take up as regards the distinction between class and status and indicate why I believe that the attempts made to question or to ignore it are flawed. The rest of the paper is given over to a historical case study in which I aim to show that the distinction between class and status can be effectively made in research, and is indeed conceptually essential; that it is differential association and not lifestyle that has to be seen as constitutive of status; and that increased status striving and its consequences can result from a narrowing as well as from a widening of class inequalities.

Class and status are two qualitatively different aspects of social stratification, both of which, however, entail social inequalities of a *relational* rather than a simply attributional kind (such as inequalities in income or wealth). Class refers to the more or less advantaged positions that individuals hold in relations in labor markets and workplaces or, one could say, to their employment relations. From these different positions, inequalities derive in income security, short-term income stability, and longer-term income prospects (see further for detailed evidence in the British case, Bukodi & Goldthorpe, 2019, ch. 1). Status refers to the more or less advantaged positions that individuals hold in relations of perceived, and in some degree accepted, social superiority, equality, and inferiority as expressed in differential association in the more intimate aspects of social life and, in particular, in commensality and connubium—who eats with whom, who sleeps with whom. In making the concept of class operational for research purposes, a combination of occupation and employment status can be shown to have high construct validity, as in the National Statistics Socioeconomic Classification (Rose et al., 2005). In making the concept of status operational, measures deriving from the occupational structure either of close friendship or of marriage or partnership—measures that prove to be highly correlated—can be used (Chan, 2010a).

Since class advantages and disadvantages may reinforce or be in various ways be “translated into” status advantages and disadvantages—or perhaps vice versa—the obvious expectation is that individuals’ positions in class structures and in status hierarchies will be positively associated. However, this association is unlikely to be perfect. Thus, in any empirical analysis of the effects of social stratification, maintaining the distinction between class and status, and taking both into account, becomes necessary.

It is this last point that Bihagen and Lambert (BL) in effect dispute. They claim that measures of class and status, as used in the work that CG have undertaken, “largely tap the same underlying dimension of stratification” or “largely reflect the same form of stratification” (2018, p. 2,9), and that the conceptual and empirical distinction is, therefore, superfluous and potentially misleading. It may be noted that BL never explain the nature of this “underlying dimension” or “form of stratification”: it is left without any conceptual elaboration. But more relevant for present purposes is the fact that while BL at one point (2018, p. 2) do raise what has to be regarded as the crucial question so far as empirical analysis is concerned, they then back off from it. That is, the question of whether, when class and status are together included as potentially explanatory variables in relation to an outcome of interest—as in some form of regression analysis—a problem of multicollinearity arises. If what they contend is correct, then, this should quite regularly be the case. But in fact such a problem rarely occurs. I am aware of only one reported instance, relating to the Netherlands (Kraaykamp et al., 2010).

Moreover, and contrary to further arguments put forward by BL (2018, p. 3), where analyses *also* include education as an explanatory variable, alongside class and status, *and* these variables are all measured in the same

functional form, multicollinearity is again rarely encountered. See, for example, as regards parental class, status, and education in relation to children's educational attainment, Bukodi et al. (2014), (2017), and Bourne et al. (2018). The important finding in these analyses, as in a range of others of a similar kind (see Chan, 2019, pp. 874–875), is that class and status prove to have *independent* and to some extent *cumulative* effects on the outcome variable, so that if one or the other is omitted the overall impact of stratification is underestimated, and what are effects of class become to some extent attributed to status or vice versa. In the light of these results, BL's attempts to show that class and status are "too strongly mutually associated" to be usefully separated in analysis lose any force.¹ The proof of the pudding is in the eating.

Turning to Flemmen, Jarness, and Rosenlund (FJR), their claim that CG have misconstrued the relation between class and status through a faulty reading of Weber amounts to very little. They provide scant textual justification for their argument that, for Weber, it is lifestyle that represents (2019, p. 818) "the primary expression of status" while differential association is only "secondary." But, in any event, as Chan has observed (2019, p. 867), the real concern is not with ancestor worship but social science; and in this context what matters is not the provenance of ideas but their consequences. For CG it is differential association in the forms earlier indicated that is to be taken as *constitutive* of status stratification, just as it is relations in labor markets and workplaces that are *constitutive* of class stratification. And in the work earlier cited they have been successful in showing—as others have also shown (Chan, 2010b)—that it is then status rather than class, that is most closely associated with at least one aspect of lifestyle, different levels and patterns of cultural consumption. While regression analyses of the kind used in this work are recognized as essentially descriptive rather than being in themselves capable of demonstrating causation (cf. Goldthorpe, 2016, ch. 8), they are descriptive in a way that indicates the lines on which causal explanations might best be developed. In the case in point, it is causal processes or mechanisms deriving from status, not from class, that should be sought in seeking to account for differences in cultural consumption.

In contrast, FJR's neo-Bourdieuian approach appears to involve no distinction between what is constitutive of status or of class and what might be regarded as their effects. In their MCA analyses they seek to relate the positions of individuals in a "social space," defined by variables taken to represent both economic and cultural capital (= class?) to their positions in a "space of lifestyles" defined by a highly miscellaneous collection of variables referring to activities, preferences, and possessions (= status?). What their analyses then involve is a large-scale exercise in data reduction or, less politely put, data-dredging—and of very poor quality data at that. The results are essentially descriptive but, in this case, *not* in a way that is helpful in leading to the explanation of what is described. The aim is to show that a "homology" exists between the positioning of individuals in the two spaces, and we are duly informed—the mountains heave—that "differences in lifestyles are reflected in social differences" (2019, p. 852). But nothing is said about the nature of this relationship—about *how it comes to exist in the form it has*. Perhaps from a neo-Bourdieuian standpoint attempts at causal explanation are impermissible.² However, if FJR's approach is to be regarded as superior to that which CG have followed, it would be interesting to know in exactly what terms "superiority" is being claimed.

Wilkinson and Pickett (WP) have not been involved in the controversies referred to above but the position they take up is of direct relevance to them. WP are concerned with the social and psychological consequences of inequalities in incomes and wealth associated with class, and they attach particular importance in this regard to the part played by status. While they do not make any clear conceptual distinction between class and status, it is through status, they evidently believe (e.g., 2010, pp. 44–45, 69–70, 141; 2019, pp. 33–35, 68–70, 193–194, 233–236), that class-linked economic inequalities "get under the skin" of individuals. Thus, the more economic inequality increases, the more set apart individuals become in their everyday lives, and the more preoccupied with differences in such things as food, possession of consumer goods and leisure activities that are taken to express their relative status positions. In turn, status striving and anxiety intensify, and to the point perhaps of causing significant psychological pathology. WP cite evidence for processes of the kind that they emphasize but they neglect an alternative possibility: that is, that class-linked economic inequalities and differences, on the one hand, and status striving, status anxiety and their consequences, on the other hand, need not be always related in

the straightforward way that they would suppose. It may be that a growing preoccupation with status and greater status segregation result from class inequalities and differences *not widening but actually narrowing*.³

It is just such a situation, I would hold, that is illustrated in the case of interwar England, to which I now turn. In taking a historical case study as the basis for treating current issues, one cannot hope to have data as closely focused on these issues as could be obtained from a purpose-designed survey. Nonetheless, survey data that are of relevance do exist, and these, taken together with official and other statistical data, contemporary commentaries, and the results of increasingly detailed historical research, do provide a remarkably consistent empirical grounding for a number of significant conclusions. As well as the more paradoxical relation between class and status, unsuspected by WP, being well brought out, it is also indicated, as against BL, that class and status can—indeed must—be disentangled if various aspects of the social history of the period are to be understood, and, as against FJR, that it is differential association, not lifestyle, that has to be seen as the primary expression of—constitutive of—status stratification.

2 | THE CONTEXT OF THE CASE: DECLINING CLASS INEQUALITIES

The interwar period in Britain is often thought of as one characterized by economic recessions, mass unemployment, and harsh living conditions. However, it is in this regard important to note that while in England “distressed areas” certainly did exist, in particular in the North-East and parts of the Midlands where industries in long-term decline predominated, the worst conditions of all were in fact in Scotland and Wales. Over the period as a whole, substantial economic growth occurred and living standards rose, and this was especially apparent in South-East England and other areas of the country benefiting from the development of new manufacturing industries and the expansion of the services sector (Aldcroft, 1970; Scott, 2007). At the same time, economic inequalities associated with class tended in various respects to narrow and, perhaps no less consequentially, this was widely seen as being the case.

One broad indication of this narrowing was that during the interwar years the earnings of wage-workers, albeit with some fluctuations, increased more rapidly than did those of salaried employees. Overall, the former increased by around 100%, the latter by only a little over 70% (cf. Aldcroft, 1970, p. 361; Stevenson, 1984, p. 121). This led to a development of social significance on what become known as “the working-class, middle-class frontier.” An overlap of the earnings of some skilled wage-workers with those of lower-level salaried employees was already evident by the end of nineteenth century; but, following World War I, this overlap began to widen and, with some interruptions, continued to do so (e.g., see Routh, 1980, ch. 2). It was, moreover, highlighted—if exaggerated—in jeremiads on “the plight of the middle classes” (see e.g., Masterman, 1922, ch. 3). Looking back over the whole of the interwar period, Lewis and Maude (1949, p. 24) observed that “the upper levels of the working class have overtaken and in respect of income are now indistinguishable from a very deep sector of the lower end of the middle class”—a change, they believed, that was “profound” and “has indeed been described as a social revolution.”

The employment relations of the salariat did in general still give advantages over those of wage-workers in terms of the security and stability of incomes and the prospect of rising incomes through career advancement. But these advantages too became less clearly marked than previously. Most important in this regard was the demonstration during the recessions of the 1920s and 1930s that unemployment could no longer be regarded as a distinctively working-class fate. Those in lower-level white-collar occupations, even if less exposed, proved not to be immune to job loss. In 1931, it was estimated that the unemployment rate for men in clerical employment was 5.7% as compared with 12.7% for the total labor force (Lockwood, 1958, p. 55; cf. also Klingender, 1935, pp. 91–98). Further, as an equivalent to “short-time” working among wage-workers, many salaried employees in both the state and private sectors suffered significant pay cuts (Klingender, 1935, pp. 86–91).

At the same time as the economic security of at least those on the lower margins of the salariat was thus in some degree compromised, their prospects for career advancement may also have become more uncertain. A

large-scale national survey carried out shortly after the end of World War II (Thomas, n.d.) found that 38% of men who had started work in clerical occupations, largely in the interwar period, had moved up into higher-level positions; but it was also found that a further 28% had been downwardly mobile into manual wage-work. The risk of “proletarianisation” was, at all events, by no means negligible.

In this context, the class frontier thus became, at least on the middle class side, a source of increasing concern. Among members of the salariat and their families, apprehension came to focus, at least after the collapse of the General Strike of 1926, less on rising working-class consciousness and the possibility of class conflict as on the threat to their status superiority that arose from the narrowing differences between their own class situation and that of what might be regarded as the rising stratum of wage-workers. Evidence of this is most readily available in three respects: housing (and housework), sports club membership, in particular of golf and tennis clubs, and dress. In each of these cases, which I now consider in turn, what was crucial from the standpoint of the salariat, and especially for those on its lower margins, was to maintain their “apartness” from the working class. This involved symbolic “boundary work” (Lamont & Molnár, 2002) but, further, a concern to maintain not only social, but also actual physical segregation.

3 | HOUSING

Before World War I, barely 10% of all housing in England was owner occupied. Even those who could have readily afforded to buy their own homes often chose not to do so, apparently finding it more convenient to rent and to move up to larger accommodation as their careers progressed, their families grew, and more servants were needed. However, from the 1920s onward, home ownership became increasingly attractive as house prices fell, due to new building techniques, and easy mortgage terms were available for those with relatively secure jobs. Over the interwar period nearly four million new homes were built, close to three million of these by speculative—though often government subsidized—developers, and in the form mostly of semidetached “villas” or bungalows on suburban or exurban estates or in ribbon development alongside arterial roads (Gardiner, 2010, pp. 296–297). A large-scale migration occurred from rented accommodation in central urban areas to these new homes—with clerks and other office workers, sales staff, technicians, and minor professionals being typical of those involved. By the 1930s, in the words of Gardiner (and cf. McKibbin, 1998, ch. 3), housing had become the “increasingly salient indicator of the distinction between the working classes and the middle classes (particularly the lower middle class),” and home ownership was directly expressive of “the desire to better oneself and mark ... upward mobility as definitively as possible.” For socially aspiring individuals, as Jackson, the leading urban historian of the period, has observed (1991:34), their house was their “principal status symbol,” the location of which was carefully chosen in relation to their estimate of their “present and potential social standing.”

However, for these same individuals and their families, concerns arose over status achievement and maintenance in two respects. First, the rising earnings of more skilled manual workers meant that they too came increasingly into the market for the new homes (Burnett, 1978, pp. 247–248; Speight, 2000; Scott, 2008), thus, posing an obvious threat to status exclusiveness. To quote Jackson again (1991, p. 34), for those in lower-level white-collar employment, “An important attraction of outer suburban or exurban life was the possibility of escape from the shoulder-rubbing proximity with the less attractive aspects of the working class, something which could not be avoided in the central streets of cities and towns.” For those who believed that they had made this escape, the idea that the working class might follow them into their new social world was then obviously disturbing. The degree of anxiety that prevailed in this regard was reflected in the emphasis that developers placed in their advertisements on the “select” nature of their estates—as being intended and designed for “families of good breeding” or for those belonging to “a definite class.” Moreover, restrictive covenants were often imposed on residents, prohibiting, for example, taking in lodgers, keeping poultry, or hanging out washing on Sundays and Bank Holidays. And social norms emerged, sanctioned through gossip and ostracism, against such other working-class practices as letting

children play in the street or biking to work rather than going to the station to take the train (Burnett, 1978, pp. 249–250; Jackson, 1973, pp. 168–170).

The second threat to the escape from working class proximity came with the further major housing development of the interwar years: the building by local authorities of what became generally known as “council estates”—rented housing primarily intended for working-class families, and often including those needing relocation after slum clearance programs. Such estates were usually built away from city or town centers and, not infrequently, close to private estates, whose residents appear invariably to have expressed strong opposition and often to have taken action to try to preserve their apartness (McKibbin, 1998, pp. 98–101).⁴ An early instance of such action came in 1926 when the residents of a private estate in Bromley in Kent erected a brick wall, topped with broken glass, in order to separate their homes from those in a neighboring London County Council estate (Gardiner, 2010, p. 321). However, the most striking—and sociologically best-documented—instance of such physical expression of status segregation was that of the Cutteslowe Walls. In 1934, a company that had built a private estate in Cutteslowe, North Oxford, erected two seven-foot high walls, topped with revolving spikes, across two roads that ran through the estate, thus, preventing access to those living on an adjacent council estate and requiring them to make a detour of up to almost half a mile in order to reach the main road with its shops and bus stops. Surprisingly, the illegality of the company's action was difficult to establish, and the walls were not finally demolished until 1959 under postwar town planning legislation.

In his detailed study of the case, Collison (1963) assembled a variety of evidence to show that the private estate residents remained throughout strongly in favor of the walls. In a survey, he himself carried out in 1956 he found that 66% of residents believed that the walls should not be taken down, and in a follow-up survey 1 year after their removal still 47% took the view that they should have remained in place (as against 90% of council housing residents welcoming their disappearance). Collison observes (1963, p. 155) that between the 1930s and 1950s the “climate of opinion” had changed so that “the confident and robust expressions of social superiority which could be made publicly at the earlier date were likely to be inhibited twenty years later.” But he also reports (1963, p. 158) that even after the walls were down only 11% of council estate residents reported having “a particular friend” living on the private estate—while *no one* living on the private estate reported having a particular friend living on the council estate.

Housing does thus give the most striking demonstration that, contrary to FJR's view, it was through differential association that status was primarily expressed. Not only did the typical residents of the new private estates not want any close social relations with members of the working class, they wanted actual physical separation from them—even working-class proximity threatened status loss. Did then rising status anxiety, in a context of declining rather than increasing class inequalities, still “get under the skin” of those living on the private estates? The evidence is that it did, although in a way that led to women being chiefly affected.

Up to World War I, perhaps the most obvious indicator of a family falling on the working-class side of the class frontier was that they did not employ a domestic servant.⁵ However, after the war, a “servant problem” arose. Supply became more restricted as in many areas young working-class women could find more attractive employment opportunities (Gardiner, 2010, pp. 41–42). Consequently, servants' wages rose and for many families on the new suburban or exurban estates live-in servants at least became too costly, even if they could have been accommodated. They were replaced by “dailies,” who two or three times a week carried out heavier chores, and also by a growing reliance on new domestic appliances such as vacuum cleaners, electric ovens, fridges, and early washing machines (Jackson, 1991, pp. 84, 116–123). These developments had, then, a major impact on the wives on the estates—the large majority of whom, following the general pattern of the time, would have left the labor market on marriage or when first pregnant. They ceased to have the status of “the lady of the house” and became much closer to being “housewives” in the working-class sense. The significance of this change is perhaps best brought out by the attempts that were made to conceal it. Horwood (2005, pp. 60–61), using Mass Observation data, reports that wives who had been doing housework thought it improper to appear out of doors, or even to answer the door, while still wearing an apron or overall. And it was usual to change clothes at least once a day—that

is, after housework was finished and before “going out” to the shops, a library or cinema, or to await the return of their husbands from work.

However, the strain falling on wives of “keeping up appearances” in dress and in other ways—such as house décor and furnishings—and of managing the budgets they were allowed for such purposes, would appear to have been often damaging. Doctors (see esp. Taylor, 1938) identified a syndrome labeled as “suburban neurosis,” chiefly afflicting women and characterized by a variety of symptoms such as headaches, palpitations, insomnia, dyspepsia, and depression. This was diagnosed as the result of money worries, “the fetish of the home,” limited social ties, and concerns to live up to “a false set of values” (Taylor, 1938, p. 760; and see also McKibbin, 1998, pp. 82–83).⁶

What in all of the foregoing requires major emphasis is then the extent to which status anxieties were directed *downward* rather than upward. Their source was not primarily an envy of, or a striving to be accepted by, higher status groups but rather a desperate concern to maintain symbolic superiority over, and social and physical distance from, that stratum of manual wage-workers with whom at least those at the lower levels of the salariat shared an increasingly similar economic situation. As specifically class-linked inequalities narrowed, status preoccupations intensified—a situation impossible to understand with BL’s conception of a single dimension of stratification and one that from WP’s standpoint could not in fact be envisaged.⁷

4 | SPORTS CLUBS, GOLF, AND TENNIS

As, after World War I, hours of work were reduced and, for the majority, real incomes rose, participation in recreational activities generally increased and engaging in, as well as watching, sports became of particular importance (Stevenson, 1984, ch. 14). Sports were clearly socially stratified, although in different ways, and with golf and tennis, which had by the interwar years become the two characteristically “suburban” sports, the forms that stratification took are of particular interest in the present context.

Golf originated in regions of Scotland, where it had a wide following and was often played informally on common land; but its development in England was primarily on the basis of private clubs. Up to World War I, club membership fees were high, as also was the cost of equipment, so that participation was restricted to the relatively wealthy. However, in the interwar period the number of clubs increased—to well over 1,000 by the end of the 1920s—and many of these, especially those opened around the newly developed housing estates, charged fees that became manageable for those in lower-level white-collar occupations (Jackson, 1991, pp. 287–289), but also, therefore, for better paid manual workers. Among the latter, interest in golf in fact grew surprisingly quickly. In 1921, the Artisan Golfers Association was founded and by 1927 had over 15,000 members (McKibbin, 1998, p. 360). Subsequently, though, the numbers of manual workers playing golf appears to have stalled. One reason for this was that the provision of municipal golf courses, on which artisans’ clubs largely depended, slowed down. But still more important was, as Lowerson (1989, p. 189) has put it, the opportunities golf offered for social differentiation and “the measurement and assertion of status,” which was reflected in the determination of private clubs to keep out, through stringent selection procedures (including the possibility of “blackballing”) “those whose income outstripped their occupational or social positions” (Holt, 2009, p. 77). Or, if the latter had to be admitted in order to maintain a club’s financial position, then this had to be on very restricted, and demeaning, terms.

From an early stage, some golf clubs had allowed working-class men an occasional round in return for performing menial duties on the course or the premises. However, in the interwar years a common arrangement was for clubs to have a special category of “artisanal” membership. For a somewhat reduced membership fee, artisans—that is, predominantly skilled manual workers either waged or self-employed—were allowed onto the course but only during strictly specified “unsocial” hours, such as before 6 a.m., when regular members were unlikely to wish to play. And if by any chance artisans did encounter regular members during a round, they were required to step aside and let their betters “play through.” In other words, status segregation on the course was strictly maintained. Moreover, artisanal members were not allowed access to the clubroom, the “nineteenth hole,” where meals and

drinks were served—commensality was denied. They were thus in all respects cut off from the social life of the club (Birley, 1995, pp. 36, 161–162; Holt, 2009).

Likewise banned from the clubroom were professional golfers, who were usually of “artisanal” origin. The large majority of these were attached to clubs to coach members, while also running a small shop where golfing equipment and accessories could be bought. But the ban extended to those professional golfers who were good enough to play on the tournament circuit—the elite among whom enjoyed a celebrity lifestyle. The great American golfer, Walter Hagen, having been prevented from eating in the members’ dining room while playing in a tournament at the Royal St. George’s Club, Sandwich, in 1922, refused to enter the clubhouse after winning, and had his manservant bring him champagne and various delicacies to his Rolls—before handing over his prize money to his caddy (Birley, 1995, p. 163).

Tennis developed initially as game played informally on the lawns of country houses but then, like golf, mainly through the formation of private clubs. Thus, also like golf, tennis was, up to World War I, for the most part restricted to the wealthy. After the war, though, its popularity grew still more rapidly than did that of golf. By 1925, 1,620 clubs were affiliated to the Lawn Tennis Association and by 1938 this number had risen to 3,230, with possibly a similar number remaining unaffiliated (McKibbin, 1998, pp. 361–362; Lake, 2016, pp. 124–125). At the same time, tennis courts became increasingly available in public parks either free or for only a very small charge, and were also provided by many large firms as part of welfare programs for their employees (Berry, 2020; Kay, 2012; Walker, 1989). By the early 1930s, almost 800 park courts were available in London (Bowley, 1935), 380 in Birmingham (Lake, 2016, p. 126), and over 300 in Liverpool (Caradog Jones, 1934, vol. 3, ch. 10), and clubs with open memberships were formed to play on these courts. Given such provision, and since both racquets and balls had become much cheaper due to mass production methods, by the interwar years few cost barriers to playing tennis existed for many manual workers and their families. As Kay (2012) has shown in some detail, tennis was by this time no longer a game “only for the privileged.”⁸

With this increase in the popularity of tennis and the widening social range of participation, the issue did then arise for private tennis clubs, as it did for golf clubs, of how their memberships should be regulated. Also as with golf clubs, many of the new tennis clubs were located in the expanding suburbs and often became a major focus of their social life (Holt, 1989, pp. 126–128; Jackson, 1991, pp. 290–291; Horwood, 2005, p. 82; Berry, 2020, ch. 5). But a significant difference arose in that tennis was a far less male dominated and sex segregated sport than golf. Tennis clubs came in fact to be seen as an ideal means of bringing both sexes together and in particular of “of mixing nubile young women and marriageable men in convivial surroundings” (Pugh, 2008, p. 289). Afternoon tea-parties, picnics and Saturday night “hops” were regular events and, as Walker has put it (1989, p. 252), “Off court was probably as important as on court.” This meant, however, that anxieties could arise concerning not only commensality, but also connubium. If status segregation were not maintained, unfortunate *mésalliances* might result.⁹

While financial considerations did, over time, lead to some private clubs relaxing the procedures involved in becoming a member, for the most part a “customary rigmarole” (Lake, 2016, p. 128) prevailed. Usually, an application form needed completion, on which the applicant’s “profession” had to be stated and sometimes also that of his or her father, while in addition references might be sought (Jackson, 1991, pp. 290–291). Further, most clubs required that applicants should take part in a “playing in” session, supposedly to ensure that their game was up to club standards, but which could also serve to establish their social acceptability. Lake (2016, pp. 127–128) sees the preoccupation with “conditions related to exclusivity” as being a direct reaction to broader societal changes in the interwar period, including the “widespread democratisation of tennis” and greater opportunities for social mobility. Moreover, controls over entry were backed up by norms of behavior to which new members were expected to conform, both on and off court, and which were intended by established members “to retain structures and customs that afforded the differentiation of status.” Any members whose behavior might suggest that it had been a mistake to accept them could still in effect be excluded through ostracism: they would find difficulty in getting anyone to play with or against.

The control exercised over membership of golf and tennis clubs thus brings out in another way that, contrary to what FJR would claim, it is differential association, rather than lifestyle activities per se, that has to be seen as the primary expression of status. In interwar England, with generally rising standards of living, the social stratification of many leisure pursuits, though still present, was less marked than previously (Stevenson, 1984, pp. 381–382; Pugh, 2008, pp. 94–96). But for members of the salariat, and especially for those closest to the class frontier with manual wage-workers, what mattered was not that growing numbers of the latter now could, and did, play golf or tennis: it was, rather, that they should do so with their own kind, and not seek to intrude where they did not belong. It was not playing golf or tennis that in itself conferred status but the social context within which they were played. It was from membership of clubs maintaining a degree of exclusiveness—of status segregation—that superior status derived, and any relaxation of this exclusiveness threatened status loss.

5 | DRESS

With housing or sports club membership, the social relations in which status was at issue were ones of a continuing kind—that is, with neighbors or fellow club members. However, status considerations can also arise with more incidental and fleeting relations, such as might occur in the street, in shops, or in any kind of public setting. What in this case is important is that status superiority—or at least a claim thereto—should be in some way made visible so that individuals can be “socially placed” by others and in turn an indication given of whether an incidental encounter might in some degree be developed, if only to a polite acknowledgment or a conversation. In other words, what can be regarded as “status symbols” (Goffman, 1951) become crucial in determining whether or not a boundary is to be recognized. In interwar England it could be said that dress became in this regard more problematic, but at the same time no less consequential, than at any time before or afterward.

In the years before World War I dress was socially stratified in a quite marked way. However, in the interwar years the combined effects of the growth of real incomes and new production and sales methods in the clothing industry led to a “democratisation” of dress—like that of playing tennis—that was in fact widely commented upon.¹⁰ For women, clothes manufactured from the new materials of rayon, crêpe de chine or artificial silks became available at stores such as Fenwicks, C&A, and John Lewis, and at prices that meant that those of only quite modest means could follow the dress styles and changing fashions of the wealthy. Jaeger launched its new lines with the claim that “Thanks to us, you can no longer tell a shop girl from a Duchess” (Horwood, 2005: Introduction and ch. 1; Pugh, 2008, pp. 94–95). For men, suits—stamp-cut rather than hand-tailored—could be bought at prices much lower than previously from stores such as Montague Burton, the 50 Shilling Tailors and Weaver to Wearer, and among “respectable” working-class men suits became quite regularly worn for “going out” or as “Sunday best” (Jackson, 1991, pp. 165–166).

Faced with this threat to dress as a status symbol, those on the class frontier who felt most exposed reacted to it by seeking to introduce more subtle refinements and distinctions. As Horwood has remarked in her outstanding study (2005, pp. 1, 5, 165), in the interwar years the rules of dress were “pettier” yet still “more challenging” than ever before. What became the “overriding factor in matters of dress was social status rather than any attempt at individuality or sexuality” and, given the availability of mass produced frocks and suits, attention turned increasingly to more minor items, and more subtle features of dress as key “signifiers of status”.

Thus, for white-collar employees and their wives seeking to demonstrate their status superiority over their working-class counterparts, wearing gloves and a hat when outside the house was a prerequisite. Gloves were essential for a woman as a symbol of “gentility,” the mark of a lady who had no need to work—and might be thought especially important if in fact the lady in question did do housework. Hats mattered a great deal for men (Jackson, 1991, p. 156). Wearing a trilby was a way of signaling “I am not working class.” What was also vital was to avoid status-damaging *faux pas*. Women, as earlier noted, should not be seen in an apron or overall; men should not be seen in their shirtsleeves or tie-less, nor should their braces or sock-suspenders ever be visible. In general,

as Samuel has put it (1983, pp. 28–31), even if with some flight of fancy, for those who wished to avoid any possibility of status loss “Correctness in dress extended to the minutest particulars ... Men were forever fidgeting with their tie to see that it was level and that the top button of the shirt did not show; women were forever feeling for the slipped petticoat and falling hairslide.”

This increasing status concern over dress was evidently accentuated in the context of diminishing class differences. A common complaint among clerical workers and others on the margins of the salariat (Horwood, pp. 41–43) was that while their incomes were little above, or even below, those of many manual wage-workers, they and their wives had to incur greater expenditure in upholding the standards expected of people in their positions, and above all in regard to dress. A 1938–1939 survey of the household expenditures of 1,360 civil servants, local government officials, and schoolteachers did in fact reveal (Massey, 1942, table XXI) that those in the lowest income bracket of £250–350 p.a. spent the same proportion of their income on clothes—around 9%—as those in the £500–700 p.a. bracket, while the proportion of income spent on other items of expenditure, apart from the “basics” of housing and food, fell steadily with level of income. And in reporting on an earlier survey of the cost of living of salaried employees and their families, Caradog Jones (1928, p. 476) remarked that “Whereas a certain standard may be regarded as essential in any class of society, there is a tendency, certainly among the feminine portion of the community, to lean away from the severely necessary and towards the extravagantly desirable in dress. Hence we find that here expenditure keeps better pace with income throughout.”

This striving to “keep up appearances” in dress did then often lead to financial difficulties and in turn to severe cutbacks in other respects, even including food (Klingender, 1935, pp. 79–80)—as was recognized in the unsympathetic working-class response, “Fur coats and no breakfast.” And Horwood’s exploitation of Mass Observation data (2005: chs. 2, 7 esp.) does indeed suggest that insofar as suburban neurosis could be said derive from stress-inducing attempts to sustain “false values,” the preoccupation with dress as a status symbol and means of boundary maintenance would provide a prime example.

6 | CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, I have taken the case of interwar England in order to call into question claims or assumptions implying that the conceptual distinction between class and status, as CG have sought to operationalize and apply it in empirical analyses, is in fact unnecessary and misguided. I have aimed to show—with reference to the growth of suburban housing, the membership of typically suburban golf and tennis clubs and dress—that this distinction is in fact conceptually essential as, in a context of declining class-linked inequalities and lifestyle differences, a growing concern with status emerged, in particular among the more marginal members of the salariat, closest, in economic terms, to the frontier with the working class. The three more specific conclusions that I would draw are the following.

First, without the distinction between class and status, on the lines that CG would envisage, it would be impossible to achieve an adequate understanding of any of the features of the social history of England over the interwar years that I have considered. Indeed, the distinction is one that historians of the period have in these, as in a number of other, respects quite consistently made, in substance even if not always using the same terminology as CG. It was, moreover, a distinction that was widely enough recognized among contemporaries. The question was clearly present of whether some degree of economic and lifestyle convergence on the class frontier would result in an erosion of the accepted order of social superiority, equality, and inferiority. And, for some, it was very evidently important that this should *not* become the case.

Second, it is apparent that status stratification was primarily thought of, and realized, in terms of differential association rather than of lifestyle in itself. What was of main concern to members of the salariat, and especially to those on its margins, was not that growing numbers of the working class were emulating them in moving out from city and town centers for a life in the suburbs or in taking up golf or tennis. It was, rather, that these changes should not be allowed in any way to compromise their own efforts to remove themselves as far as possible from

contact, social, and also simply physical, with the working class. For in housing and in sport alike such segregation was taken as crucial to the expression and to the maintenance of their social superiority. It is indeed difficult not to see here parallels, even if of a muted, implicit English kind, with the ideology and practice of Indian caste, of “Jim Crow” in the southern United States, or of South African *apartheid*.

Third, it emerges that it is too simplistic to see rising status concerns and anxieties, and any associated psychological problems, as being associated only with *increasing* economic inequalities. In the interwar period in England such concerns and anxieties stemmed, rather, from class-linked economic inequalities being in some degree reduced and from class differences in lifestyle being made less immediately apparent than previously, as most obviously in the case of dress. Insofar as the position of salaried employees and their families approximated the class frontier, they then saw their claims to status superiority as being under threat from the social ambitions of better-paid groups of manual wage-workers. Status striving, with its psychological costs, was necessary not so much to achieve status enhancement—to “keep up with the Joneses”—as economic inequalities widened, but rather, as such inequalities tended to narrow, to prevent the possibility of status loss—to avoid, one might say, being “caught up by the Smiths.” And there is indeed growing evidence (Kahneman, 2011, ch. 26) of the potency of “loss aversion”—resulting from the fact that the loss of something one once had has psychologically negative effects greater than the positive effects that would follow from a comparable gain.

In sum, the evidence of the historical case that I have taken serves to confirm—as does now in fact a growing body of contemporary research based on the quantitative analysis of survey data—that the distinction made between class and status, on lines such as those followed by CG, is a valid, revealing and indeed necessary one in the analysis of social stratification and its consequences.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ It should be noted that in their analyses of British Household Panel Study data, Bihagen and Lambert treat class through the now, for Britain, outmoded EGP schema (while repeating again the old, quite erroneous *canard* that this was grounded in the Hope-Goldthorpe occupational prestige scale). The studies referred to in the text above, where they relate to Britain, use NS-SEC, which, while having the same theoretical basis as EGP, is much more securely derived from the theory.
- ² FJR do at one point (2019, p. 828) cite approvingly Wuggenig, who claims (2007, p. 307) that Bourdieu has “refuted” regression methods in sociology (though where this remarkable feat was accomplished is not indicated), and who further asserts that quantitative work in the context of Bourdieusian sociology can only be appropriately undertaken using forms of correspondence analysis in order to demonstrate homologies. If this is indeed the case, it appears not to have been appreciated how severe are the limitations thus imposed. For further comment on Wuggenig and on the attempt to create some kind of mystique around correspondence analysis, see CG (2007e).
- ³ It might be added that WP’s use of evidence in support of their general position appears unduly selective. For example, they cite approvingly (2019, pp. 33–34) the finding of Layte and Whelan (2014) that across European countries individuals’ status anxiety appears to be inversely related to their income rank, but *not* Layte and Whelan’s further finding that this relation does not vary—is not “exacerbated”—by the overall level of income inequality in a country.
- ⁴ As an indication of the nature of this opposition, see the exchange reported by Jackson (1973, p. 161) between the splendidly named Mrs Bastard and a Ministry of Health Inspector at a public inquiry into the possible siting of a council estate close to the private estate on which Mrs Bastard resided.
- ⁵ Not employing a servant was the criterion used by Rowntree in his study of poverty in York (1901, p. 14) in order to define working-class households in the city.
- ⁶ Taylor’s paper became a classic. For a comment and update, see *The Lancet* leader (1958). A further consequence of the tension between available resources and the costs of status maintenance was restriction of family size, and especially if the private education of children was under consideration. In the interwar years it was the Registrar General’s Social Class IIIa, “Skilled Nonmanual,” that had the lowest fertility of all, with one-child families becoming more common than either before or afterwards (McKibbin, 1998, pp. 80–81; Titmuss and Titmuss, 1942, p. 80).

- ⁷ WP do in fact recognize (2019, pp. 193–194) that the interwar period saw the start of a decline in income inequalities that lasted until the 1970s, and they then assert that status differences correspondingly declined. While some support for this latter claim could be provided for the 1950s and 1960s, it goes quite contrary to the relevant body of evidence for the interwar years, which WP ignore.
- ⁸ In 1932, a “Workers Wimbledon” tournament was instituted, with support from the Labor movement, which by the end of the 1930s was attracting over 100 entrants and wide media coverage. Working class interest in tennis appears to have been increased by the “real” Wimbledon victories, in 1934, 1935, and 1936, of Fred Perry, the son of a Labor and Co-operative Party MP who had previously been a cotton spinner (Berry, 2020, ch. 6).
- ⁹ In the 1920s, parental concern over the possibility of daughters “marrying down” was accentuated by the shortage of “suitable” men as a result of the heavy casualty rate among the officer class during World War I (Winter, 1977).
- ¹⁰ Reports exist of ticket sellers and inspectors at train stations and of conductors on buses complaining that while previously dress had clearly served to show who was eligible for reduced early-morning fares for “working” men and women, this was no longer the case.

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Societal religiosity and the gender gap in political interest, 1990–2014

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Abstract

This manuscript examines the structural causes of the gender gap in political interest. In many countries, men are more interested in politics than women. Yet, in others, men and women prove equally interested. We explain this cross-national variation by focusing on the effects of societal religiosity. Since religion sustains the traditional gender order, contexts where societal religiosity is low undermine the taken-for-grantedness of this order, subjecting it to debate. Men then become especially interested in politics to try to reassert their traditional gender dominance, or to compensate for their increasingly uncertain social status. A secular environment thus increases political interest more among men than among women, expanding this gender gap. Using the World and European Values Survey, we estimate three-level regression models and test our religiosity-based approach in 96 countries. The results are consistent with our hypothesis.

KEYWORDS

gender, political interest, religion, social values, quantitative analysis

1 | INTRODUCTION

Political interest is a stable disposition that guides individual political practices (Wass & Blaiss, 2017). As prior (2010, p. 747) notes, political interest stands out as “typically the most powerful predictor of political behaviors that make democracy work.” Citizens interested in politics are more likely to vote (Smets & van Ham, 2013), be politically

informed (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996), engage in informal political action (Marien, Hooghe, & Quintelier, 2010), and practice civic voluntarism (Burns, Scholzman, & Verba, 2001). Yet, at the same time, existing scholarship documents a substantial gender gap in political interest. Across multiple countries, men tend to be more interested in politics than women (Burns et al., 2001; Campbell & Winters, 2008; Coffé, 2013; Inglehart & Norris, 2005; Paxton, Kunovich, & Hughes, 2007). This gender gap in political interest is potentially highly consequential for political behavior and policy outcomes. Because interest covaries with political engagement, a gender gap in political interest may affect the gender gap in voting and informal political participation. And since women are also more supportive of redistribution than men (Jaime-Castillo, Fernández, Valiente, & Mayrl, 2016), countries with a larger gender gap in political interest may also face fewer pressures to pursue progressive fiscal and social policies.

While an *overall* gender gap in political interest has been observed in many settings, the *strength* of this gap differs across countries (Hayes & Bean, 1993; Mayer & Schmidt, 2004). This paper contributes to the literature on gender and political behavior by focusing on this puzzling cross-national variation. We specifically examine the scope conditions of this gap by considering the influence of the average levels of religiosity in the country—that is, the level of societal religiosity. The study thus addresses the following important question: is the gender gap in political interest influenced by the level of societal religiosity? To answer, we examine the gender gap in political interest in 96 countries between 1990 and 2014 and use the Integrated Values Survey (IVS), which offers the broadest geographical scope of all comparative survey programs. The IVS allows us to consider countries with diverse cultural, economic, political, and social circumstances, overcoming limitations of previous comparative studies on the gender gap in political interest that examine only democratic nations (Kittilson & Schwindt-Bayer, 2012) or European countries (Fraile & Gómez, 2017). We use three-level logit models that include 245 country-year surveys. By conducting the first quasi-global analysis of the extent and causes of the gender gap in political interest, our study fills an important void in the literature on gender and politics.

Existing studies of the gender gap in political engagement suggest four structural features that may contribute to cross-national variation in the political interest gender gap: (a) economic development, (b) the prominence of women in political institutions, (c) predominant religious tradition, and (d) the extent of emancipative values among the population. We test these explanations alongside an alternative that emphasizes the role of *societal religiosity*—that is, the overall intensity of religiosity in the population. Religion is known to be deeply implicated in the gender order (Adamczyk, 2013; Bartkowski & Shah, 2014; McGuire, 2002; Peek, Lowe, & Williams, 1991; Woodhead, 2001, 2005), and to exert its influence in large part through its collective force (Berger, 1967; Stark, 1996). We therefore hypothesize that the overall strength of religion in a society could shape the gender gap in political interests. Our evidence indicates that, although the modernization of nonreligious values also matters, the level of societal religiosity is the best predictor of the gender gap in political interest. Those countries in which a smaller proportion of their population considers God to be important in their lives display significantly larger gaps in political interest between men and women.

2 | PREVIOUS RESEARCH

The fact that women are less interested in politics than men is well documented (Burns et al., 2001; Campbell & Winters, 2008; Inglehart & Norris, 2005). As Coffé (2013, p. 324) summarizes, “time and again, research in a variety of countries ... has shown that women are less interested in politics than men.” The literature, moreover, shows that the magnitude of this gender gap varies significantly across countries; for example, postindustrial societies reveal smaller gaps than agrarian societies (Inglehart & Norris, 2005, p. 108). Existing research on gender politics offers four broad explanations for these variations, which we term sociodemographic, economic, political, and cultural. These approaches will serve as alternatives to the theoretical model we present in the next Section.

Most *sociodemographic analyses* focus on individual-level features. In particular, higher education and labor force participation are thought to be critical “resources” governing political attitudes and behavior. Paid employment,

higher education, and higher income increase the opportunity cost of political disengagement and provide either the cognitive resources or the necessary connections to have meaningful involvement in politics. Since men control more of these resources than women, their average political participation is higher. Other socio-demographic characteristics, such as age, marital status, or family size also appear to condition women's political interest (Bennett & Bennett, 1989; Burns et al., 2001; Coffé, 2013; Inglehart, 1981; van Deth, 2000). Campbell and Winters (2008) show that women usually identify family responsibilities such as child-rearing and household chores as barriers to keeping up with politics—although these barriers can be reduced by gender equality policies (Fraile & Gómez, 2017). Since most works in this approach stress the role of women's economic autonomy, we hypothesize that *countries with higher female labor force participation display smaller gender gaps in political interest (H1)*.

A second set of explanations emphasizes *macro-economic conditions*. According to Inglehart and Norris (2005), economic modernization creates a context of prosperity, which is favorable to more gender-egalitarian political participation. In industrialized and postindustrial societies, citizens have higher existential security and, therefore, can prioritize non-materialist value orientations, including self-expression. As principles of equality and autonomy gain normative salience, women's political engagement is increasingly accepted. Supporting this approach, Sundström and colleagues (2017) show that economic development is one of the best predictors of women's political empowerment in 173 countries between 1900 and 2012. This approach suggests that *more prosperous countries display smaller gender gaps in political interest (H2)*.

A third set of explanations emphasizes *macro-political factors*. Two such factors have received particular attention: the feminization of political elites, and gender quotas. Several scholars predict that a greater presence of women in political decision-making positions undermines the gender gap in political interest. This is because the increased visibility of women in top political positions sends a clear signal to society that politics is not exclusively a men's game, fostering women's perception of their political efficacy and men's acceptance of women's political participation (Barnes & Burchard, 2013; Burns et al., 2001).

Relatedly, some scholars have proposed that gender quotas in parliamentary representation may have an important influence on women's political interest. These policies seek to increase the presence of women in top political positions and thereby foster greater gender equality in the political field. Gender quotas could affect the political interest gender gap, either because they boost women's presence in the political elite (Dahlerup, 2006), or because they institutionalize a rejection of a form of gender discrimination in political behavior. Yet, empirical research testing these macro-political explanations has produced mixed results, with some studies producing supportive findings (Barnes & Burchard, 2013; Burns et al., 2001; Kittilson & Schwindt-Bayer, 2012), and others not (Dolan, 2006; Zetterberg, 2009). Given the prominence of these predictions in the literature, we hypothesize that *countries with more women in Parliament (H3) or that adopted gender quotas in parliamentary representation (H4) display smaller gender gaps in political interest*.

Finally, although *cultural accounts* are rare in the literature on gender and political interest, two cultural dimensions have been persuasively discussed. One is the role of the predominant religious tradition in a country. In addition to being a fulcrum for the collective definition of the proper roles of women in family, employment and politics, religious doctrines also deeply shape the predominant culture of a given society. In thus shaping national cultures, religious doctrines affect gender-specific political attitudes and behavior (Inglehart & Norris, 2005). Margaret Inglehart (1981) has stated this point most forcefully by noting that Protestant and Catholic principles imply widely different consequences for political gender equality. Although both Protestantism and Catholicism historically endorsed women's subordination, Protestantism also encouraged literacy, which provided room for women's political empowerment. These conditions could have kick-started women political rights earlier in Protestant countries, leading to smaller gender gaps in political interest than in Catholic countries. From these insights, we infer that a country's dominant religious heritage could affect the political gender gap, and hypothesize that *Protestant countries display smaller gender gaps in political interest (H5)*.

Still, religious traditions constitute only one influence on national value systems. A large literature shows that dominant long-term orientations in a society can have an independent effect on multiple forms of political

attitudes and behavior. Referring specifically to values associated with modernity, Welzel (2013) argues that macro-historical value change mainly involves the expansion of “emancipative values.” In societies with more material, educational, and relational resources, individuals can benefit from acting autonomously and expressing their personal opinions, which gradually transforms their practices and worldviews. Citizens then adopt individual autonomy, self-expression, and gender equality as core values. This should affect the political engagement of historically subordinated groups like women. Even if gender-role attitudes are multidimensional (Knight & Brinton, 2017), in a context of generalized emancipative values and normative gender equality, men should become more accepting of women's political engagement, while women themselves seize the opportunity to become more politically active. As a result, we hypothesize that *countries with more emancipative values display smaller gender gaps in political interest (H6)*.

3 | SOCIETAL RELIGIOSITY

Most existing cultural approaches focus on how different religious traditions and secular value systems, broadly construed, affect the overall national culture of a society. In so doing, they tend to overlook that the power of religious values is strongest when embedded in a “moral community” of fellow believers (Stark, 1996). We believe this is an important oversight. In contrast to the existing approaches listed above, we argue that there are important reasons to attend to how the declining *collective force* of religiosity might affect political interest—particularly *men's interest* in politics—and thereby shape cross-national variations in the gender gap in political interest.

3.1 | Religion and the gender order

It is well known that one of religion's most important roles has traditionally been to uphold, justify, and naturalize the social order (Berger, 1967). One of the central aspects of the social order that religion has historically supported is the gender order (Bourdieu, 2001; Connell, 1987). Religious beliefs play an important role in reinforcing gender roles (Bartkowski & Shah, 2014; Sherkat & Ellison, 1999) and reproducing masculine privilege (Sumerau, 2012). Most major religions give disproportionate interpretive authority to men, who read religious doctrines in terms that reinforce their dominance (Bush, 2010). While different religious traditions and denominations vary in terms of how they conceive of gender relations (Bush, 2010), and there remains ample opportunity for resistance and gender-related creativity within religious organizations (Avishai, 2008), overall the major religious traditions tend to support the androcentric gender order (Adamczyk, 2013; McGuire, 2002; Peek et al., 1991; Woodhead, 2001, 2005). As a result, in terms of their relationship to gender equality, the major religious traditions differ far less from one another than they do from nonreligious worldviews, which tend to be more supportive of gender equality (Schnabel, 2015).

While religious beliefs reinforce the gender order directly for individuals, the collective power of those beliefs, when held by the larger community, reinforces those beliefs by acting as a plausibility structure (Berger, 1967; cf. Stark, 1996). Studies have shown that the extent to which religious beliefs are collectively held can affect a wide variety of social and political attitudes (Jaime-Castillo et al., 2016; Moore & Vanneman, 2003; VanHeuvelen, 2014). As a result, when religion loses its collective force, its ability to sustain the gender order may be particularly undermined.

Why should this decline affect political interest? An answer to this question lies in the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1991, and 2001) and his concept of “doxa,” or “that which is beyond question” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 169). Doxa refers to those aspects of the social world which appear self-evident, where societal consensus prevents any discussion about them. For Bourdieu, doxa primarily benefits those dominant groups who benefit from the status quo. Social change only becomes possible when those things that have gone unstated and unquestioned become

stated, and a new realm of opinion—and hence politics—becomes possible (Bourdieu, 1991). As doxa disappears, therefore, the scope of debate expands, creating more opportunities and pressure for political engagement, and thus, an opportunity for greater interest in politics, not least among those who benefit from doxic arrangements.

Extending this line of reasoning, since highly religious contexts sustain the gender order and allow it to be taken for granted, we argue that declines in the power of religion allow the gender order to escape the realm of doxa, subjecting it to conscious articulation and contestation, and unleashing new political dynamics and political interest. The weakening of religion's collective power, therefore, should produce new political impulses that promote greater political engagement.

3.2 | Societal religiosity and differences in political interest by gender

In short, we argue that societal religiosity—that is, the collective power of religion at the country level—is an important factor that may influence the gap in political interest between men and women. In more religious societies, religion more effectively sustains the gender order, enhancing hegemonic masculinity's ability to be taken-for-granted, and thus, removed from the realm of politics. In more secular societies, by contrast, religion's ability to buttress the gender order weakens, making it easier for the gender order to be subjected to politics. While contexts of low societal religiosity should foster political interest in general by subjecting the gender order to overt contestation, it is less clear whether we should expect this increased interest to increase or decrease the gender gap in political interest.

One possibility is that growing contestation over the gender order should be primarily focused among women, who perceive the emancipatory possibilities of contesting and transforming it. Religion (particularly conservative religion) has been shown to have demobilizing political effects on women (Cassese & Holman, 2016). Declines in societal religiosity, therefore, by reducing this suppressing effect, may act as a “gendered opportunity structure” (McCammon, Campbell, Granberg, & Mowery, 2001) that can draw women further into political life. Indeed, the growth of feminist movements demonstrates that women's interest in politics has been on the rise in recent years, especially in the West. If men's interest in politics surpasses women's in highly religious societies, this may lead women's interest in politics to “catch up” as societal religiosity decreases, leading to a decrease in the gender gap. We therefore hypothesize that *countries with lower societal religiosity display smaller gender gaps in political interests (H7a)*.

On the contrary, there are reasons to believe that declines in societal religiosity should have equal, or even more profound, effects on men than on women. Under the traditional gender order, men tend to have higher status than women; consequently, men have more to lose from secularization than women (Connell, 1987; Munsch & Willer, 2012; Willer, Conlon, Rogalin, & Wojnowicz, 2013). This fact has noticeable political consequences, for there is strong evidence that individuals react more swiftly and fiercely to losses than to gains (Jervis, 1992; Kahneman, 2011; Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). This suggests that men should have a stronger reaction than women to the destabilization of the gender order produced by a weakened religious order.

For some men, politics may also provide an avenue to reconstitute men's past prerogatives. From this perspective, as the traditional gender order becomes subject to overt contestation, men are likely to respond politically to counter this threat to their social privilege. In a form of “backlash politics,” men may respond to the experience of a loss of power and privilege by attempting to regain that power (Mansbridge & Shames, 2008). At the individual level, studies have shown that men (but not women) respond to perceived threats to masculinity by endorsing traditionalist gender views (Weaver & Vescio, 2015; Willer et al., 2013). Men may also act collectively to regain their lost status; over the last three decades, several countries have observed the rise of masculinist movements, which mobilize to defend male privilege and curb the influence of feminism (Blais & Dupuis-Déri, 2012; Boyd & Sheehy, 2016). Men may, thus, counter the weakening of the old gender doxa instrumentally with political action aimed at reclaiming their old privileges.

For other men, however, a turn to politics may be less an overt effort to recapture their privileges, and more a subtle attempt to reassert their masculinity. Because politics has traditionally been seen as men's realm (Bourdieu, 1991; Fox & Lawless, 2005, 2014; Verba, Burns, and Schlozman 1997), men may see in politics an opportunity to redefine and validate their masculinity, and increase their interest in it accordingly. Politics is not only a site of confrontation, but also one of self-expression (Hillman, 2010; Schuessler, 2000) and social learning (Habermas, 1989); and political participation has been shown to increase life satisfaction (Pacheco & Lange, 2010). Applying these principles to gender relations in less-religious countries, we argue that political participation can help men compensate for the declining certainty about their place in the social order. Because the legitimacy of the gender order is undermined in contexts of low religiosity, men should therefore be particularly likely to develop an interest in politics as a forum in which to voice their emotions and opinions, build personal relationships and reassert their identity—all of which will provide them emotional satisfaction even if they do not regain their traditional gender privileges.

At the same time, women's growing interest in politics may be partially counteracted by tendencies toward system justification among women. According to system-justification theory, a general psychological disposition exists—among the dominated as well as the dominant—to explain and justify the existing state of affairs simply because it exists (Jost & Banaji, 1994). This tendency toward system justification works powerfully through stereotypes, and has been shown to reduce outrage and willingness to protest, even among the politically engaged (Jost et al., 2012). Accordingly, while living in a secular country may encourage some women to develop a stronger interest in politics, we expect this effect to be stronger among men than among women, both because men have incentives to react more strongly to changes to the gender order than women, and because women's interest in politics will continue to be tempered by broader dynamics of system justification. In brief, even if declining societal religiosity increases women's interest in politics, it may increase men's interest in politics to an even greater extent, thereby leading to an increase in the gender gap in political interest. We therefore hypothesize that *countries with lower societal religiosity display stronger gender gaps in political interests (H7b)*.

Our theoretical model also has longitudinal implications, because by weakening the gender order within-country decreases in societal religiosity may also shape the gender gap in political interest. A test of this additional expectation has unavoidable limitations because the process of secularization is a truly long-term and multi-century one and longitudinal survey data on levels of religiosity and political interest cover a relatively brief timespan of this process (1990–2014). Yet, as a partial test of the role of secularization in this process, we formulate the hypothesis that *countries with faster decreases in societal religiosity display stronger increases in the gender gap in political interest (H8)*.

4 | DATA AND METHODS

4.1 | Data

Our choice of data was governed by two criteria: (a) maximizing geographic scope by including all possible developing countries, and (b) using a reliable indicator of societal religiosity. The Integrated Values Survey (IVS), which combines the European Values Survey and World Values Survey longitudinal files, offers the best compromise to meet these two principles (EVS, 2015; WVS, 2015).¹ This source covers a wider array of developed and developing countries than most other comparative survey programs and includes key variables to measure the religiosity and value orientation of the population. Since this source includes two or more annual surveys for many countries, it provides more country-year data points and leads to a broader generalization less influenced by outlier cases than other sources with only cross-sectional—and not longitudinal—data. The longitudinal aspect of the IVS also allows us to test the prediction that within-country increases in societal religiosity reduce the gender gap in political interest. Our final sample includes about 287,000 individuals, five periods (1990–1993, 1994–1998, 1999–2004, 2005–2008, and 2009–2014), 96 countries, and 245 country-years.

Our dependent variable, interest in politics, comes from a measure which asked, "How interested would you say you are in politics?" Respondents could choose from a standard ordinal scale reading "Very interested," "Somewhat interested," "Not very interested," and "Not at all interested." To facilitate interpretation and ease the computational burden of our models, we collapse these categories and distinguish individuals "very" or "somewhat" interested in politics (coded 1) from those "not very" and "not at all" interested in politics (coded 0). This item has been frequently used in comparative research as a dependent variable (Lee, Lin, & Stevenson, 2015; Prior, 2010; van Deth & Elff, 2004).

Our primary independent variable is a country-level indicator of *societal religiosity*, constructed from individual-level survey data on *the importance of God* in respondents' lives.

we draw on the individual-level IVS questionnaire item that asks "How important is God in your life?", with a response range from 1 ("not important at all") to 10 ("very important"). Based on that indicator, *societal religiosity* represents specifically the average country-year value in this continuous variable, with higher values representing countries with a more religious population. This is a common indicator in the sociology of religion and cultural sociology (Jaime-Castillo et al., 2016; Fischer & Schwartz, 2011; Stark, 2001; Xiao, 2000); it has been available in all IVS considered in this study; and, unlike other factors (such as attendance rates), it is less affected by differences in practice across religious traditions.

Nine other country-level variables address alternative approaches discussed in the literature and provide a set of controls. The role of women's economic autonomy is measured through *female labor force participation*, defined as the percentage of women who are either working or looking for work, and obtained from the IVS itself. Three indicators capture the political approach. *Women in parliament* measures the percentage of parliamentary seats held by women (Coppedge et al., 2016). *Gender quota* is a dichotomous variable that indicates the existence of a statutory obligation to reserve some seats for women in all political parties with representation in the lower chamber in that given country-year (Coppedge et al., 2016). Countries with higher levels of *democratization* also expand opportunities for mobilization to culturally or economically subordinated groups like women (Beer, 2009). We measure democratization using the V-DEM *polyarchy index* that combines freedom of association, clean elections, freedom of expression, elected officials, and suffrage (Coppedge et al., 2016). To rule out the possibility of spurious causation in the role of societal religiosity, the models control for two dimensions that have proven related to a country's level of religiosity: economic prosperity and the value system (Inglehart & Norris, 2005). Economic prosperity is measured through GDP per capita in constant US dollars (World Bank, 2016). *Emancipative values* cover an emphasis on individual autonomy, choice, gender equality and use of voice,² and are measured using the index designed by Welzel (2013). Finally, we include variables with the per cent of *Catholic*, *Muslim*, and *Protestant population*, which capture the effects of dominant religious traditions. Due to its right-hand skew, GDP per capita has been logged.

We include eleven individual-level variables to minimize the risk that the *female* variable absorbs the effect of socio-structural conditions. Specifically, the multilevel models control for variables that have proven significant in previous research on political engagement or that include substantial gender stratification: *age*, *age²*, *age completed formal education*, *active* in the labor market (employed or unemployed), and *married or cohabitating* (Burns et al., 2001; Coffé, 2013; Verba, Burns, & Schlozman 1997). *Individual religiosity* and *individual emancipative values* represent the individual-level value of the questionnaire item "importance of God" and the index of emancipative values, respectively. These two latter variables ensure that *societal religiosity* and *emancipative values* do not simply capture the compounded individual-level effect of these two dimensions. We also control for individuals' religious denomination (*Catholic*, *Muslim*, and *Protestant*, while *Other* is the reference category). Table A1 in the online Appendix includes descriptive statistics of all variables.

4.2 | Methods

Since we have a multi-wave and cross-national dataset, our data are nested in three levels. At the first level, we have individuals; at the second, country-years; and at the third, countries. Given this multilevel structure

and the dichotomous nature of our dependent variable, we use logistic multilevel models with three-level nesting. The main advantage of using multilevel models in comparative research is that they account for variance in the response across different levels of analysis and enable us to estimate the effect of aggregate-level variables on individual responses without underestimating the standard errors (Kreft & De Leeuw, 1998; Snijders & Bosker, 2011). We estimate random-slopes models (Snijders & Bosker, 2011) by interacting the gender variable *female* with all relevant country-year variables. To facilitate the interpretation of interaction effects, all continuous country-level variables have been grand-centered (i.e., centered on the average value for the whole sample). We include a random-intercept and a random slope for *female* at the country and country-year levels. This allows us to model variation in the effect of gender as a function of country-year characteristics. The other 11 individual-level variables have fixed effects on the dependent variable. All models include a linear time trend as a fixed effect to rule out the possibility of significant effects that are due merely to common trending between dependent and independent variables.

5 | RESULTS

5.1 | Cross-national variation in the political interest gender gap

Figure 1 depicts the absolute difference between women and men in political interest in 96 countries. The values were estimated through 245 single-level logit models (each including 10 individual-level control variables) for each country-year. Since values represent the absolute difference between women and men, a negative value indicates that men are on average more likely to be interested in politics than women. For instance, the predicted probabilities of being interested in politics in Brazil in wave 5 are .551 for men and .465 for women. In the United Kingdom, the corresponding probabilities are .500 and .353. Thus, as depicted in Figure 1, the (absolute) gender gaps in that wave in these two countries are $-.086$ and $-.147$. Consistent with prior work, men display greater interest in politics in most country-years. The gender gap is negative and significant in 84.49% of all country-years. Moreover, countries differ substantially in the extent of the gender gap. Although regional clustering is not strong, European countries display the largest gender gaps followed in order by Eastern and Southern Asian, African and Latin American countries.

5.2 | Societal religiosity and the political interest gender gap

Can we identify a simple bivariate relationship between societal religiosity and the gender gap in interest in politics, as we predicted above? If that expectation is correct, *societal religiosity* and the absolute *gender gap* (depicted in Figure 1) should have a clear, positive relationship. The first subplot in Figure 2 allows us to assess this. Consistent with *H7b* and contrary to *H7a*, the correlation between *societal religiosity* and the gender gap in political interest is positive and highly significant ($r = .334, p < .001$). More secularized countries tend to have bigger gender divides in political interest. To examine the robustness of this finding, we now consider multilevel and multivariate models.

As mentioned above, to predict political interest, we estimate three-level multilevel models with *female* as the only individual-level, random variable, and 10 individual controls as fixed effects. The results are reported in Table 1. Model 1 includes all 11 individual-level covariates. Model 2 adds an interaction term between *female* and *societal religiosity*. Model 3 adds an interaction term between *female* and all 10 country-year variables. After controlling for individual religiosity, emancipative values, age, working status, income, education, marital status, and religious affiliation, Model 1 indicates that, on average, women tend to be less interested in politics than men. In addition, gender has a substantial effect. The probability of being interested in politics is .55 for men to .42 for women. Controlling for multiple socio-structural factors, women are, thus, 33.09% less likely to declare being

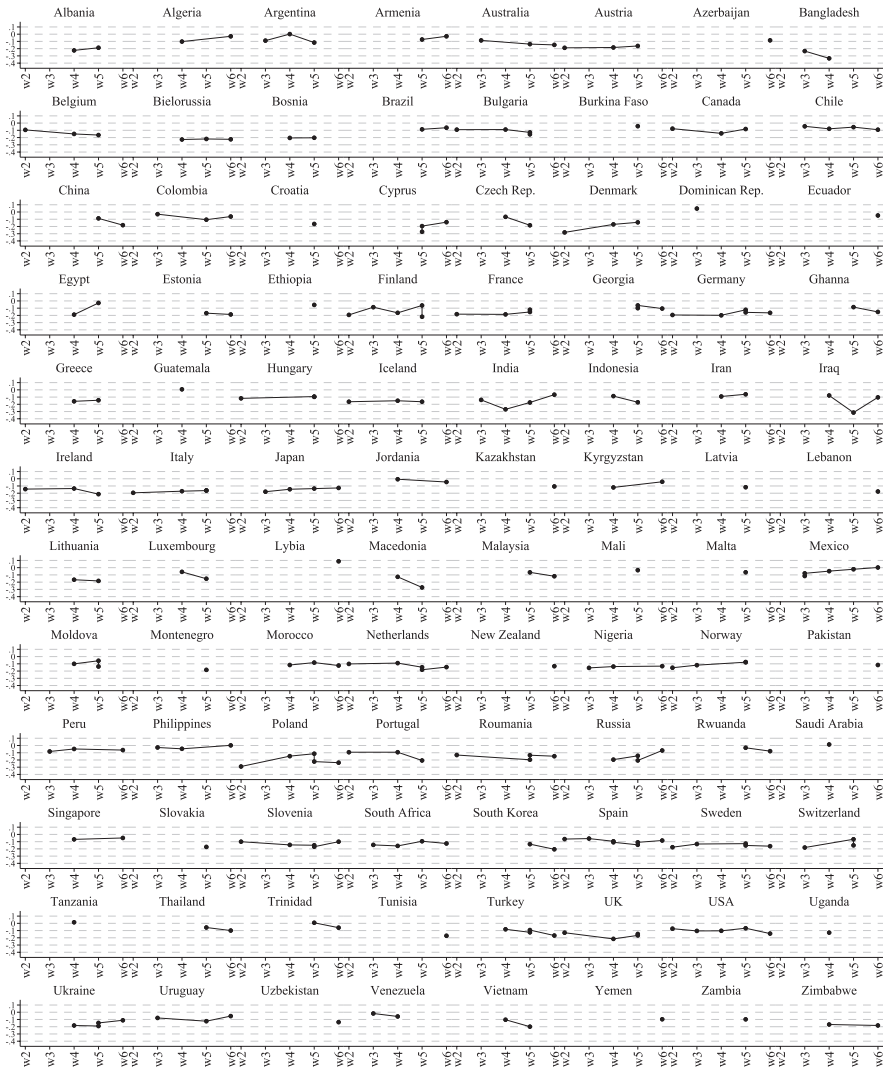


FIGURE 1 Absolute gender gap (women-men) in the average interest in politics in 96 countries, 1990–2014. w2 = 1990–1994, w3 = 1995–1998, w4 = 1999–2004, w5 = 2005–2009, w6 = 2010–2014. A few countries conducted two surveys in the same wave

interested in politics than men. The variance of the *female* effect is also significant, indicating the presence of substantial differences across country-years.

How do levels of societal religiosity shape the effect of gender? Model 2 provides initial indications by interacting *female* with *societal religiosity*. First, *societal religiosity* is negative but only significant at $p < .10$ for men. More importantly, and in line with *H7b* and contrary to *H7a*, the effect of *female* remains negative, and the interaction term *female* \times *societal religiosity* is positive and highly significant ($p < .001$). The gender gap, therefore, is related to the country level of religiosity. A close examination of the interaction *female* \times *societal religiosity* allows us to ascertain the moderating influence of societal religiosity on the gender gap. Given the interaction term *female* \times *societal religiosity* and the negative effect of *societal religiosity*, we can conclude that secularized contexts increase interest in politics among men. In fact, the coefficient of *female* \times *societal religiosity* is positive but slightly smaller in absolute terms than that of *societal religiosity*, which indicates that a context of low religiosity increases

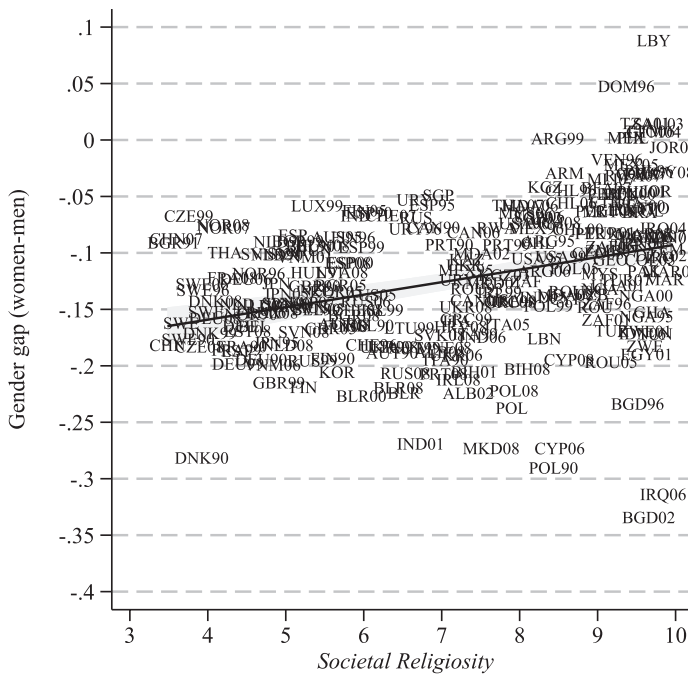


FIGURE 2 Relationship between the gender gap (women-men) in political interest and societal religiosity, 1990–2014

political interest among both genders, but less intensely among women than men. The finding that more intensely secularized countries display a larger gender gap in political interest is consistent with our theoretical prediction.

These results could, nevertheless, be affected by considering alternative explanations for the gender gap. Hence, Model 3 in Table 1 includes all 10 country-level variables and their interaction terms with *female*. Regarding individual covariates, Model 3 reveals no substantial differences with respect to Model 2. Women are still significantly less likely to be interested in politics, as are young and older, economically inactive and unemployed, less educated, and less religious individuals, and those who do not hold emancipative values. With respect to the non-interacted country-year level covariates, several findings emerge. In countries with less emancipative values, higher percentage of women in parliament and democratization, lower GDP per capita and lower percentages of Catholics men display stronger interest in politics. More important, once controlling for the other country-level variables, low societal religiosity strongly increases men's political interest.

Regarding the cross-level interactions in Model 3, which address the central objective of our paper—that is, identifying the determinants of the gender gap in political interest—after controlling for all other factors, *female* × *societal religiosity* remains positive and highly significant ($p < .001$). This is consistent with *H7b*. In addition, *female* × *emancipative values* at country-year level is positive and highly significant. Yet, as we show below, the moderating impact of emancipative values on male and female political interest is incompatible with Welzel's (2013) theory. Moreover, contrary to *H1*, *H2*, *H3*, *H4*, and *H5*, the level of female labor force participation, prosperity, percentage of women in Parliament, presence of political gender quotas and the percentage of Protestant population do not affect the gender gap in political interest, whereas these factors were found significant in previous work and turn nonsignificant in our study, this could be due to the fact that (unlike some previous work) our dependent variable measures political interest specifically and our study covers a larger number of countries and time points than previous research.

Although Model 3 clearly indicates that the gender gap increases under conditions of lower societal religiosity and average emancipative values, it does not in itself help identify how substantive the effects of emancipative

TABLE 1 Multilevel logit models predicting interest in politics in 96 countries, 1990–2014

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
<i>Individual level variables</i>						
Female	-.555***	(.026)	-.569***	(.024)	-.815***	(.226)
Age	.024***	(.001)	.024***	(.001)	.024***	(.001)
Age ²	-.000***	(.000)	-.000***	(.000)	-.000***	(.000)
Age finished formal education	.033***	(.001)	.033***	(.001)	.033***	(.001)
Married or cohabitating	.104***	(.009)	.104***	(.009)	.104***	(.009)
Active (empl. or unemp.)	.035***	(.010)	.036***	(.010)	.036***	(.010)
Individual religiosity	.018***	(.002)	.019***	(.002)	.019***	(.002)
Emancipative values	1.497***	(.027)	1.496***	(.027)	1.502***	(.027)
Catholic	.005	(.014)	.005	(.014)	.009	(.014)
Protestant	.044**	(.016)	.044**	(.016)	.047**	(.016)
Muslim	.075***	(.022)	.077***	(.022)	.072**	(.022)
Year	-.006†	(.004)	-.006†	(.004)	-.010*	(.004)
Constant	-1.945***	(.110)	-1.935***	(.110)	-.521	(.472)
<i>Country-year level variables</i>						
Societal religiosity			-.054†	(.027)	-.122***	(.033)
Emancipative values					-1.214*	(.594)
Female labor force					-.020	(.293)
Women in parliament					.011†	(.005)
Gender quota parliament					-.088	(.086)
Democratization					-.181	(.254)
GDP per capita log					-.126†	(.051)
Percent Catholic					-.005**	(.002)
Per cent Protestant					-.003†	(.002)
Per cent Muslim					.000	(.002)
<i>Cross-level interactions</i>						
Female × Societal religiosity			.051***	(.012)	.075***	(.016)
Female × Emancipative values					.885**	(.331)
Female × Female labor force					-.278†	(.154)
Female × Women parliament					-.001	(.002)
Female × Gender quota parl.					.052	(.047)
Female × Democratization					-.359**	(.128)
Female × GDP per capita log					.029	(.024)
Female × Per cent Catholic					-.000	(.001)
Female × Per cent Protestant					.001	(.001)
Female × Per cent Muslim					-.002*	(.001)
Random effects - level 3						

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
Variance (Female)	.206	(.024)	.186	(.023)	.162	(.023)
Variance (Constant)	.539	(.047)	.535	(.047)	.423	(.041)
Random effects—Level 2						
Variance (Female)	.150	(.015)	.147	(.015)	.147	(.015)
Variance (Constant)	.311	(.020)	.310	(.020)	.300	(.019)
Observations	287,072		287,072		287,072	
Country-years	245		245		245	
Countries	96		96		96	
Log-likelihood	-181730.11		-181719.68		-181686.03	

Notes: Standard errors are in brackets.

[†] $p < .1$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

values and societal religiosity are on the political interest of men and women. To clarify, we estimate predicted probabilities for each gender at different levels of societal religiosity and average emancipative values with average values in all other country-level variables. Figure 3 depicts the results of this exercise. Societal religiosity reduces the gender gap, because it makes men's political interest decrease faster than that of women. Based on Model 3, the probability of being interested in politics for men goes from .66 at two standard deviations below the average level of societal religiosity to .43 at two standard deviations above the average, while the probabilities of women decrease far less intensely with the level of societal religiosity; considering the same reference points of men, it goes from .45 to .36. In other words, contexts of weaker societal religiosity foster men's interest in politics more than women.

A cursory reading of Model 3 may suggest that the effect of *emancipative values* is consistent with the theory of Welzel (2013). Yet, Figure 3 shows that *emancipative values* moderates the gender gap through a similar pattern as societal religiosity: reducing political interest among both genders but more among men than women. These two latter elements are clearly inconsistent with Welzel's theory that predicts a generalized increase of political interest, which is particularly intense among women. *H6* if thus not supported. Also important, a comparison of the two subplots in Figure 3 makes clear that *societal religiosity* has a stronger moderating impact on *female* than average *emancipative values*. This means that *societal religiosity* is the stronger factor shaping the gender gap in political interest.

5.3 | Sensitivity analyses

To assess the robustness of these findings, we conduct a series of additional sensitivity analyses. First, we use different specifications of our models and alternative measure of *societal religiosity* in Table A2 in the online Appendix, yielding estimates consistent with the findings reported so far. Model 1 in Table A2 disentangles the longitudinal and cross-national effects in the previous multilevel models (Fairbrother, 2014) by using two alternative variables: *mean societal religiosity* measures the average level of societal religiosity of each country for the period under study; and *change in societal religiosity* measures changes in societal religiosity within each country by subtracting the country average from each year's value. This Model shows that the gender gap is larger in secular countries but, at the same time, the gender gap declines when *societal religiosity* increases in a given country (although this effect is significant at the 10% level). This evidence is consistent with *H8*. Model 2 replicates the analysis utilizing an alternative indicator of societal religiosity: the country-year proportion of respondents that

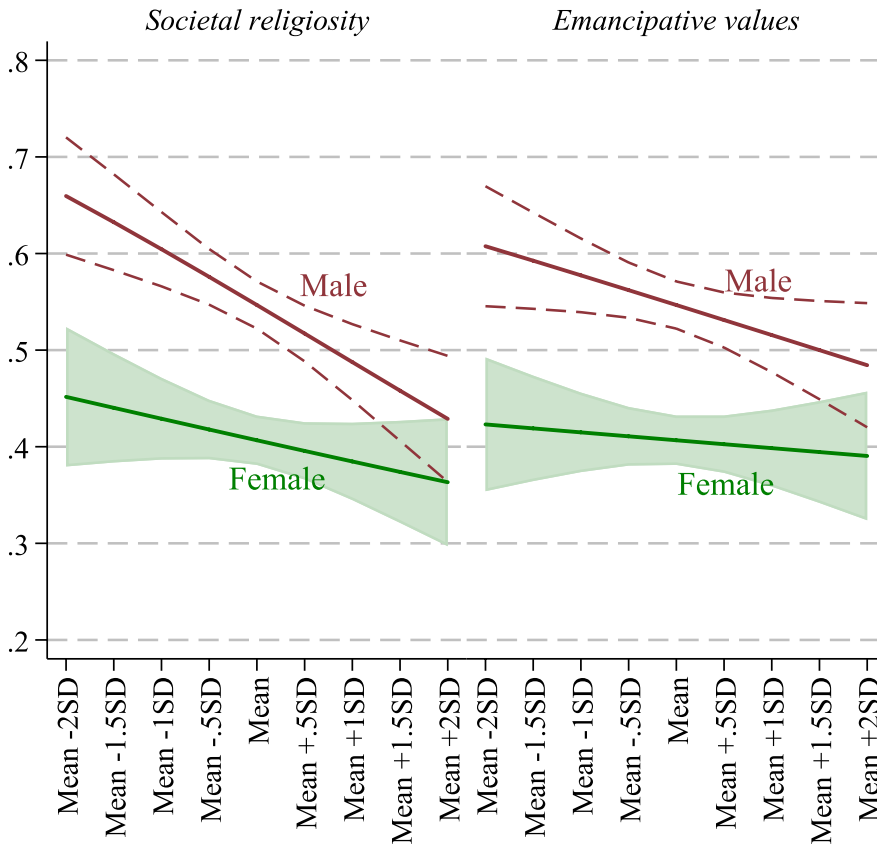


FIGURE 3 Probability of being interested in politics by gender [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

self-define as a religious person. Using this alternative indicator, the gender gap in political interest also declines with the level of societal religiosity.

Second, Kittilson and Schwindt-Bayer (2012) and Fraile and Gómez (2017) argue that inclusive political institutions and lower general levels of gender inequality reduce the gender gap in political interest, respectively. Following their reasoning, we consider the role of the standard index of electoral systems' relative disproportionality (Gallagher, 2017) and the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) constructed by the World Economic Forum (2014). More proportional electoral systems can be considered more inclusive and "provide incentives for political parties to mobilize women, an 'undertapped market'" (Kittilson & Schwindt-Bayer, 2012, p. 18). Moreover, the GGGI that is "is one of the best-known measures of national gender inequality" (Stoet & Geary, 2019, p. 1) and covers most countries worldwide. Results are displayed in Models 2 of Tables A3 and A4, which due to data limitations in these latter two variables, only control for the two factors proven to shape the gender gap: societal religiosity and societal emancipative values. Interestingly, neither electoral disproportionality nor the GGGI has a significant effect on political interest for either women or men. More importantly, after introducing these additional controls, the effect of *societal religiosity* on political interest continues to be highly significant and strongly negative for men and significantly less for women.

Third, to ensure our findings are robust to possible variation in how we measure religiosity, we re-estimate our models including a measure of religious practice (percent of individuals who pray) instead of our salience-based measure of societal religiosity. Results, displayed in Models 1 and 2 in Table A5, indicate that the gender gap increases in context of less religious practice, which is consistent with our argument. Further, to ensure our findings

are not being driven by variations across religious denomination, we add to the original model a triple interaction between gender, societal religiosity, and religious denomination. Results shown in Model 3 in Table A5 indicate that there are no differences between religious denomination in the effect of societal religiosity, since the interaction between gender and societal religiosity remains significant and in the expected direction, but none of the triple interactions with religious denomination are significant.

Fourth, to ensure that our indicator of societal religiosity is not simply capturing the effect of institutional religiosity (Dobbelaere, 2003), we replicate the main model (Model 3, Table 1) with an indicator for the degree of church-state integration. This additional variable—*institutional religiosity*—is drawn from Fox's (2013) Religion and State dataset, and represents an index measuring 52 dimensions of state legislation or programs that support religious institutions, laws, or precepts (Table A6). Controlling for *institutional religiosity* does not alter our main findings: *societal religiosity* continues to have a strong negative effect for men and the interaction *female* × *societal religiosity* remains positive and significant.³

6 | DISCUSSION

Four main findings emerge from our analysis. First, consistent with previous work, the gender gap proves highly variable across countries and periods. Men are, on average, substantially more likely to be interested in politics, and, in most country-years, this difference is statistically significant. Yet, this gender gap is far from cross-nationally homogeneous. European countries display the largest gap, followed by Asian, African, and Latin American countries. Cross-national variation is, in fact, so intense that in many African and Latin American countries, men are not significantly more interested in politics than women.

Second, this gender gap proves unrelated to central dimensions of the economic and political context. Women-men differences in political interest are not consistently larger in more developed countries or in countries with higher female labor force participation. This latter finding is particularly relevant because it challenges the common expectation in feminist theory that women's employment and having an autonomous income contributes to female interest in politics by fostering their economic empowerment and decision-making autonomy. Further, the presence of women in legislative positions, the existence of gender quotas in Parliament, and the level of democratization do not significantly reduce the gap in interest in politics between men and women.

The dominant religious tradition in the country—another factor commonly stressed in the literature—does not predict this political gender gap, either. Contrary to the expectation of Inglehart and Norris that “the *type* of religion matters for beliefs about gender equality far more than the *strength* of religion” (2005, pp. 67–68; see also Inglehart, 1981), women and men do not differ significantly more in political interest in Catholic- or Muslim-majority countries. This suggests that, although the type of religion may matter for other kinds of attitudinal gender gaps, it does not appear to affect the gap in political interest.

Third, unlike economic, political, and religious-tradition factors, the national value structure does affect the gender gap in political interest. Countries with more emancipative value structures have smaller gender gaps. This robust effect holds even when we disentangle the cross-national and longitudinal dimensions of changes in this set of values. Countries that prioritize individual autonomy, choice, and self-expression display smaller differences between men and women in political interest. Yet, the concrete mechanism leading to this diminishing gap is inconsistent with central tenets of Inglehart and Welzel's theory of value modernization (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Welzel, 2013). Rather than reducing the gap by *spurring women's interest* in politics, as their theory predicts, generalized emancipative values actually appear to reduce the gap by *diminishing men's interest* in politics. This unexpected result may be related to the fact that, in many countries, engagement in formal politics and information gathering regarding policy debates is a low priority for most individuals.

Fourth, another cultural dimension—the overall level of religiosity—both has a robust impact on the political interest gender gap and produces the expected pattern for each gender. In less religious societies, women and men diverge

more in their level of political interest. This divergence occurs, moreover, because men's interest in politics grows substantially more than women's interest. Additional analyses discussed above indicate the robustness of this finding.

Several caveats apply. As in any other macro-level analysis, omitted variable biases may affect the results. Hence, we cannot state categorically that societal religiosity has causal effects. In addition, this study reports several unexpected findings. Contrary to Welzel's (2013) theoretical model, the gender gap in political interest declines with emancipative values mainly because of changes in men's political interest. One possible explanation is that in more gender-egalitarian normative contexts, men do not perceive the political arena as a site of masculine privilege anymore and withdraw from political engagement. Also contrary to previous work, higher rates of female labor force participation do not reduce the gender gap in political interest, although previous work has considered mostly developed countries, and we need more research on the meaning women attach to paid employment in developing countries.

That being said, these results are consistent with our theoretical model, which posits that in less religious contexts, religion is less capable of sustaining the taken-for-grantedness of the social world, and in particular the gender order. According to our theory, this weakened role of religion, therefore, opens social structures to contestation, spurring interest in politics. Men's interest in politics, however, grows faster than women's, for two reasons. First, because in secular societies the religious order cannot uphold hegemonic masculinity, men will be inclined to turn to the traditionally masculine arena of politics as a space where they can express their views and reassert their masculinity. Second, in less religious societies, the political realm provides men with a transformative institutional site to regain their lost privileges. Through this process, consequently, living in a country with weakened religiosity elicits a stronger political response from men than women.

Future research could build on the findings documented in this study by continuing to explore the cultural and political impact of societal religiosity. In this paper, we argue that in secular societies hegemonic masculinity faces mounting challenges, disproportionately increasing men's interest in politics and expanding the preexisting gender gap in political interest. Additional research could test the mechanisms implicit in the theoretical model presented above. The argument of this study could also be extended to the relationship between other persistent relations of domination commonly sustained by orthodox religious doctrines and differences in political behavior. The income hierarchy is one of them. As it does with hegemonic masculinity, religious orthodoxy has also been used to legitimate some degree of income inequality, reducing high-income groups' need to validate and justify their prosperity. But once religiosity has lost part of its cultural influence, and its doctrine does not suffice to legitimate economic inequalities, higher- and lower-income groups may differ more intensely in their support for redistributive policies. This suggests that a systematic focus on levels of societal religiosity provides a promising avenue to account for other persistent comparative puzzles like the substantial cross-national variation on how individual income structures political attitudes and behavior. Further research could also examine if institutional and societal religiosity influence attitudinal and behavioral gaps similarly.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in WVS (2015) and EVS (2015) at <https://europeanvaluesstudy.eu/methodology-data-documentation/previous-surveys-1981-2008/integrated-values-surveys-1981-2014/>.

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ENDNOTES

¹ Emancipative orientations more validly approximate collective and individual value systems than self-expression orientations (Welzel, 2013).

- ² The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in WVS (2015) and EVS (2015) at <https://europeanvaluesstudy.eu/methodology-data-documentation/previous-surveys-1981-2008/integrated-values-surveys-1981-2014/>.
- ³ Table A6 reports that for men the degree of state-church integration measured through *institutional religiosity* does not affect interest in politics. It also shows that the gender gap in political interest increases with the level of *institutional religiosity*. In line with prior research that has demonstrated an inconsistent relationship between societal and institutional religiosity (cf. Fox & Tabory, 2008; Stolz, 2018; Stolz & Chaves, 2017), in the database constructed for this study *institutional religiosity* and *societal religiosity* are only loosely related ($r = .22, p < .05$). This may reflect the fact that governments that preserve state–church integration do not mechanically codify the precepts of the dominant religious doctrine into law, but instead only institutionalize a few of those precepts. In so doing, they may paradoxically undermine cultural pressures stemming from the religious moral community (Stopler, 2017).

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information section.

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The radical ambitions of counter-radicalization

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Abstract

The “Trojan Horse” scandal laid bare an anxiety at the heart of the British security establishment; an anxiety that brings together questions of identity, values, and security within the demand to manage radicalization. It is an anxiety that, I will argue, reveals a novel conceptualization of threat that has driven the UK’s security and communities policies within the “war on terror.” This conceptualization emerges within Prevent, the UK’s counter-radicalization strategy. Yet, I argue, the extensive literature on Prevent has failed to adequately articulate this underlying, core logic. To date, the Prevent literature has effectively demonstrated the ways in which Muslim communities in the United Kingdom have been policed through British counter-radicalization policy. Yet, this analysis struggles to explain the expansion of Prevent into a wider range of “extremist” spaces. In this article, I contend that it is more useful to situate Prevent as a particular conception of power; a logic and an analysis of threat that demands new forms of government intervention. To do so, this article provides a genealogical reading of Prevent, locating it as a radical extension of state security ambitions to intervene early, making explicit a vision of security in which life as a process of becoming is produced as an object of management. The paper draws out the ramifications of this analysis to think through fundamental shifts in the principles and practices of contemporary security aspirations.

KEYWORDS

counter-terrorism, identity, prevent, radicalization, security policy, temporality

1 | INTRODUCTION

On the 27 November 2013, a letter was allegedly discovered in a school in Birmingham. While of questionable authenticity, it contained the details of a plot termed by those involved as “Trojan Horse.” The alleged plotters stated, “[w]e have an obligation to our children to fulfil our roles and ensure these schools are run on Islamic principals [sic]” (Clarke, 2014, p. 109; the letter is reproduced in Clarke, 2014, pp. 107–112). While the original letter was a hoax, it was seen to reflect practices in some Birmingham schools. Upon being leaked to the press, the story prompted numerous headlines and a number of investigations were launched to ascertain whether the activities cited in the letter had credibility. Within a year, schools that had been judged by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) to be “outstanding,” and whose commitment to diversity and cohesion had been praised, were now “inadequate” (Holmwood & O’Toole, 2018, pp. 143–166). Sir Michael Wilshaw (2014), Ofsted's Chief Inspector, argued that within these schools, the “active promotion of a narrow set of values and beliefs” is making children “vulnerable to segregation and emotional dislocation from wider society,” with children “not being encouraged to develop tolerant attitudes towards all faiths and cultures” (Wilshaw, 2014). In evidence to the Education Select Committee, Wilshaw further stated: “What we did see was the promotion of a culture that would, if that culture continued, have made the children in those schools vulnerable to extremism because of, as I said, the disconnection from wider society and cultural isolation” (Education Committee, 2014).

Charting the same terrain, the Clarke Report (commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE)) concluded that there had been a “co-ordinated, deliberate and sustained action” to introduce an “intolerant and aggressive Islamic ethos” into some of the schools in question (Clarke, 2014, p. 14). The headline conclusions directly link these identity practices with an increased vulnerability to radicalization. Clarke articulates three primary concerns deriving from witness evidence given to the investigation. First, a fear that “children are learning to be intolerant of difference and diversity”; second, that, “young people [...] are having their horizons narrowed. They are not being equipped to flourish in the inevitably diverse environments of further education, the workplace or indeed any environment outside predominantly Muslim communities”; and third, that the “very clear evidence that young people are being encouraged to accept unquestioningly a particular hardline strand of Sunni Islam raises concerns about their vulnerability to radicalisation in the future. I have heard evidence to the effect that there are real fears that their current experiences will make it harder for them to question or challenge radical influences” (Clarke, 2014, p. 13). The report concludes that, regardless of the motivations of those involved in this coordinated plot, “the effect has been to limit the life chances of the young people in their care and to render them more vulnerable to pernicious influences in the future” (Clarke, 2014, p. 14).

The “scandal” has received much academic scrutiny. Miah (2017) has argued it represents a racial governmentality that equated specifically Muslim cultural conservatism with extremism, and he details the problematic and hypocritical approach taken by Ofsted inspectors in their investigations. Holmwood and O’Toole (2018) have convincingly argued the affair represents a serious miscarriage of justice, wherein no evidence of extremism or religious conservatism was present, and exemplary teachers and governors were vilified in service to a wider populism that scapegoats Muslim citizens in the United Kingdom. The case aptly demonstrates how expressions of communal Muslim identities have come to be understood in an anxious relationship to a perceived “British” identity. Yet, what has still not been remarked upon, and what is crucial to understanding the contemporary intersections of security and identity policy in the United Kingdom, is that what emerges as central within the framing of Trojan Horse is a particular *analysis of threat*: that this distance from “British values,” is seen to constitute a failure in safeguarding these children from *becoming* vulnerable to future radicalization.

The Trojan Horse scandal thus reveals a wider anxiety at the heart of the British security establishment concerning the relationship between security and identity; an anxiety that has informed numerous aspects of government policy over the past 20 years. Yet, this is an anxiety that has not yet been adequately captured by the wider literature on Prevent and British counter-radicalization strategy. Prevent, one of the four pillars of the UK’s counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST, is the institutional space that seeks to prevent radicalization, and has come

under significant academic scrutiny. To date, the literature has effectively articulated the ways in which Muslim communities in the United Kingdom have been policed through Prevent (Ali, 2020; Kapoor, 2013; Kundnani, 2007, 2009, 2014; Thomas, 2012), with arguments linking such practices to histories of counter-insurgency (Sabir, 2017) and drawing parallels with the experiences of Catholic communities in Northern Ireland, through mobilizing the concept of “suspect communities” (Abbas, 2019; Awan, 2012; Breen-Smyth, 2014; Mythen et al., 2012; Pantazis & Pemberton, 2009). The ground-breaking work of Paddy Hillyard (1993) that underlies much of this analysis, thus imbues it with an intellectual heritage that privileges an understanding of threat in which perceived belonging to a racialized group becomes a vector for suspicion and police harassment.

Yet, while this intellectual heritage enables a powerful and important critique of the policing of Muslim communities in the United Kingdom, it nevertheless limits a fuller understanding of British counter-radicalization policy in two important ways. First, such accounts, rooted in a critique of the legal frameworks of counter-terrorism, have tended to privilege how police powers have been (mis)applied to Muslim communities. In doing so, they tend to overlook the “softer” powers that Prevent mobilizes—such as community engagement and cohesion practices—that I will argue form an important, substantive part of Prevent. Second, the literature has largely framed the question of identity as one of a problematization of Muslimness within the context of counter-terrorism policing. In so doing, it is a line of analysis that struggles to effectively integrate and explain the expansion of Prevent into a wider range of “extremist” spaces. It is clear, from recent Home Office data (see Home Office, 2019; Martin, 2018), that Prevent work has sought to engage with far-right extremism, and that referrals for such cases have increased significantly in recent years. Moreover, recent reporting has shown that Prevent guidance has identified environmental protests as a site of concern, specifically listing non-violent groups such as Extinction Rebellion and Greenpeace as groups of potential concern regarding vulnerability to violent extremism (see Dodd & Grierson, 2020).

In this article, I therefore contend it is more useful to situate Prevent as a particular conception of power; a logic and an analysis of threat that demands new forms of governmental management. Building on work that highlights the ambitions of early intervention within British counter-radicalization policy (see de Goede & Simon, 2013; Heath-Kelly, 2013), I argue the core logic of Prevent is one that reads *all* performances of identity as a function of risk, with some performances identified (and thus cataloged, trained, surveilled) as potentially risky, and others as coherent with a secure identity—in this context a normalized “Britishness”—and thus not needing attention. It thus leads to the novel problematizations of threat that we see in the “Trojan Horse” case, in which a distance from perceived “British values” is deemed to be a potential danger. And, it leads to a problematization of identities and ideology, bringing together concern regarding “Islamism,” far-right ideologies and environmental protest into the same analytical space. It is a logic that carries out an ideological function, producing and policing what “British values”—and their constitutive outside—are understood to be.

To do so, the article draws on Foucauldian and Deleuzian conceptions of power. By assemblage, the article refers to a complex and heterogenous constellation of actions, statements and bodies that come together around a particular function (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987 [2002], p. 88). An *assemblage* is a productive entity that enacts a *diagram of power*; it seeks to combine its elements toward a particular mobilization of power in order to transform, in some fashion, the problematized object or subject to which it aims. Power is understood in terms of forces; a “physics of abstract action” that passes through the mastered no less than the master (Deleuze, 2006, p. 60). It is not something that can be possessed, rather it is practiced. The question is of how it is being practiced and to what function it is being mobilized. The diagram is then “the map of relations between forces, a *map of destiny*” (Deleuze, 2006, p. 32). It represents an abstract way of thinking about how particular functions within a space of social relations might be produced; or in other words, how mobilizations of power might produce particular outcomes in particular ways. The assemblage is, therefore, that which translates this abstract *function* into a series of concrete *practices* that act toward particular outcomes. Utilizing this framework, the article develops two key insights: it articulates *both* the diagram of counter-radicalization (the abstract function through which the state

makes sense of the problematic of radicalization), and the assemblage of concrete counter-radicalization practices that respond to this abstract problematization.

In mapping the diagram of Prevent, the article is able to express its core function—that of producing “secure” identities. In charting the assemblage of Prevent, it identifies how this manifests as concrete practices throughout British policy. Doing so situates counter-radicalization policy at the cutting-edge of the integration of security into the fabrics of society, a dream vision in which contemporary threats can be preclusively managed prior to their emergence, and in which this duty to secure is distributed throughout the social, enabling all citizens to play a proactive role in managing the risks deemed to threaten the state. *Life as process* becomes the site to be secured. Moreover, this analysis shows that Prevent cannot merely be seen as a series of interventions into those deemed to be at risk—important though they are—but represents the driving logic that has structured the British state’s engagement with questions of identity across a number of policy domains, including, but not limited to, security and communities policy, and manifesting in important ways in education, healthcare, and social care policy. Read as a diagram of power, Prevent can be seen to occupy a more significant role in contemporary British life than is acknowledged in the current literature, representing a broad way of thinking about social relations at the intersection of security and identity.

The argument of the paper proceeds in three parts. First, the paper situates Prevent within the emergent literature on security and temporality, identifying how Prevent radicalizes state security ambitions to intervene prior to the actualization of the threats they seek to mediate. Second, the paper provides a genealogical survey of the interventions produced by the Prevent policy, identifying three key areas in which policymakers have sought to manage the threat of radicalization, reconceptualizing security/identity in British policy as they go. Third, the paper outlines the diagram of power manifested through Prevent. In doing so, it makes explicit a vision of security—visible in the Trojan Horse scandal—in which life as a process of becoming is produced as an object of management, albeit the burdens of this becoming are dramatically uneven, pivoted around the production of “Britishness.” By way of conclusion, the paper draws out the ramifications of this analysis for our understanding of contemporary security ambitions and the identity/security relationship they produce.

2 | THE RADICAL TEMPORAL AMBITION OF PREVENT

The emergence of a global regime of counter-radicalization represents the cutting-edge of a raft of security practices that seek to manage threats before they can emerge. In one sense, this is thus a story of early intervention. Yet, this does not do it justice. Rather, Prevent represents both a manifestation of, and the motive force behind, a radical security ambition to intervene into life as a process of *becoming*. Concretely, Prevent does not merely seek to stop someone from committing an act of terrorism, it seeks to stop individuals from *becoming* engaged in terrorism in the first place.

Recent years have seen the development of a wide range of scholarship arguing there has been a transformation of the means through which security is produced. Notably emerging in the disciplines of critical security studies (Amoore & de Goede, 2008; Aradau & van Munster, 2007, 2011; de Goede, 2008; Massumi, 2007) and criminology (McCulloch & Pickering, 2009; Zedner, 2007), it is a literature that argues there has been a contemporary shift toward innovative, radical forms of future-oriented security. A distinction drawn by Massumi (2013) between dangers and threats is of pertinence here. Dangers, in this reading, represent an immediacy and localizability of harm. The harm exists in the future, but there is a linear line between the present and the future-harm. Threats, on the other hand, exist in a future space that cannot be related to the present along linear pathways. Thus, a threat retains a categorical uncertainty; it exists only in its potential. Within British counter-terrorism, the danger of the terrorist attack is the ultimate object to be secured. Pursue—another pillar of CONTEST—targets this danger explicitly, utilizing a criminal justice framework to apprehend those engaged in terrorism. Prevent operates at the level of threat. The subjects of Prevent’s interventions are categorically uncertain. They exist in the future

as potentials. But due to the possibility they might become a danger—and the harm that would entail—they are seen to require some form of action in the present.

In this regard, a central feature of securing *threats* is that they are “preclusive.” The term “preclusive security” is used here to clarify an ontological position: that *all* attempts to act upon a threat must necessarily produce a means of making this threat knowable. Threats are not clear and present, they are produced as interpretations of possible futures. There thus exists a “temporal gap,” defined as the temporal space that exists between the present and the envisaged future harm. To secure threat then requires traversing this space (Anderson, 2010; Massumi, 2013). Threats cannot be read as epistemologically given phenomena; processes of securing threats always generate a dangerous or promissory supplement to the present (Anderson, 2010). To secure, therefore, requires the traversal of this gap. That is, to disclose the future-object of security will always require work, some form of discursive, material, or practical means of making-knowable.

While security policy has always concerned acting on the future, what is notable about contemporary framings of security is the desire to go beyond tackling explicit dangers, and beyond probabilistic and calculative engagements with threat. What emerges within the security politics of the “war on terror” is a privileging of imaginative and hypothetical engagements with uncertain futures. Famously, the report into the attacks of 9/11 argued there had been a “failure of imagination” and that the United States needed to find ways to bureaucratize imagination within its security practices (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, 2004, pp. 344–346). Similarly, in the United Kingdom, the National Security Strategy states that while the Cold War was “largely predictable,” the country “no longer face[s] such predictable threats” (Cabinet office, 2010, p. 18). Rather, the United Kingdom must “scan the horizon, identify possible future developments and prepare for them. We must be prepared for alternative futures based on key trends, building in the adaptability to respond to different possibilities” (Cabinet office, 2010, p. 15). Summing up this contemporary framing, Sir David Omand (who was central in developing CONTEST), writing on the nature of modern intelligence, states, “there will be less inductive reasoning, and rather more hypothesis formulation and testing, for example in relation to the *possible intentions* of groups that may not yet themselves know their potential capabilities” (Omand, 2009, p. 13, emphasis added).

In this regard, contemporary security practices enact a self-conscious engagement with threats that are conceptualized as uncertain and unknowable. In this article, the term *preclusive* thus signifies both the productive ontological relation between futurity and the securing of threats, and, importantly, the active engagement of security actors with this problematic, and an explicit ambition to intervene *prior* to the emergence of the dangers they seek to manage. When read in this way, what becomes crucial is the intensification of this security aspiration among state security agents in the post-9/11 era. Within this context, Prevent represents the cutting-edge of this ambition; an ambition to move away from calculative and probabilistic mediations with the future toward sustained, preclusive engagements with incalculable, uncertain futures, seeking intervention as prior to the actualization of threats as possible. The work of de Goede and Simon (2013) and Heath-Kelly (2013) articulates this relationship effectively in relation to the concept of radicalization, and its temporal manifestation to intervene into subjects deemed both “risky” and “at-risk.” The intent here is to situate this temporal-security framing on a wider footing, at the heart of British security and identity politics. It is to recognize that the novel security ambition of Prevent is inextricably a question of its temporal framing; an ambition and a framing that seeks to produce *life—in all its uncertainty—as a process of becoming*; a becoming that can be made *knowable*, and thus intervened into and transformed into a becoming that is deemed more secure. It is this core ambition that underlies the diagram of power manifested in British counter-radicalization policy, enabling an assemblage of practices that can identify and intervene into those becomings that are deemed risky.

The question at the heart of Prevent is thus: how can life as a process of becoming be rendered knowable? The answer, as the next section will demonstrate, is to focus on signifiers of identity, and, in particular, those that are deemed to indicate processes of becoming dangerous.

3 | THE UK'S PREVENT POLICY

In seeking to respond to this temporal ambition, counter-radicalization policies have carved out a new role for the state. The intent of this section is to provide a brief genealogical analysis of the assemblage of counter-radicalization practices. The examples given, and the history narrated, will be in the context of the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, the manifestations of power identified here have clear resonances with transnational and other national counter-radicalization programs. This section will show that counter-radicalization is manifested through a traversal of the temporal gap that produces factors in the present as indicators that particular becomings are becoming dangerous. In so doing, what is central to counter-radicalization is a consideration of how such potential can be read, and as the following discussion will demonstrate, security is deemed to be produced through acting on certain environments, spaces, and individuals, transforming them from identities, values, and perceptions of belonging in the present deemed risky, toward those deemed secure. This is, therefore, a story of how identity, read as a process of becoming, is manifested as a site of security intervention, and the consequences this entails.

Since its emergence in the response to 9/11, three broad approaches to managing radicalization can be seen within Prevent, forming an assemblage of practices that seek to manage potentially dangerous becomings. The first is a focus on the environments in which radicalization occurs. Prevent can be read, in part, as a series of practices that intervene into circulations of ideas and identities, within and across communities. "Extremist" spaces, alienated from "Britishness" and "British values," require opening up to flows of identity and ideas that will reduce the vulnerability of those within them. This takes effect historically and primarily through the conflation of community cohesion and Prevent, positioning communities policy as a key aspect of security policy.

Community cohesion emerges as a key plank of Government policy in the United Kingdom in the wake of disturbances between white and Asian youths in the Summer of 2001. The key theme that emerged upon investigation into the violence was a concern regarding segregation, with the differences between ethnic communities in the United Kingdom understood to have become entrenched, at the expense of that which is held in common. It is identified that, in many areas affected by the "disorder or community tensions, there is little interchange between members of different racial, cultural and religious communities" (Home Office, 2001a, p. 3). As the Cattle report famously stated, they were struck by the "depth of polarisation of our towns and cities," noting that different communities lived "parallel lives" (Home Office, 2001b, p. 9). Cohesion thus posits a particular preclusive relation to threat, in that, through managing the flows of identities, it is possible to generate more secure future environments. When too much distance between ethnic, cultural, or faith groups can lead to future outbreaks of disorder and violence, a shared vision and a common, core identity is held to mitigate such threats.

While the discursive language used within the early years of cohesion is careful not to position it as a move toward assimilation or integration, within its merging into the Prevent agenda, it becomes a discourse that attains a directionality. The mobilizing ideal of "British values" becomes increasingly important as the mechanism for reducing the emergence of violence. It is with the 2007 reworking of Prevent that the merging of cohesion and Prevent work, and the centrality of "British values" within this, is first explicitly stated. The "Preventing Violent Extremism" strategy starts by affirming the government is committed to working with "the vast majority of Muslims who reject violence and who *share core British values* in doing this" (DCLG, 2007, p. 4, emphasis added). It is stated that:

As a society we must defend and promote our shared and non-negotiable values: respect for the rule of law, freedom of speech, equality of opportunity, respect for others and responsibility towards others [...] Government needs to support individuals and organisations who uphold those values and to respond robustly when those values are transgressed.

(DCLG, 2007, p. 5, emphasis added)

What is clearly at stake in this narrative is, thus, not a question of finding those values that British citizens hold in common. Rather, there is a *de facto* understanding of that which is already held to be shared, which must now be promoted, and which is the basis upon which further interrelation is possible.

This matters, as it is this distance and alienation from core, “British” values that comes to narrate environments and communities that are deemed to represent vulnerabilities to extremism and radicalization. While the policy framing of Prevent has attempted to demarcate its communities and security policy strands (Martin, 2014), this shows how the problematic of Prevent is mobilized *through* communities policy, governing interventions into communal identities produced as outside of “Britishness,” and, therefore, as threatening (see also Ragazzi, 2016). Thus, it can be stated in the 2011 iteration of Prevent, that:

There is evidence to indicate that support for terrorism is associated with rejection of a cohesive, integrated, multi-faith society and of parliamentary democracy. Work to deal with radicalisation will depend on developing a sense of belonging to this country and support for our core values.

(Home Office, 2011, p. 5)

And that a “stronger sense of ‘belonging’ and citizenship makes communities more resilient to terrorist ideology and propagandists. We believe that *Prevent* depends on integration, democratic participation and a strong interfaith dialogue” (Home Office, 2011, p. 27). While the 2011 iteration of CONTEST sought to institutionally separate the cohesion agenda from Prevent (see Martin, 2019), this reading shows the important conceptual confluences that remained (and that would go on to re-emerge clearly in the counter-extremism agenda, which discursively and institutionally brings these policy areas back into alignment (see Cabinet Office, 2013; Home Office, 2018). Thus, a key diagrammatic function of Prevent is that it produces a spatial analysis that sees, within the flow of particular ideas and identities, the possibility of identifying secure or threatening spaces, with spaces that are distanced from mainstream, core, “British values” rendered as problematic.

This manifests in the assemblage of Prevent practices in three primary ways. First, it is an approach that seeks to open closed spaces of extremist identities to the circulation of “British,” ideas and identities, enabling these more “secure” identities to challenge and disrupt extremist ideas and values. This is evident in the wider cohesion agenda and early examples such as the “Radical Middle Way” roadshows that sought to create space for dialog to engender a mainstream and moderate British Muslim identity (Home Office, 2009, p. 82). Second, is the explicit ambition to promote “British” or “shared” values. One early example is the setting up of the Sufi Muslim Council in July 2006. It explicitly sought to mobilize an apolitical Islam, as opposed to the work of the Muslim Council of Britain (Casciani, 2006). Third, is the need to disrupt and remove extremist ideas, values and identities from public space, such as through continued attempts to regulate extremist content on the internet. Importantly, all three combine to offer a vision of Prevent in which the circulations of identity within British communal life are the object of governmental management, and that through the correct management of these processes, more secure identities can be produced.

The second means through which Prevent seeks to function to prevent radicalization is through the explicit focus on individuals who are deemed vulnerable. The institutional space in which this occurs is the Channel program. The active work carried out by a Channel process consists of three principle tasks: to identify individuals at risk from violent extremism; to assess the nature and extent of the risk; and, if considered suitable for a Channel intervention, to develop the most appropriate support for the individual concerned (Home Office, 2012; see Pettinger, 2020, pp. 4–5 for a fuller account of the Channel process). Since the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, specified authorities now have a statutory duty to engage in this Prevent work, referring individuals they consider to be a risk. Thus, professionals working in healthcare, education, social work, and prison and probation services must maintain vigilance toward vulnerabilities to radicalization (see Heath-Kelly, 2017; Martin, 2018; Ragazzi, 2017).

The idea at the heart of Channel is that, with the right knowledge and awareness, it is possible to make visible and identify the signs of potential future violence. The mechanism through which Prevent enables the identification of individuals who are deemed vulnerable to radicalization is the “vulnerability indicator.” The Channel Guide lists 22 “vulnerability indicators.” It is understood their assessment will provide a rounded view of an individual's vulnerability, informing the decision over whether an individual needs support, and, through continued assessment, they can be used to track an individual's progress (Home Office, 2012, pp. 11–2; see CAGE, 2016 for a critical account of the “science” underlying these indicators). In many cases, vulnerability indicators are presented merely as an expression, perhaps verbal, perhaps communicated in images, of a politics or religiosity (Martin, 2018). Conceptually, the indicators are not concerned, primarily, with intent, but with attitudes or ways of being, and focus on the individual under analysis, divorced from wider, social contexts (Knudsen, 2018). As the work of Pettinger (2020) has empirically shown, Channel's concrete interventions are not concerned with violence. Based on interviews with Channel mentors, Pettinger (2020, p. 6) notes how individuals undergoing Channel interventions are seen to have little in common with offenders sentenced under terrorism legislation. Rather, the reasons given by mentors for referral and acceptance onto Channel are due to the individual expressing offensive language and ideas. These young people are thus deemed to need support and mentoring, in the form of anti-racism and critical-thinking discussions with a role model (Pettinger, 2020, p. 6). The process privileges a “worst-case” scenario logic and a conservatism, concerned with the reputational harm of not intervening in a case where this worst case then goes on to occur (Pettinger, 2020, pp. 4–7).

These referrals and interventions produce the concrete outlines of the “extreme.” Indicators concerning ideas and expressions of identity form the basis for referrals from across society and specified authorities. They are interpreted by practitioners with minimal training, who are encouraged to use their own intuition to identify and police those expressions and identities they deem to present a potential, worst-case scenario threat for the future (Pettinger, 2020). In so doing, the process serves to demarcate, order and police those identities seen to be containable within “Britishness,” and those which signify its dangerous exterior, potentially requiring intervention.

Third, and, to an extent, mediating the above two sites, the counter-radicalization assemblage manifests through a focus on institutional spaces. This represents a focus on the flows of identities within discrete spaces, such as the school, the prison, the hospital and the university. Such institutions are problematic as they may contain spaces potentially inculcating “extremist” ideas, cut off from “British values.” Yet, they are of utility, in that the professionals who work in them are, it is judged, able to play a positive, perhaps even “expert” role in identifying vulnerabilities. Diagrammatically, they are thus organized as sites of circulation, within which British values and identities must be promoted, and to which vigilance is required.

Different sectors possess their own challenges, but the prison and education sectors provide a window onto how this logic manifests. Since the first public release of CONTEST in 2006, prisons were highlighted as particularly worrying environments, with evidence that radicalization was occurring in these spaces (Home Office, 2006, p. 13). While prisons are highly regulated environments, there is a need to make the flows of identity within them intelligible and open to monitoring. Thus, in a 2012 Home Affairs Committee report, it could be stated that:

The current thinking in the prison service was that dispersal of terrorist prisoners around the estate was the best method for containing the spread of terrorist views but some argued that concentration would be more effective.

(Home Affairs Committee, 2012, p. 40)

This latter view has since won out, leading to the creation of so-called “jihadi jails,” segregating small numbers of prisoners convicted of terrorism offenses from the wider prison population (see Ministry of Justice, 2016 for a summary of the key report that led to this shift in strategy). The point here is not the “solution” per se, but the problematization of circulation and identity that has given rise to various attempts to manage the flows of “extremist” ideas and

identities. It is also interesting to note that the intervention used in prisons to facilitate desistance and disengagement from extremist offending is, apparently unironically named, the “Healthy Identity Intervention” program.

Moving to the education sector, as early as 2007, Prevent focussed on Islamic supplementary schools; a system, it was argued, violent extremists could exploit (DCLG, 2007, pp. 5–7). The Department for Communities and Local Government and DfE developed materials for an Islam and Citizenship Education program, which sought to “provide teachers with the tools to demonstrate to young Muslims that their faith is compatible with wider shared values and that being a Muslim is also compatible with being a good citizen” (Home Office, 2011, p. 81). More recently, developing out of the Trojan Horse scandal, Ofsted is now required to assess “how well the school prepares pupils positively for life in modern Britain and promotes [...] fundamental British values” (Ofsted, 2015, p. 38) as a part of their citizenship education, explicitly referencing the 2011 iteration of the Prevent policy (DfE, 2014, p. 5).

Regarding Universities, the Communities and Local Government Select Committee reported that, in as far as there was a problem, it was “linked to the fact that universities provided ‘free space’ whose use was difficult to regulate” (Home Affairs Committee, 2012, p. 41). The concern being that—especially regarding Islamic societies—“extreme” ideas were going unchallenged. This is reflected in anxieties around external speakers at Universities, and the now statutory duty for University administrations to monitor who is speaking on campus. Speaking to the Home Affairs Select Committee, Charles Farr (at the time, Director of the Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism) stated:

It is about ensuring a broad spectrum of speakers rather than a consistent series of speakers representing one particular point of view. [...] It is about, in some cases, ensuring that there is more than one speaker speaking, so that people hear a varied and broad range of views rather than simply one.

(Home Affairs Committee, 2012: Ev. 63)

The goal is thus opening these closed spaces, where extremism could take hold, to the flows of ideas. Across a range of institutions, the counter-radicalization assemblage is thus manifested in response to a diagrammatic vision wherein threats are managed through intervention into the identities and values that circulate and manifest within them.

4 | COUNTER-RADICALIZATION AS A DIAGRAM OF POWER

Taken together, these constitute the assemblage of Prevent practices, and, read in this light, it is now possible to summarize and coherently articulate the diagrammatic function of power envisaged by Prevent. There are identities produced through Prevent as secure. Prevent also produces identities that are risky, uncontainable within an account of a secure expression of identity and values, thus posing a potential threat of becoming radicalized. This boundary does not, therefore, represent the law, or that of the territoriality of the state. It is a boundary based on potential threat, and this potential is produced through performances of identity in the present.

Communities or institutional spaces possess their own identities. These environments may be, in some sense, physically enclosed, as is the case in the Trojan Horse schools. They may be more abstract, for instance, representing a particular ethnic or religious community. Yet, they matter, as they represent the physical or conceptual space within which ideas and identities circulate. Due to the circulation within these environments, they act as a milieu which effects those who are within them, rendering them more likely to cohere with the ideas and identities prominent in that environment. Yet, these environments are not static and are capable of being transformed. Counter-radicalization seeks to open closed, potentially threatening circulations, increasing the flow of secure identities such that they can transform and secure these environments.

Through understanding these flows of identity, individuals can be visibilized as lines of potential becoming, perhaps extending away from a secure identity. These are temporal lines, representing the possible futures of an

individual. What matters is, therefore, an individual's momentum and direction of travel toward or away from a secured identity. When these trajectories intersect with environments, these circulations can act as an accelerant, providing momentum to a particular trajectory. By identifying the signs an individual displays, their potential becomings can be identified and monitored.

Becoming in itself is not a problem, but rather a natural occurrence that is capable of being influenced. Negative movement is a consequence of exposure to problematic ideas and identities. Prevent, therefore, manifests as a series of interventions into this movement across time. Reacting to these problematic temporal lines is envisaged as co-emergent with the threat. Responsibility is dispersed throughout society. When signs of a threat emerge, the assemblage seeks to have individuals trained to spot them in close proximity, enabling the process of intervention as soon as such signs manifest.

The radical temporal ambition of Prevent—to prevent an individual from *becoming* violent—is made possible. The temporal gap is traversed through an analysis of identity in the present, wherein certain performances are now rendered as potentially indicative of a future threat. Intervention then occurs at the level of identity. The diagram of counter-radicalization functions to secure the future through ensuring and transforming environments and individuals into coherence with a secure identity. Within the concrete assemblage of Prevent, this identity is powerfully narrated through the language of “Britishness” and “British values.” Prevent thus produces an account of those subjects and spaces deemed to be coherent with a normalized “Britishness,” expressing British values and identity and thus unthreatening; and those identities deemed to be uncontainable within this space, and which are thus risky, requiring mediation. Prevent produces, and polices, “British” identity.

5 | THE (WIDER) TERRAIN OF PREVENT

So, what does this tell us about Prevent and its role within the United Kingdom, and about the impacts of counter-radicalization policies more broadly? In one sense, this is an old story, one in which difference and identity play out in the security anxieties of the liberal state. Yet, there is a clear novelty in the security/identity logic at play; a diagram of power that ontologizes all life as *becoming*, promising to identify and manage that life which is read as *becoming dangerous*. A diagram that enables an understanding of how and why the “Trojan Horse” scandal dominated headlines within a national security framing. Yet, that also has wider ramifications for an understanding of contemporary security ambitions. Read as a diagram of power, Prevent can be seen to occupy a more significant role in contemporary British life than is acknowledged in the current literature.

The implications of this analysis can be seen through contrasting it with the concept of “suspect communities,” an analysis that has circulated widely, in both academic critique and grass-roots mobilizations against the policy. First developed by Hillyard (1993), the term denotes the designation of a community as targeted through counter-terrorism powers, wherein the members of the group are “suspect” not due to perceived illegality, but due to the perception they belong to the said group. These powers are enforced through security mechanisms such as profiling, stop and search, surveillance, and detention. The work of Pantazis and Pemberton (2009), Awan (2012), Mythen et al. (2012), Breen-Smyth (2014) and Abbas (2019) argues for the application of the concept to the policing of Muslim communities in the United Kingdom. Work in this tradition has provided an excellent analysis of how, through legislation and policing practice, those considered to be part of Muslim communities in the United Kingdom have been rendered suspect and subjected to police powers such as stop and search, and counter-radicalization (mis)interventions such as Channel.

Yet, this analysis maintains a blind spot as to how this production manifests in a demand to *transform* these identities that are rendered as threatening. The heritage of this approach, rooted in the application (and misapplication) of legal frameworks, entails it overlooks the wider implications of Prevent. In so doing, it powerfully critiques the legal framework of the War on Terror. However, by failing to recognize Prevent's radical temporal demand to intervene *prior* to the criminal act, this approach misses the pernicious power that is made clear through

the diagram of counter-radicalization: that Prevent functions through ordering, and then, seeking to produce, "secure" identities, and in so doing, ontologizes an account of those identity performances that are deemed to constitute a normalized "Britishness," and those deemed external to such "Britishness," and thus risky and "extreme." This blind spot leads to perverse outcomes, wherein those advocating this analysis frame the negative impacts of suspect communities as detrimental for the broader, positive goals of cohesion (Awan, 2012). Similarly, this approach often situates "hard" policing methods, such as stop and search and detention without charge, as jeopardizing positive, "soft," policing methods, such as community engagement, that make up aspects of Prevent work. Pantazis and Pemberton (2009, p. 660), for instance, argue, "it is difficult to see how such skilful, yet ultimately fragile, 'soft approaches' can thrive, when the weight of state suspicion and the brutality of 'hard' methods have fallen on these communities." In contrast, a diagrammatic reading draws clear attention to not just the "hard" end of contemporary counter-terrorism, but the powerful mechanisms through which "soft" approaches to counter-radicalization have sought to produce "secure" identities, and mandate a plethora of interventions on this basis.

Moreover, read as a diagram of power, it is possible to situate the conceptualization of, and response to, radicalization, as having had a profound impact upon British communities policy. The early years of Prevent, wherein community cohesion and counter-radicalization were institutionally aligned, is a clear demonstration of this. Yet, a diagrammatic reading allows for a thicker understanding of the conceptual relationship Prevent has drawn between security and identity/communities policy. Many of the early readings of the relationship between Prevent and communities policies sought—much like the suspect communities literature—to highlight and identify the damage being done to communities policy (notably community cohesion) due to its proximity with the counter-radicalization agenda (see Thomas, 2009 for a clear example). The diagram of counter-radicalization shows the analytical limits of this approach. The "soft," valorized interventions of cohesion derive from exactly the same analysis of threat that informs the more targeted aspects of counter-radicalization practice. They are two sides of the same coin.

Furthermore, while there is now a formal distinction between communities and counter-radicalization policy, the diagram allows us to recognize the limits of this separation; it highlights the analysis of threat that emerges within the twin context of the Cantle report and the war on terror, and that remains discursively and functionally intact to this day. Take, for example, key statements made by Dame Louise Casey in her report into opportunity and inequality in the United Kingdom. While charting a variety of indicators and factors of social inequality, the text retains an underlying theorization in which a lack of integration is seen as fostering extremism, is thus potentially threatening, and, therefore, requires some form of management. The report effectively reiterates the analysis of Cantle, stating that "resilience, integration and shared common values and behaviours—such as respect for the rule of law, democracy, equality and tolerance—are inhibitors of division, hate, and extremism. They can make us stronger, more equal, more united and able to stand together as one nation" (Casey, 2016, p. 8), and, more broadly, argues that in an attempt to accommodate difference, the United Kingdom has "lost sight of our expectations on integration and lacked confidence in promoting it," condoning regressive practices, and playing "straight into the hands of extremists" (Casey, 2016, p. 16). More recently, a widely publicized intervention by Tony Blair directly links a perceived failure of migrants to the United Kingdom to integrate as a key driver of the rise of the extreme right, stating that "politics has failed to find the right balance between diversity and integration [...] Particularly now, when there is increasing evidence of far-right bigotry on the rise, it is important to establish the correct social contract around the rights and duties of citizens, including those who migrate to our country" (Blair, 2019).

The approach to communities policy in the United Kingdom—and, to education, healthcare, and social work—is thus formed in the shadow of Prevent, owing a commitment to the analysis of threat it contains. It is a narrative beset by metaphors of mixing, cohesion and integration, wherein a failure of individuals and communities to cohere—implicitly or explicitly framed in the context of identity and "British" values—generates potentials toward extremism and political violence. What thus emerges is a complex assemblage of practices, targeting individuals, institutions, and communities, within which the management and promotion of "secure" identities is the driving function.

Lastly, and crucially, this analysis highlights the analytical limits of much of the literature that takes Muslim communities to be *the* problem site of Prevent. A recent paper by Ali (2020) makes a strong case for this argument. In the following section, I hope to make explicit a tension within the critical literature on Prevent between an account that situates race as conceptually central to our understanding of the strategy (as exemplified by Ali, and informing much of the “suspect communities” literature), and one that foregrounds temporality and preclusivity (as put forward by this paper).

Utilizing a critical race framework, Ali's core claim is that race—and the particular socio-historical context of the British Empire—is *the* “condition of possibility” of Prevent (Ali, 2020, p. 4, emphasis added). Ali's analysis rightly draws our attention to the ways in which Britishness—a category central to Prevent—is racialized. The discursive reliance on narratives of extremism and radicalization as that which is opposed to “Britishness” and “British values” thus functions to produce racialized borders, concerning who is and who is not seen as threatening. The account given of threat in Prevent—and associated concepts of extremism and radicalization—is thus, for Ali, coded as Muslim. In reproducing an account of threat as racialized and *external* to Britishness, whiteness is then normalized as Britishness, and removed from accounts and perceptions of extremism and terrorist violence. This produces the hyper-visibility of Muslim violence, and the identification of the Muslim community as the problem site for Prevent, and, in contrast, the violence of white supremacism is *unseen* through Prevent.

It is an argument that is at its most powerful in challenging the supposed equivalence within Prevent in responding to “Islamist” and “white supremacist” violence. Reading the case of Thomas Mair, who murdered MP Jo Cox in the midst of the Brexit referendum campaign in the United Kingdom, Ali shows how this violence was presented as a “lone wolf” attack, linked to mental health concerns. This removes Mair from the context of a Brexit discourse that echoed white supremacist, anti-immigration and anti-refugee sentiments. As Ali concludes, to “argue Brexit was accomplished without violence [as Nigel Farage famously stated] is to unsee the murder of Cox by a white supremacist” (Ali, 2020, p. 14). For Ali, this is demonstrative of the inability of Prevent to respond to white racial violence, individualizing the murder, invisibilizing its white supremacist violence, and thus serving to reinforce and reproduce racial, colonial borders within the United Kingdom that defend structures of white Britain. The production of racialized borders, producing Muslimness as threatening and normalizing Britain as a white nation, are thus *essential* to Prevent. This is then mobilized to critique work on Prevent that privileges temporality and preclusivity (such as my own, i.e., Martin, 2014, 2018) which reads the racialized bordering practices of Prevent as *contingent*; as a product of Prevent's particular application.

This approach thus rests upon the claim that, in the context of the war on terror, “Britishness” is understood within the strategy as co-terminus with whiteness, such that the framing of Prevent and extremism as concerning “British values” can *only* be read as a coding of Muslim difference and the reproduction of Britain as a white nation. On this I am not convinced. This is in no way to downplay the very real harms that Prevent has caused for those racialized and securitized as Muslim in the United Kingdom, nor to deny that such communities have been the focal point for Prevent interventions. It is important to acknowledge that the language of “British values,” that underpins the articulation of identity and threat within Prevent, emerges in the context of specific state anxieties regarding Muslim communities. Namely, it reflects suspicions that the exercise of Muslim faith represents an alternative allegiance in the United Kingdom, and perceived failures of Muslim communities to integrate into the United Kingdom. Read through a prism of identity that privileges articulations and performances of “British values,” and which expects these to be judged and assessed by millions of non-traditional security actors, it is no surprise that existent assumptions regarding race, religion, threat, and terrorism come to the fore within Prevent, leading, for instance, to the disproportionate number of subjects referred for “Islamist” extremism to Channel (see Martin, 2018).

Yet, the analysis in this article diverges from Ali on the concept of “Britishness” in two important ways. First, empirically, this analysis reads “Britishness” and “British values” as relatively mobile signifiers. While they clearly carry racialized and post-imperial meaning, they can also be engaged to articulate other aspects of identity with which security actors are concerned. In this sense, and as the diagram of radicalization seeks to establish, Prevent

itself is *productive* of the boundaries of “British values”—and who is thus bordered within and without them—through its security interventions. This is not to argue that anything can be framed as a signifier of extremism or radicalization, but it is to argue that such signifiers are, to an extent, fluid, and cannot be solely conflated with representations of Muslim threat within the context of the war on terror.

Second, and through the conceptual language developed in this paper, there is a question as to whether “Britishness” represents an aspect of Prevent’s *core diagrammatic logic*, or is a particular manifestation within its *assemblage of concrete practices*. In the reading of Prevent here, “Britishness” and “British values” form the latter—an aspect of the assemblage that is used to interpret and apply the underlying diagrammatic logic; a logic which does not *require* the concept of “Britishness” to function per se. This diagrammatic reading allows the article to make a broader claim regarding the *ambitions* of counter-radicalization. Prevent’s problematization of threat *can* be deployed toward other performances of identity that are read as signifying potential violence. What is at stake within the diagram of counter-radicalization is a way of making sense of life as a process of (potentially) becoming (violent), and a series of mechanisms for making such processes visible through performances of identity, thus rendering them intelligible and actionable.

“Britishness” is thus neither empirically stable, nor analytically essential within the function of Prevent, something which a reading of the preclusive ambitions of Prevent makes visible, but which is obscured by the critical race analysis developed by Ali. What Ali thus reads as a contradiction between Prevent and action against white supremacist violence, I instead read as an important tension. In seeking to police far-right terror through the existing assemblage and discourses of Prevent, the policy invokes a narrative of “Britishness” that is contested by such groups themselves. It is thus an open question as to how effective framing signs of vulnerability through this language will be in respect to far-right ideologies. Moreover, this reading enables a substantive engagement with the application of Prevent into different forms of “extremism” including perceived vulnerabilities to radicalization concerning the far-left, and animal rights and environmental activism (Grierson, 2020), something that Ali’s paper does not engage with, and whose framework cannot analytically capture or explain. The assemblage of Prevent clearly seeks to extend and manifest the diagram of counter-radicalization toward different ends, and these need not be coherent with each other; there may be internal disjunctures and confusions, and the rationale and practices directed toward “Islamist” extremism may differ from those concerning “far-right” or other extremisms. Nevertheless, read as a diagram of power, what emerges through this analysis is a core approach and logic that underlies the *vision* of counter-radicalization, and *allows* these disparate interventions and practices to be brought together within the same strategic, intellectual and bureaucratic space.

6 | PREVENT’S RADICAL SECURITY AMBITIONS

This paper has thus sought to draw a thicker, conceptual analysis of the core logic and analysis of threat produced within the history and practices of British counter-radicalization policy; a radical security ambition that functions through producing and policing identity. Thus, while interventions that have articulated the racialized practices contained within Prevent are crucial, I argue that it is equally important to situate counter-radicalization as a particular conception of power; a function that renders certain subjects as “secure” and renders other subjects as risky, and thus requiring mediation (while simultaneously acting as a powerful ideological function in producing, through these acts of policing, just what the state considers the boundaries of a “secure” identity to be).

By way of conclusion, it is worth reflecting on the consequences of such a conception of power, and the role of the state that it demands. This form of power defines its own boundary. Not coterminous with the territory of the state or the law, it enacts its own political geography of who belongs and who, in their “riskiness,” must be brought into coherence with—in the context of Prevent—a normalized account of “Britishness” and “British values.” Existing work on Prevent demonstrates the consequences of counter-radicalization practices for the political participation of those who identify as Muslim. Studies show that respondents who identify as Muslim are very

much aware of the practices that are seen to signify risk, self-censoring accordingly (see Brown & Saeed, 2015; McGlynn & McDaid, 2016; Mythen et al., 2012). What has not yet been adequately remarked upon though are the consequences of Prevent for the constitution of the *political order* (although see also Boukalas, 2019). A diagrammatic analysis of Prevent allows this more fundamental claim to be made. Prevent can be understood as a *productive and deeply political* function of power. In producing “Britishness” and its outside, and then, rendering this outside as potentially threatening and, therefore, in need of mediation, Prevent produces this potential exteriority as unable to contribute to the reproduction of that which is shared, common and “British,” and thus to make a claim on that which is “Britishness.” It thus troubles an understanding of citizenship rooted in legal and juridical borders, instead directing the gaze toward the bordering practices that are produced when security takes becoming as its privileged site of intervention. It denies formally equal citizens of the United Kingdom the ability to make claims upon the identity of the state. A denial that is based upon potential ascribed to them. A potential that, even on Prevent's own terms, may never manifest. The diagram of counter-radicalization can be understood as a mode of power that actively reproduces and secures the existing order. In producing a normalized British identity at the center of its topography of secure and securing identities, perceived potential disassociation from this center becomes policed. At a political level, the diagram of counter-radicalization functions as an anti-becoming machine; a politics of stasis that produces and directs a wide-ranging assemblage toward producing and reproducing that which is considered by state actors to be secure, “British” values and identities.¹

Prevent has carved out a new role for the state, at the cutting-edge of preclusive ambitions to manage threats prior to their emergence and actualization. If part of the human condition is change over time—of *becoming*—then the promise held by Prevent is that, with the right training, becoming that is becoming dangerous can be made visible in the present, identified, and, ultimately, mediated before such danger manifests. It is life as a process of becoming that is the site of security; and, when security takes as its object processes of becoming, we can thus see that it takes as its object the constitution of the political itself.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

All data used in the article are publicly available.

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ENDNOTE

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Terrorist attacks and minority perceived discrimination

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Abstract

A growing strand of the literature finds a causal negative impact of terrorism on undifferentiated discriminatory attitudes toward Muslims, migrants, and other minorities. In this paper, we argue that jihadist terrorism threatens first and foremost Muslims. To evaluate this claim, we estimate the causal effect of jihadist terrorism on the perceived discrimination among Muslims through a 2×2 quasi-experimental design. Exploiting “natural experiments” driven by exogenous variation in terror threat caused by jihadist attacks that unexpectedly occurred during the fieldwork of a large survey, we compare the perceived ethoracial discrimination of the relevant minority (Muslims) against other minorities (non-Muslims) before and after five different terror attacks in five different European countries. We find that jihadist attacks increase perceived ethnoracial discrimination among Muslims while reducing it among non-Muslims, and that individual-level factors including social status and economic insecurity mitigate public opinion responses to a greater extent than group-level factors do. Hence, while in-group attitudes toward out-groups tend to be undifferentiated, the experience of out-groups in the aftermath of jihadist attacks depends on the specific identity of the respondents.

KEYWORDS

minority, terrorism

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1 | INTRODUCTION

That much more is known about the dominant than the subordinated is a recurrent concern within and beyond intergroup threat theory. The literature on terrorism makes no exception. It is well-established that terrorism increases anti-immigration attitudes (e.g., Böhmelt et al., 2020; Finseraas et al., 2011; Legewie, 2013; Schüller, 2016), voting behavior (e.g., Balcells & Torrats-Espinosa, 2018), racial animus (Canetti-Nisim et al., 2009; Echebarria-Echabe & Fernández-Guede, 2006; Lahav & Courtemanche, 2012), hate crimes (Hanes & Machin, 2014), and market discrimination against Muslims (Davila & Mora, 2005; Elsayed & De Grip, 2018; Gautier et al., 2009; Ratcliffe & von Hinke Kessler Scholder, 2015). Much less is known about the effect of terrorism on perceived discrimination among minorities (Birkelund et al., 2019). This paper aims precisely at filling this lack.

This issue has crucial relevance, as the perception of discrimination is an extremely important metrics of minorities (e.g., Assari et al., 2018; Fischer-Neumann, 2014; Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009). However, its empirical assessment is complex. (i): Since terror attacks are unexpected, survey items proxying preferences of interest only appear after the emergence of terrorism. The researcher is left without a counterfactual. (ii): Several phenomena concur to increase the perception of discrimination among minorities. This is particularly problematic for perceived discrimination: as the occurrence per se of discrimination is not observable, there is always the possibility of misperception. The researcher is left with a complex attribution challenge. (iii): Minorities in society are minorities in datasets. The researcher is left with limited statistical power.

To circumvent these issues, we rely on the following design (e.g., Balcells & Torrats-Espinosa, 2018; Bol et al., 2020; Legewie, 2013). We exploit the fact that some murderous jihadist attacks recorded on the Global Terrorist Database (2017) happened to have occurred during the fieldwork period of rounds of the European Social Survey (2016)—henceforth, *ESS*. Since the date of interviews is as good as random with respect to the date of the attacks, we can compare the perception of discrimination among individuals interviewed before these events—the “control group”—versus individuals interviewed after the attack—the “treatment group.” The availability of daily level data in the *ESS* helps minimizing threats to internal validity. By combining five equally designed “natural experiments” in France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Russia, we achieve sufficient statistical power to analyze perceived discrimination among the Muslim out-group relative to non-Muslim out-groups.

This methodology allows us to unveil the casual effect of jihadist terrorist attacks on perceived discrimination of Muslims versus other minorities. Furthermore, we use this empirical framework to validate the mediating effects of other factors that has been shown to affect the level of threat perceived by the out-group.

The findings from these natural experiments reveal a significant and sizable increase in the extent of perceived discrimination of 18 percentage points for Muslims, accompanied by a decrease of about 10 percentage points for non-Muslims, with respect to untreated non-Muslims. These findings do not depend on outliers, and they are robust to several model specifications, as well as different estimating and sampling techniques. Furthermore, we find that both larger economic insecurity and lower social status exacerbate the level of perceived discrimination by Muslims.

Importantly, thanks to the availability of a large set of discrimination proxies, we compare relevant dimensions of discrimination versus placebo dimensions, (e.g., gender discrimination and ageism). None of them yields a significant effect, validating our interpretation that terrorist attacks increased perceived discrimination among Muslims only.

The main contribution of this paper is to show that jihadist attacks change the short-run levels of perceived ethn racial discrimination; threatening the Muslim’s “suspect community” (Abbas, 2019) to a substantial extent, these events mitigate perceived discrimination among other communities—thereby ultimately reshuffling the existing racial hierarchy. Our second, related contribution is to clarify how relevant the key individual-level and group-level factors identified in intergroup threat theory are in moderating the effect of jihadist attacks on perceived discrimination, (e.g., Quillian, 1995). Finally, bridging the seminal contribution of Joshua Legewie in the field of terrorism and public opinion (Ceobanu & Escandell, 2010; Legewie, 2013; Stephan & Stephan, 2017) with

that of perceived discrimination in Europe (see, e.g., André & Dronkers, 2017; Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002), we provide a method that combines fair internal validity with fair external validity.

2 | GROUP CONFLICT, TERRORIST ATTACKS, AND PERCEIVED DISCRIMINATION

Holding that societies are divided in identifiable social groups often characterized by some dominance relation, intergroup threat theory's main objective is to analyze how intergroup perceived threat shapes intergroup prejudice (Allport, 1954; Ceobanu & Escandell, 2010; Stephan & Stephan, 2017; Quillian, 1995). Consequently, since perceived security threats endanger survival, they should predict patterns of prejudice to a greater extent than economic or cultural threats do (Canetti-Nisim et al., 2009).

It is thus unsurprising that scholars in the field found jihadist terrorism an ideal ground to study the causal relationship between intergroup threat in intergroup prejudice: Since jihadist attacks represent a major threat carried out by people who self-identify or could be identified with the out-group against the in-group, they may precipitate attitudes toward immigrants and minorities, (e.g., Canetti-Nisim et al., 2009; Echebarria-Echabe & Fernández-Guede, 2006; Finseraas et al., 2011; Lahav & Courtemanche, 2012; Legewie, 2013; Schüller, 2016).

However, the way in-group members are assumed to set group boundaries in this framework is highly politicized: terrorist perpetrators and minority citizens with no sympathy whatsoever for jihadist terrorism are grouped—or “conflated”—together. Such conflation, in turn, may result in several forms of out-group discrimination which threatens minorities (Davila & Mora, 2005; Elsayed & De Grip, 2018; Gautier et al., 2009; Hanes & Machin, 2014; Ratcliffe & von Hinke Kessler Scholder, 2015). Therefore, by provoking discriminatory reactions among the in-group, jihadist attacks threaten the out-group.

While insofar we generally refer to “out-groups” without drawing a distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims, it is not clear whether attitudinal patterns of perceived discrimination actually diverge across minorities. On the one hand, security threats tend to increase perceived out-group homogeneity among the in-group (Pickett & Brewer, 2001). This would suggest that the process by which out-group members are conflated with terrorist perpetrators does not only involve Muslims and people believed to be Muslims, but also, more generally, immigrants, and minorities (e.g., Legewie, 2013). On the other hand, terrorism profoundly affected the development of a novel sense of racial threat; “the terrorist is imagined to be Arab, Muslim, immigrant, foreign, brown, and/or black” (Collins, 2006, p. 44). As perceived discrimination has different meanings for privileged and disadvantaged groups (Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002), we might expect some heterogeneity also in the experiences and interpretations after terrorist attacks among different out-groups.

Factoring in that that Muslims communities become despite their cooperation “the suspect community” (Abbas, 2019), with strong consequences for their safety (Hanes & Machin, 2014), wages (Davila & Mora, 2005), labor-market insecurity (Elsayed & De Grip, 2018), and housing discrimination (Gautier et al., 2009), we hypothesize that the level of the discrimination that minorities perceive against their group—here, Muslims—should increase in the aftermath of events that worsen the attitudes of the majority against the minority—here, murderous jihadist attacks—and more so than for non-Muslims.

While we are not aware of studies that employ an empirical methodology to quantify a causal link between perceived discrimination and a terrorist attack for different minorities (see Section 3 for more details on our empirical strategy), few studies examined the *associational* impact of traumatic events on a minority's attitudes and perceptions. For example, Bobo et al. (1994) show that the verdict in the Rodney King beating and the following 1992 Los Angeles riot caused increased negative attitudes among African Americans about the future of race equality in the United States. Additionally, Jacobs et al. (2011) show that complaints about anti-Semitism in Belgium increased during the Israeli military operation Cast Lead in Gaza. In the context of terrorism, Hekmatpour

and Burns (2019) show that European Muslims' opinions about Western governments are strongly affected by residential segregation.

After testing the main hypothesis, we build on intergroup threat theory to study how individual-level factors—for example, social status, economic and cultural insecurity—as well as group-level factors—for example, local in-group share and unemployment rate—mitigate public opinion responses (Corenblum & Stephan, 2001; Quillian, 1995; Stephan et al., 2002; Verkuyten, 2009).

The next section describes the data and lays out the empirical strategy that we utilize to evaluate these hypotheses on the effect of murderous jihadist terrorist attacks on the level of perceived discrimination by Muslims.

3 | EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

3.1 | Data

We use data from eight rounds of the European Social Survey (ESS) to study minority attitudes. Beside its overall quality, the ESS combines three key features. First, the population sample is obtained through strict random sampling, and a strong effort is made to interview those individuals that were sampled in first place, to limit any reachability bias.¹ Second, unlike other surveys (e.g., *Eurobarometer*) and despite the reluctance of European governments to acknowledge a formal ethnic system, the ESS includes information about individuals' ethnic identity and background. This allows us to identify Muslims, the focus of our analysis, and non-Muslim minorities, providing a valuable benchmark against which Muslims' attitudinal patterns can be contrasted with. Finally, the ESS includes the exact timing of each interview. The latter is scheduled randomly long-before the occurrence of terrorist attacks. It is thus *as good as random* with respect to the exact date at which terrorist attacks occur, allowing us to compare similar pre- and post-attacks samples.²

We use data from the Global Terrorism Database—henceforth, *GTD*—to identify terrorist attacks. We look for a specific coincidence: the occurrence of a murderous terrorist attack occurring in a specific European country during the field work period of that country. Thus, we focus on the national rather than transnational effects of terrorism (Finseraas et al., 2011; Legewie, 2013; Schüller, 2016).

We retrieve five terrorist attacks in the Netherlands (2004), Sweden (2010), Russia (2011) France (2015), and Germany (2016). Each of these attacks was potentially a critical juncture in the country, provoking deaths and dismay. Figure 1 plots the daily collection of surveys around the date of each of these five attacks, as well as pooling them in a single graph (to-left). In online appendix A, we provide a more accurate description retrieved from the *GTD*.

We consider the *Control group* to be composed by any individual interviewed *before* any attack, and the *Treatment group* to be composed by any individual interviewed *after* any attack. The descriptive statistics presented in online appendix A are broken down by treatment status. Moreover, we extensively deal with the challenges imposed by potential sample imbalance (see online Appendix B).

At this stage, it is worth pausing on two interrelated aspects of our approach.

First, we pool several terrorist episodes in a single framework. Combining five equally designed “natural experiments” has an additional advantage unique to this work: it permits to study minority attitudes. The combined dataset allows to rely on sufficient power to study the perception of out-group individuals under the terror threat. Overall, we can retain 930 individuals with ethnic minority background. In order to identify minorities, we rely on individuals' answer to the question “Do you belong to an ethnic minority group?” Such question unambiguously relies on individuals' identity. The latter is key in general, and even more in Europe, where there is often no formal definition of race and ethnicity (Simon, 2017). However, one might be concerned that the answer to this question is too subjective. Therefore, we provide a robustness check in which we rely on objective metrics of family background to identify ethnoracial minorities (see online Appendix B1).³

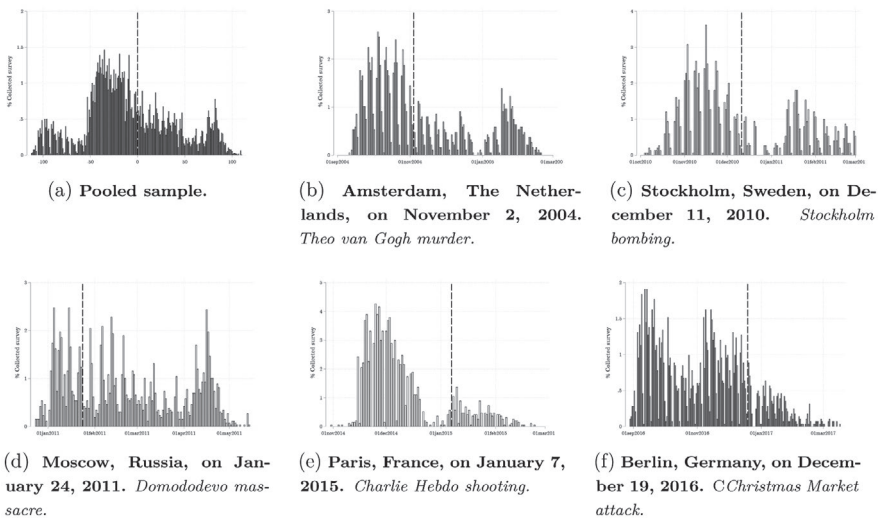


FIGURE 1 Moderators of the treatment effect

Second, one can observe that the rate of collection of surveys display some short-run and longer-run fluctuation. These fluctuations would be problematic if they had to do with the terrorist events themselves. However, we argue that there is no issue of *attrition*. The short-run fluctuations have to do with the fact that *ESS* interviewers do not work on the weekend. Longer-run fluctuations and some empty space within the collection period have to do with Christmas holidays. Indeed, the *ESS* typically (not always, though) runs from September to February. This is why it is more likely to fortuitously record attacks occurring in this period of the year than those occurring in the summer. Moreover, the rates of non-response on the key variables are similar in the control and in the treatment group, suggesting that terrorist attacks did not significantly alter respondents' willingness to engage with discrimination-related questions.

3.2 | Dependent variable

Our main focus is placed on whether Muslims perceive discrimination in the aftermath of terror attacks. The main dependent variable is:

- Perceived discrimination: "Are you a member of a group discriminated against on the basis of race/ethnicity?" The DV takes the value of zero if the respondent does not perceive to belong to an either racially or ethnically discriminated group, and "one" else.⁴

Muslims represent a highly racialized and ethnic category in Europe. Yet, while perceived group homogeneity leads the in-group to treat Muslims as a monolithic out-group, European Muslims typically belong to diverse social classes, linguistic groups, and national origins *inter alia* (see e.g., Foner, 2015, Zolberg & Woon, 1999). Furthermore, we stressed how terrorist perpetrators and minority citizens with no sympathy for jihadist terrorism are conflated together. This process of conflation may result in several forms of out-group discrimination which threatens Muslims irrespective of their views, origin, belief, or culture. In line with this reasoning, previous research found that terrorist attacks increased labor market discrimination and housing segregation of Muslims (see e.g., Davila & Mora, 2005; Gautier et al., 2009; Ratcliffe & von Hinke Kessler Scholder, 2015). Hence, we expect

that conflation will reflect into experiences of perceived discrimination for Muslims irrespective of their origin or cultural background.

Perceived discrimination provides us with an extremely important metric of minorities' welfare. It has dramatic consequences for minorities' life and political integration. It decreases democratic satisfaction, political assimilation, and trust in key institutions, (e.g., Fischer-Neumann, 2014; Van Craen, 2012) whereas it increases depression among black youths (Assari et al., 2018), reluctance to request cancer screening among American Indian women (Gonzales et al., 2013), refraining from seeking medical treatment among minorities in Sweden (Wamala et al., 2007, for a meta-analysis, see Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009). In our sample, perceived discrimination is negatively correlated with subjective health ($\rho = -.11, p < .01$), likelihood to meet general practitioners ($\rho = -.08, p < .01$), trust in institutions, include, for example, the police ($\rho = -.06, p < .01$) or political parties ($\rho = -.12, p < .01$) and self-reported turnout ($\rho = -.07, p < .01$).

As the occurrence per se of discrimination is not observable, there is always the possibility of misperception. We cope with this issue in three ways. First, we compare the effect of terrorist attacks on perceived discrimination of Muslim versus other minorities.⁵ This enables us to isolate the effect on this specific ethnoracial group as opposed to general feelings of treat perceived by all the members of the out-group. Second, we perform a placebo analysis of perceptions of discrimination that is not related to the aforementioned terrorist attacks (online Appendix C). Third, we incorporate several factors that intergroup threat theory suggest might shape perceptions and group conflict to test whether the effect of the traumatic events we consider is mediated by these other determinants.

3.3 | Independent variables

We use the following difference-in-differences specification:

$$y_{ic} = \alpha + \beta T_i + \delta (T_i \times \text{Muslim}_i) + \gamma' \mathbf{x}_{ic} + \theta_c + \mu_{ic} \tag{1}$$

where y_{ic} is the score of the DV for i in country c , α is the intercept, and T_i is the Treatment variable: a dummy that takes value 1 if the unit was interviewed after the terror attack and 0 otherwise. Muslim_i is a dummy variable that takes value 1 if the respondent is Muslim. Hence, we implement a difference-in-differences design. We first assign minority individuals in the control and treatment groups, and then, separate them between Muslims and non-Muslims. As a result, β and δ are our coefficients of interest, the treatment effect and its interaction with the Muslim dummy. Since we only have two groups (Muslims and non-Muslims), the treatment effect, β , informs us about the effect of terror attacks on perceived discrimination among non-Muslim respondents with ethnic minority background, while the interaction term, δ , about the effect among Muslim respondents. \mathbf{x}_{ic} is a vector of baseline individual covariates, α_c is a country-year specific intercept and μ_{ic} is the error term. As randomization occurs at the country-date level, we use *iid* robust standard errors clustered at the country-date level for confidence intervals.

We control for an increasing set of covariates. The *basic model* does not include any additional covariate. The *extended model* includes demographic variables: Age (15–99), Sex (0: Male, 1: Female), household status (0: no children living home, 1: else), and domicile (0: urban area, 1: rural area). The *full model* includes socioeconomic variables as well: educational attainment (1–7), social status (0: occupational prestige from ISCO code is lower than median, 1: else), income feeling (1–4), and employment status (0: employed, 1: living on social benefits). We also control for the degree of religiosity (1–7) and for whether the respondent's first language is a foreign tongue (0–1). Our coefficients of interest remain very similar throughout all specifications, suggesting that our results are not being driven by unobservables correlated with the controls we add (Altonji et al., 2005).

The *balanced specification* accounts for the fact that individuals in the control and treatment groups are not the same, resulting in some degree of sample imbalance. We address the latter both by controlling the regression

and using entropy balancing (Hainmueller, 2012). The latter weights individuals in the control group such that the aggregate distribution of covariates mimic, after weighting, the one in the treatment group until the third moment of the distribution. After imposing these weights, ex ante imbalance is limited, and only applies to socioeconomic variables. After entropy weighting, imbalance collapses to null and treatment effects are thus net of potential imbalance. The online appendix presents additional analysis of sample imbalance (online Appendix B2).

We fit a linear probability model through OLS. Given that both the DV and the main IV are dummy variables, we can interpret the coefficient as increases/decreases of percentage points. Choosing a standard nonlinear estimator to better account for the nature of the data-generating process does not however affect our results (online Appendix B1). Finally, while we pool terrorist episodes from different countries which thus certainly hinge on specific contextual factors, we assess the robustness to single country episodes. We find that deleting each country at the time and running again the main specification confirms our findings. Hence, our findings are not systematically driven by an outlier case (online Appendix B2).

In the main analysis, we compare individuals' perceived discrimination before and after terror attacks. One may argue that omitted time-varying trends threaten internal validity. It could be that, for reasons unrelated to terrorism, the aggregate perceived discrimination of individuals with ethnic minority background (Muslims and non-Muslims) was changing due to other events we do not control for. We deal with this potential threat to internal validity in three ways (online Appendix B2). First, we estimate a more demanding regression equation that accounts for possibly omitted time varying perceived discrimination path by mimicking a parametric *RDD* strategy. Second, while in the main analysis we retain all available data, we report the regression coefficients from the main specification, but we restrict the time-bandwidths to four arbitrary intervals of time: 30, 60, 90, and 120 days. Our main findings are robust to both checks. Finally, we run permutation tests. Randomizing the treatment variable and its interaction with the Muslim dummy suggests that the reported treatment effects are unlikely to be spurious. In fact, the kernel distribution of the random treatment effects is extremely similar to the main results that we present in the following section.

4 | RESULTS

Figure 2 summarizes our main findings. Panel a of Figure 2 presents the point estimates and the 90% and 95% confidence intervals for each coefficient in the basic, expanded, full, and balanced empirical models relative to the model (1), while Panel b of Figure 2 focuses on the balanced specification and distinguishes three-related dependent variables: our main dependent variable (ethnoracial discrimination), ethnic discrimination, and racial discrimination.⁶

The message emerging from Figure 2 is rather unambiguous: (i) jihadist attacks increase perceived ethnoracial discrimination among Muslim individuals, who generally hold lower scores on the dependent variables, whereas (ii) they decrease perceived ethnoracial discrimination among non-Muslim individuals.

First, assessing the position of the "Treatment \times Muslim" plots, we observe that the terror treatment effect is positive and significant at least at $p < .05$ for Muslim respondents, whose perceived discrimination is ex ante lower relative to that of other minority individuals. In the balanced model, ethnoracial discrimination increases by a substantial amount, around 18% relative to untreated non-Muslims, in the aftermath of jihadist attacks. Our main finding, which holds across all specifications and dependent variables, indicates that Muslim citizens' perception of discrimination precipitates following terrorist attacks perpetrated by Muslims in Europe.

Second, assessing the position of the "Treatment" plots, we observe that the terror treatment effect is negative and significant at least at $p < .05$ for non-Muslim respondents with minority background. This finding holds across all specifications but one, in which we focus on "ethnic discrimination" only. These findings indicate that non-Muslim minorities see threat from the white majority shifting away from them.

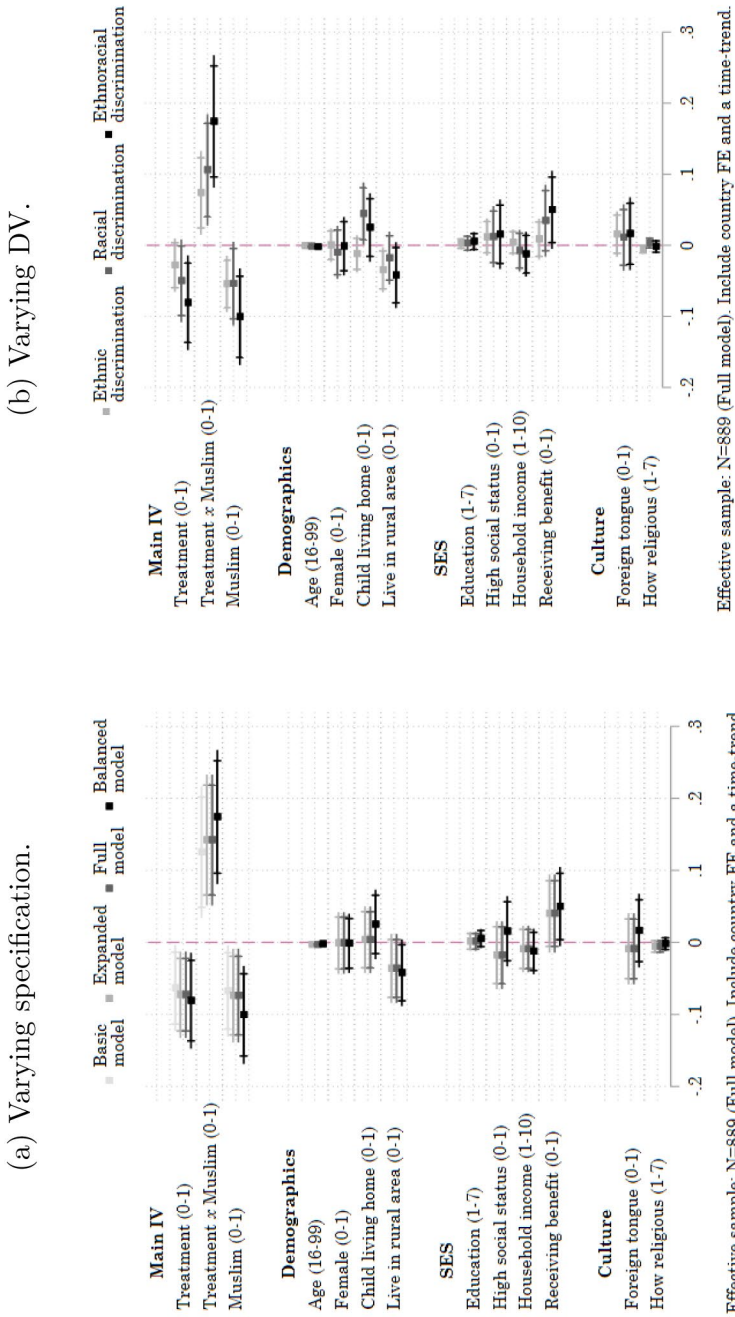


FIGURE 2 Jihadist attacks and perceived discrimination

What could explain this pattern? We argue that the fact that Muslims perceive higher ethnoracial discrimination, whereas non-Muslims perceive lower ethnoracial discrimination is consistent with the idea that the status-quo *racial hierarchy*, despite its roots in the long-run process of social dominance, may change rapidly when major events occur (Sidanius & Pratto, 2001). The status-quo *racial hierarchy* develops according to a social construction that is *politically contentious, historically contingent set of boundaries of classification, where the delimiters have social meanings that are (most often) attached to phenotype and culture* (Bashi, 1998, p. 7). Indeed, systems of ethnic and racial stratification have differed historically, not only in terms of the groups involved, but also the complexity and magnitude of the distinctions made between groups (Song, 2004). Terrorist attacks arguably qualify as major events that may reshuffle the status-quo *racial hierarchy*, lowering the relative standing of Muslims vis-à-vis other minorities. By emphasizing Muslims as the major “suspect community” (Hekmatpour & Burns, 2019), terrorist attacks may not only lead Muslims to perceive higher discrimination, they can also reduce the salience of other long-standing discriminatory grounds, such as, for example, the Continental background, that typically articulate the otherness of non-Muslim ethnoracial minorities. In this context, jihadist attacks may reduce the short-term perception of discrimination among non-Muslims.

4.1 | Moderating factors

To better understand the link between intergroup threat and prejudice, we test whether the effect of these traumatic events is mediated by the other determinants of group conflict. These factors that affect the pressure the majority exerts on the minority can be categorized as individual-level and group-level factors. Figure 3 analyzes

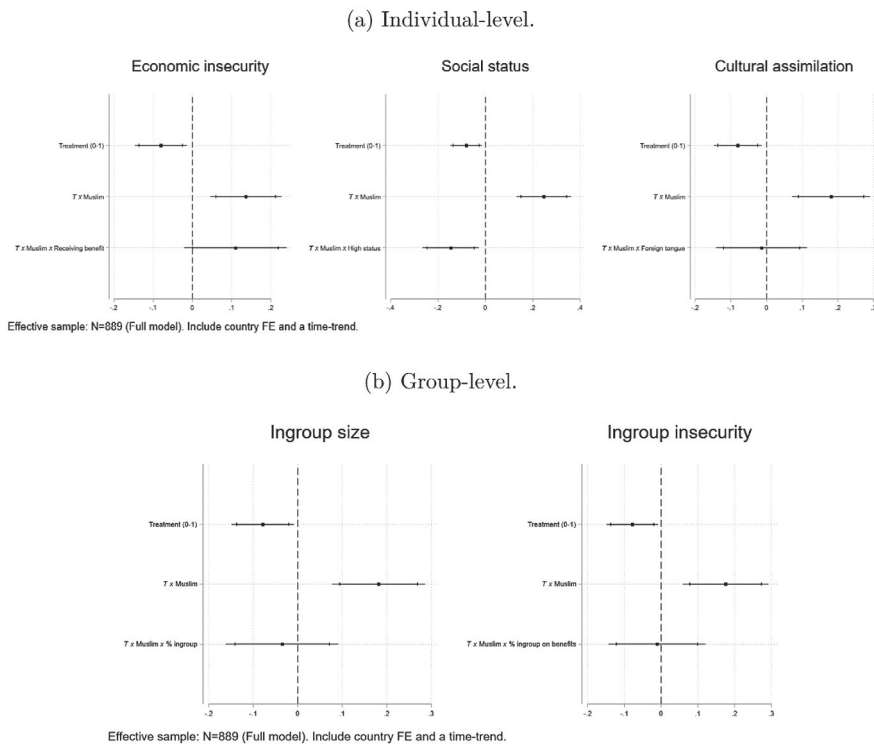


FIGURE 3 Data collection around terror attacks. For each attack, black spikes give the density of daily collection. The red spike is the date at which each attack took place

how individual-level factors (Panel a) and group-level factors (Panel b) mitigate the main findings. The documented attitudinal patterns underscore that individual-level factors matter while group-level factors do not.

A key individual determinant of intergroup relations is socioeconomic status, as larger differences in status promote tensions (Stephan et al., 2002). Since Muslims and other minorities tend to have lower status than the majority, it is plausible that the lower the status of a Muslim and the higher economic insecurity they face, the higher the effect of jihadist attacks on the level of perceived discrimination. Interacting the relevant treatment effect in Figure 3 with high socioeconomic status yields a negative moderation effect significant at $p < .05$. Status is derived by converting ISCO occupation codes into the standard SIOPS occupational prestige scale.⁷ Thus, Muslims with high socioeconomic status update their perceived discrimination to a substantially lower extent than individuals with low socioeconomic status.

This finding is consistent with the interpretation of Hekmatpour and Burns (2019) that the decrease in the perception of Western governments' hostility to Islam among highly educated Muslims after the declaration by Isis of its caliphate is related to their willingness to distance themselves from its extreme ideology. Since the emergence of ISIS, there has been a growing pressure on Muslims to publicly denounce "Islamic terrorism." Muslims with a high socioeconomic status may have responded more to this pressure in an attempt to redefine/blur the boundaries of between with the in-group (Zolberg & Woon, 1999), thereby mediating the effect of terrorist attacks on their perceptions of discrimination.

Among individual-level factors, economic (see, e.g., Pardos-Prado & Xena, 2019) and cultural (see, e.g., Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2007, Gelepithis & Giani, 2020) insecurity have been repeatedly shown to play a prominent moderation role, particularly in the context of discriminatory immigration attitudes, that is, in the context of in-group attitudes. There exist reasons to expect economic and cultural insecurity to interplay with out-group perceived discrimination as well.

Regarding economic insecurity, which we proxy by unemployment status, it is likely that Muslims who already live in precarious socioeconomic condition (holding socioeconomic status constant) may forecast that the ethnic polarization resulting from jihadist attacks will further reduce labor market prospects. Instead, Muslims with a job—particularly in the context of relative job safety of European countries—may feel safer. Regarding cultural insecurity, the context in which intergroup contact occurs matters for the perception of threats, as linguistic and cultural barriers can hinder the effectiveness of the interaction (Spencer-Rodgers & McGovern, 2002). Language differences, as proxied by whether a country's official language is spoken at home, might thus exacerbate the perception of discrimination.

Figure 3 also shows that economic insecurity exacerbates the effect of jihadist attacks on perceived discrimination among Muslims, whereas a higher social status decreases it. In contrast, cultural assimilation proxied by whether the individual's first tongue is a foreign language does not appear to significantly mitigate terror treatment effects.⁸

Group characteristics, including, for example, power, relative status, and relative group size, affect the way the members of each group interact, and the expected outcome of that interaction (Corenblum & Stephan, 2001; Quillian, 1995). We assess the role that the in-group share at the NUT2 level, which proxies relative size, and the in-group unemployment rate at NUT2 level, which proxies the in-group resources and feeling of insecurity, in moderating treatment effects among Muslims.⁹

In Figure 3, we interact the treatment effect on Muslims with these group-level moderators, but find a null effect. This finding is however to be taken *cum grano salis*, because the level of disaggregation is not ideal and so the exercise suffers from some measurement error.

5 | CONCLUSION

Too often conclusions about group dynamics in asymmetric contexts are drawn upon an exclusive focus on majority attitudes toward minorities. This has been the case in the literature on terrorist attacks and xenophobic

attitudes capturing intergroup threat levels. In this paper, we seek to offer to such literature a complementary focus. Specifically, we analyze how jihadist attacks affect Muslims' perceived ethnoracial discrimination relative to members of other stigmatized groups. This is important because security threats tend to increase perception of out-group homogeneity among in-group members, and hence looking at majority attitudes would lead us to miss changes occurring within the out-group.

We are not aware of any study that focuses on the causal effect of terrorist attacks on minorities' perceived discrimination. As such we can complement existing research focusing solely on majority attitudes. Our main contribution is to show that while jihadist terrorism changes the in-group attitudes toward the out-group in a rather undifferentiated manner (e.g., Böhmelt et al., 2020; Finseraas et al., 2011; Legewie, 2013), it entails strongly asymmetric effects among out-groups. Further research is needed to understand whether the changes induced by terrorist attacks in the short-run levels of perceived ethnoracial discrimination we uncover will lead to long-run changes in ethnic and racial stratification.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data are publicly available.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ For additional details see, for example, Lynn et al. (2007). Furthermore, we extensively deal with the challenges imposed by potential sample imbalance (see below and online Appendix B).
- ² Such design has also been recently applied to study, for example, how terrorist attacks impact on voting behavior (Balcells & Torrats-Espinosa, 2018) and attitudes toward discrimination (Giani, 2020) or how the electoral outcomes affect racial attitudes (Giani & Méon, 2019). A recent paper by Muñoz et al. (2020) deals with the main methodological issues associated with this empirical design.
- ³ We identify 411 Muslims using a direct proxy available in the ESS. Some descriptive may help profiling this category of people. In our sample, 59.78% of respondents are second generation immigrants: either their father, or mother or both are foreign-born. 43.23% was born in another country. Overall, 62.40% are either first- or second-generation immigrants. Furthermore, 72.6% of non-Muslims report a religious affiliation, and 88.4% of them report to be Christian (Catholic, Orthodox, or Protestant). Power computations reveal that to find a difference in means significant at $p < .05$ with 80% of power and a standard deviation of 1, one would need 139 observations, so in this sense our sample size is sufficiently large to run inference.
- ⁴ We also provide separate estimates for ethnic and racial discrimination, showing that these two are highly correlated.
- ⁵ Note that we consider Muslims individuals who self-define themselves as such. To check that our empirical analysis is not confounded by individuals changing their religious affiliation, in a robustness check we rely on objective metrics of family background to identify ethnoracial minorities (online Appendix B.1).
- ⁶ The detailed results of the estimation are in online Appendix A.
- ⁷ We convert such continuous measure into a dummy variable at the median for ease of interpretation.
- ⁸ The social contact hypothesis postulates that attitudes and stereotypes can be mitigated by prior intercultural contact (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998). Social contact thus promotes healthy intergroup relations; for example, it increases the likelihood of interracial marriages in the United States (Merlino et al., 2019). Also, it mediates the negative impact of terrorism on anti-immigration attitudes (Legewie, 2013). It is however not clear whether we should expect a similar attenuation for minorities. For example, the association between contact and interracial closeness is significantly weaker among black respondents than white respondents in a US survey, and perceived discrimination moderates this relationship among black respondents (Tropp, 2007). Unfortunately, the proxy used by Legewie (2013) is only available for one out of eight rounds of the ESS. Hence, we cannot convincingly test the contact hypothesis.
- ⁹ These statistics are retrieved by collapsing survey information at the NUT2 level. This is the only valuable alternative we have, since European countries do not retrieve ethnicity or race based labor market information at such level. The

NUTS classification is an EU standard hierarchical geocode dividing the territory of countries into subregions based on socioeconomic, cultural, and historical characteristics to represent relative homogeneous areas. The classification system distinguishes between 271 NUTS2 regions with a population of around 0.8–3 million.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

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Older Iranian Muslim women's experiences of sex and sexuality: A biographical approach

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Abstract

Muslim women in Iran live in a patriarchal society which significantly restricts their freedom and agency. While there is a growing understanding of social change as it relates to younger Muslim women in Iran, the perspectives and experiences of older women are marginalized; mirroring problems with the intersections of age, gender, and sexuality in the West. In order to address this occlusion, this article draws on life history interviews with 30 older Muslim women living in Tehran and Karaj. Adopting a biographical life course approach, and examining pivotal moments related to sexuality in their lives, we discuss how cultural meanings and symbols of sexuality have emerged and been negotiated by these women at the life stages of puberty, first sex at marriage, and menopause. The patriarchal and religious gender order of Iran transgresses these women's human rights so that sexuality is experienced as a source of shame, stigma, and pollution, yet the women also exert forms of agency in their lives as they adopt and challenge these norms.

KEYWORDS

aging, gender, Iran, sexuality, shame, stigma, women

1 | INTRODUCTION

Women's lives are affected by sexuality across the world. Feminist research has focussed on the impact of sexuality on women in the West, yet the regulation of sexuality is more pervasive and damaging on women who live in

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fundamentalist patriarchal cultures like Iran (Afary, 2009). Iranian women's narratives of sex and sexuality receive less coverage and discussion in the West, partly because of the difficulties of gaining access to collect data with these women and the danger for the women to speak about these issues. A growing literature addresses the experiences of younger Iranian women (e.g., Arjmand & Ziari, 2020; Khalajabadi-Farahaini et al., 2019; Sharifi, 2018), focusing on generational shifts related to sexual practices and liberalizing attitudes. The perspectives of older Iranian women are marginalized from this discussion (see Amini & McCormack, 2019 and Sharifi, 2018 as exceptions). Yet, women aged in their 40s to 60s experienced their adolescence during or soon after the Iranian Islamic revolution of 1979, and so offer an important perspective on the effects of a tumultuous period of sexual conservatism and repression.

Drawing on biographical interviews with menopausal women in Tehran and Karaj, we document the profound impact that Iranian laws and cultural norms have on the women's experiences of sex and sexuality. Sexuality was silenced from puberty, which was experienced as a time of stigma and shame. These feelings were then compounded during first sex, which occurred immediately after marriage and often as a traumatic event. We then document the women's experiences of sexual activity during marriage, which is seen as an obligation, a religious duty and, on occasion, a way to gain favor or items desired. We situate these experiences of sex and sexuality within the Iranian context that is a patriarchal, religious gender order. We draw on sociological theories of stigma and pollution in the context of a structural gender order alongside human rights framework to understand how sexuality operates as a vector of power in Iranian culture, intersecting with gender and age, to limit women's experiences and lives. We highlight both the agency women can enact within this constrained context and the profound negative impact on sexual pleasure, bodily autonomy, and happiness more generally.

1.1 | Sexuality and social control in Iran

Iran has a history of relative gender equality, including women's suffrage, education programmes targeted at women and high rates of education and women's presence in the public sphere (Keddie & Richard, 2006). It was the Islamic Revolution of 1979 where Iran entered an era of extreme sexual conservatism (Khalajabadi-Farahaini et al., 2019). After the Revolution, a new juridical discourse on sexuality was established, giving more control to men and the State over women's bodies, sexuality and reproductive functions. The family code was canceled and replaced by a religious code (Sharia law) and sexuality became a matter of legal control and state scrutiny. Here, the sexuality of men is framed as a natural and inevitable urge that should be satisfied, while women's sexuality is defined as an honorable and valuable feature of femininity, subject to regulation and protection.

Under this regime, the aim of sexual relationships is for procreation (Moghasemi et al., 2018) and for women to satisfy their husbands (Khoie et al., 2008). Sex outside marriage is illegal, with harsh punishments for breaking this law (Article 221 and 213, Islamic Criminal Law), including 100 lashes and up to 1 year in prison. According to Article 11, a wife must be obedient to her husband (*Tamkin*) especially in sexual relationships, otherwise she is disobedient (*Nashiza*) and her husband can marry another woman (Moghadam, 2004). Same-sex sexual acts are illegal, while polygamy, temporary marriage, and easy divorce are available to men (Afary, 2009; Khalajabadi-Fahrmi et al., 2019). The legal age of marriage was lowered from 18 years of age to 13 for women and 20 years to 15 for men. Marriages are frequently arranged by the father, and the organization of romantic relationships follows traditional patriarchal models (Sharifi, 2018).

In 2012, the Supreme Leader of Iran formally disapproved of the population control strategies, calling motherhood a "sacred and essential role" for women (Khamenei, 2012). After this speech, abortion was declared illegal as was access to free contraception and the import of male condoms; all surgeries intended for permanent contraception were also banned, except for medical reasons, and harsh punishments were introduced for doctors involved in such surgeries (Karamouzian et al., 2014). Sex education is limited rendering sexuality a taboo topic (Arjmand & Ziari, 2020; Rahimi-Naghani et al., 2016). Accessing educational information related to sexual health is extremely difficult for unmarried couples, and the few existing sexual education programs provide services only

to couples who are married or engaged. As such, Iran is facing rising HIV and STI rates, increasing illegal abortions, and rising rates of drug use (Lotfi et al., 2013; Mahdavi, 2009).

Women's sexuality has been embedded in public morality, with women considered responsible for the moral health of Iran. This framing provides the rationale for gendered segregation, the veiling of women, and greater control on women's bodies (Najmabadi, 1993). Gendered segregation is enforced in public spaces such as schools, universities, public transport, and sport centers (Arjmand & Ziari, 2020). Shahroki (2019) shows how gender segregation has been central to post-revolutionary Iran where the state "retains its role as the ultimate arbiter of gender boundaries by regulating women's presence in public spaces" (p. 4).

Despite these profound restrictions on women's freedoms, gender and feminist politics in Iran is complex and fluid. Afary (2009) documents how Islamic feminism emerged in the 1990s and has worked to gain rights for women, not least through a pragmatic politics (see Hoodfar, 1996; Hoodfar & Sadr, 2010). Feminist resistance is not primarily shown by mass protests or marches, but through negotiating norms and laws of sexuality in everyday life (Bayat, 2013). This has seen increases in higher education participation, with over 60% of university undergraduate students being women in 2015 (Rezai-Rashti, 2015). However, this is also attributable to conservative fathers and husbands allowing their daughters and wives to go to higher education because of gender segregation, and higher education participation does not translate into equal employment, with participation of women in the work force or in parliament is among the lowest in the world (Tohidi, 2016). Women also do not have equality under the law in areas such as inheritance, marriage, divorce, and child custody.

In this context, the framework of women's human rights is instructive. This framework highlights that the oppression of women in international contexts is often disregarded as a private or cultural issue because it pertains to gender, rather than a form of systematic and profound abuse (Bunch, 1990). The criminalization of consensual sexual conduct and access to sexual and reproductive health, including around menstruation (Zivi, 2020), are human rights abuses (Fried & Espinoza-Kim, 2019). Even as women negotiate and challenge their position in complex ways, Iran exerts significant social control over women's sexuality in a manner that has been documented in fundamentalist regimes in many countries and should be considered abuses of women's human rights (Feldman & Clark, 1996; Reilly, 2009).

1.2 | Sexuality and aging in a patriarchal gender order

Sexual desires and identities tend to be considered as an endowment of young people, with older people's sexualities marginalized (Fileborn et al., 2015; King et al., 2019). In sociological research in the West, older women's experiences are frequently ignored or marginalized (Carpenter et al., 2006; Gott & Hincliff, 2003)—not least because menopause is often considered the end of sexual functioning and desire (Winterich, 2003). Here, sexual function has been considered as an element for successful aging and, by promoting "positive aging" and "antiaging" concepts, biomedical technologies shape sexual experiences in later life (Marshall, 2012). The medicalization of menopause exacerbates how the biological aspects of it are experienced (Hinchliff et al., 2010), despite research documenting the heterogeneous effects menopause has on women.

These intersections of gender, sexuality, and aging are further complicated by an ethnocentric bias where the focus is on White women in Western countries, particularly the United Kingdom and the United States (Amini & McCormack, 2019; King et al., 2019). Research has started to diversify its focus, but even important contributions here tend to focus on one aspect of these intersections so that while each structure might receive consideration, the gestalt is not fully intersectional (Daatland & Biggs, 2006; King et al., 2019). For example, Sharifi's (2018) powerful study of inter-generational perspectives of gender in Iran provides vital understanding of the shifts among younger Iranian women, but the perspectives of the older women are less developed (see also Khalajabadi-Farahani, 2020). Likewise, other research documents the developing feminist attitudes of Iranian women of younger generations, but this analytic focus means that older women's experiences are used as an

abstract norm against which change among young people are considered (Arjmand & Ziari, 2020; Khalajabadi-Farahani et al., 2019).

Connell's (1987) framework of gender order can be instructive in considering older women's experiences in Iran. Recognizing that bodies are interconnected through everyday social practices as both objects and agents, body reflexive practice shapes new structures, which address and constrain bodies. For Connell, there are four key structures that do this: (1) power; (2) symbolism, culture, and discourse; (3) production, consumption, and gendered accumulation; and (4) cathexis (i.e., emotional and sexual relations). Power is composed of different aspects, from collective or individual violence to organizational hierarchy, including the power of the state. Within Connell's framing of cathexis, an important concept to understand how structural power circumscribes romantic and sexual relationships comes from Mary Douglas's anthropological account of risk and pollution. Douglas (1966) argues that cultural rejection of things as polluted is not about hygiene but a symbolic system by which norms and structures become institutionalized. For Douglas, pollution is a way to signify danger by the dominant power to maintain socio-cultural structures, such as patriarchy. Transgressing the gender order threatens traditional sexual morality and is considered a danger and risk (Douglas, 1966, 1992)—with dirt being a crucial component in how this operates. This connects powerfully with Goffman's theorizing on stigma as a social process by which people are othered and learn to manage the effects of being socially stigmatized. Stigma becomes a form of social control where the production of shame reduces the life chances of the stigmatized person. These forms of stigma are developed over time and are closely integrated into the social structures of society (Tyler, 2020). As we will show in this article, concepts of shame, stigma, and pollution are powerful ways of understanding the regulation of cathexis within a patriarchal gender order.

2 | MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this study, we employed a biographical life course approach, placing emphasis on transitions and the dynamic complexity of the individual's life, and enabling participants to narrate their own stories (O'Neill, 2010; Roberts, 2002; Rosenthal, 2004). Placing participants' realities at its center, and focussing on their subjective interpretation, this approach is salient for marginalized and silenced groups, including our participants (Merrill & West, 2009; Plummer, 1995). As Erel (2007) highlights, biographical methods help foreground agency and subjectivity of marginalized women, which is particularly important in an area where the patriarchal structures are often emphasized over individuals' experiences. This study is part of a broader project regarding older women's health and experiences of menopause in Iran, given the paucity of sociological research on this topic and the problems the lead author had witnessed as a midwife in Iran many years earlier (see below). It became evident during analysis that sexuality was a significant structuring force in these women's lives, hence our focus in his article on the impact of sex and sexuality across the life course.

In winter 2014 and spring 2015, the lead author conducted 30 individual biographical interviews with women who regularly attended religious classes in Tehran and Karaj. Participants from different socio-economic classes were recruited via five Quran classes from different geographical areas of Tehran: North, North East, North Center, South East, and "Downtown." Additionally, one Quran class was located in Karaj, the fourth largest city of Iran and 20 kilometers west of Tehran. People who cannot afford to live in Tehran often relocate to Karaj. Purposive and snowball sampling were adopted. To make initial contact, the lead author spoke with friends who attended these classes and, before attending herself, was introduced to the teachers of the classes and obtained their permission. To meet the women regularly, she attended all these sessions every week for 4 months. The lead author gave an introduction at the start of the first session of each class, and potential participants were invited to join the research and given contact details.

Participants were all aged 45 or older and were either: post-menopausal (menstruation had ceased for more than a year); had experienced the termination of their menstruation cycle, but for less than a year; or had

experienced menopause due to undergoing hysterectomy surgery as the result of menorrhagia. All participants had experienced the Islamic revolution (1979) during their adolescence. The sample had a wide range of educational levels and professions, from illiterate to medical practitioner. Table 1 provides further detail about participant demographics including education level: In Iran, school education lasts for 12 years but is not always completed. Where participants did not complete high school, we state the grade they completed which corresponds to the number of years of schooling.

The interviews were conducted by the lead author who is an Iranian woman. Her interest in the sexuality of older Iranian women stems from a combination of biographical factors, beginning with her background as a

TABLE 1 Participant information

Name	Age	City	Education	Occupation	Children
Anis	50	Tehran	Degree	Teacher	2
Bitia	64	Tehran	Degree	Teacher	2
Eftekhar	54	Tehran	Postgraduate degree	Teacher PT	2
Farideh	57	Tehran	Postgraduate degree	Teacher	2
Farnaz	50	Karaj	Grade 5	Factory Worker	5
Fatemeh	53	Karaj	Illiterate	Housewife	6
Habibeh	69	Tehran	High School	Retired Nursery Assistant	3
Hoda	66	Karaj	Grade 2	Housewife	11
Mahdieh	51	Tehran	Degree	Teacher	2
Mansoreh	56	Karaj	High School	Housewife	3
Maryam	50	Tehran	Degree	Part time Teacher	2
Masomeh	60	Tehran	High School	Retired Clerk	2
Mehri	47	Tehran	Degree	Dentist	1
Molood	62	Teran	High School	Nursery Teacher	2
Nafiseh	65	Karaj	Grade 3	Housewife	1
Nahid	51	Tehran	Postgraduate degree	Midwife	2
Nakisa	59	Tehran	Postgraduate degree	MD	2
Pooran	48	Karaj	Diploma	Teacher	1
Rahimeh	56	Tehran	Grade 8	Housewife	2
Razieh	50	Tehran	Grade 4	Housewife	4
Reihaneh	59	Tehran	Degree	Teacher	0
Samin	54	Karaj	High School	Housewife	4
Sanaz	58	Tehran	Degree	Teacher	3
Sarah	57	Tehran	Postgraduate degree	MD	2
Shokooh	60	Karaj	Grade 5	Factory worker	4
Tahereh	48	Tehran	High School	Housewife	1
Tooran	50	Tehran	Degree	Teacher	2
Zahra	51	Tehran	Postgraduate degree	Manager in Education Ministry	3
Zeinab	62	Tehran	Degree	Secretary	3
Zohreh	47	Tehran	High School	Housewife	2

midwife for more than 7 years in Tehran. This involved spending time with a range of women, frequently hearing about their private lives where narratives of trauma were common. The medicalized discourse of the menopause alongside the evident distress this caused led the lead author to study for a PhD in sociology and conduct research on social understanding of menopause in Iran. Given her gender, nationality, and sexual orientation were the same as the research participants, the lead author entered the research field as an insider with a shared language and cultural history. Yet, boundaries between the researcher and participants were also evident because of her Westernized status as a researcher from a British University, her age and her marital status. These differences were mediated throughout interview, with participants asserting agency through choosing where and when the interview took place, and the researcher obeying the norms and etiquette of Iranian culture (Amini, 2019). While any qualitative account is necessarily partial and contingent, the lead author was able to collect data that were rich and guided by a deep understanding of Iranian culture and gender norms.

All interviews lasted over an hour—and some of them 2 hr—due to participants' eagerness to discuss their experiences which is typical for biographical research (O'Neill et al., 2015). Interviews were conducted in Farsi, and translated into English. Systematic analysis of the data then occurred through two processes: thematic analysis, focusing on the content of the text, and structural analysis, emphasizing the way a story is told, and how narratives are constructed (Riessman, 2008). Thematic analysis was used to identify similarities and differences across participants' stories. Here, we constructed a typology of themes to enhance our analytic interpretation. The structural analysis, focusing on language, highlighted the process through which a story was told and highlighted the meanings of the stories—doing so by employing our analytic theoretical framework. Analysis was primarily undertaken by the lead author, with the second author corroborating codes and themes and developing analysis in an engaged way with the lead author. As a gay British sociologist with no personal experience of Iran, these divergent backgrounds were a source of productive tension through sympathetic challenging of themes and arguments to ensure a critical analysis that remained rooted in humanistic foundations, cognizant of the socio-cultural context and structural constraints of Iranian culture (Merrill & West, 2009).

Significant ethical issues exist regarding interviewing women about sexual stories in a patriarchal context. Ethical guidelines of the British Sociological Association were followed, with anonymity and confidentiality guaranteed. Gaining access and informed consent are a complex process (Miller & Bell, 2012), as is the safety of participants and interviewer, and the intricacies of doing this in Iran has been discussed as it relates to this study in detail elsewhere (Amini, 2019). Most participants had not told these stories to anyone previously, and while most said they felt "peaceful" or similar term after interview, it also invoked emotions including recollections of trauma. In six cases, we referred participants to a specific counselor. We approached ethics as a practice to be continually negotiated throughout data collection and incorporated into our reflexive analysis, ensuring that our findings authentically represent the stories to give voice to these women's experiences (Erel, 2007).

3 | RESULTS

As part of our biographical life course approach (Roberts, 2002), we identified key stages in participants lives in which sexuality consolidated in their narratives. These three stages were childhood, with a focus on puberty; entering womanhood, via first sex on wedding night; and menopausal time, and limited assertion of agency in the absence of sex.

3.1 | Puberty and family management of signs of sexuality

All participants spoke about puberty as a key moment in their awareness of sexuality. Shame and silence dominated participants' first experiences of sexuality, and participants hid their breasts as children because of the

stigma associated with them (see also Crawford et al., 2014). Nahid (aged 51) mentioned that growing her breasts was “strange” for her and she emphasized that she and her sisters “tried to hide them, *always*.” Her mother would insist that they wear a very tight vest under loose shirts to hide their breasts whenever they had a guest at home, and she said “this was a source of great *shame* for us.” Tahereh (aged 48) stated that was prohibited from playing and cycling in the street:

I loved to cycle in the street near our house and play with all of the boys and girls who lived near us. But my dad told my mum that it was not suitable anymore for me to play outside of the house and asked her not to let me play and cycle in the street with other children. My brother could do it. That summer was the worst summer holiday of my life.

Zahra (aged 51) argued that shame was not only felt but also had to be displayed for the male members of her family. She explained that all girls must have this feeling of “shame,” even in front of their brothers and fathers, as shame indicates their “chastity” and “modesty,” important characteristics of a “good girl.”

These experiences of breast development were consolidated through dominant Iranian discourse. In Farsi, while *pestan* is the word for breasts, women are expected to use the *sineh* to describe their breasts, which translates as chest. Similarly, when medical staff discuss sexual organs with colleagues, they use English words instead of Farsi. Given the rejection of Western notions of femininity in Iran (Sharifi, 2018), the use of English can be seen as associating sexual organs with the dangerous and polluted West.

Participants spoke about how the feelings of shame that emerged in puberty persisted throughout their lives. Pooran (aged 48) explained that she still felt shame when discussing her breasts, saying: “I flush with shame. Look at my cheeks, you see?” She stated that her shame stemmed from her breasts being “obvious...even under Chador” [A Chador is a full-body-length fabric which is worn as Hijab, without any hand openings, and covers the women's body from head to toes]. Similarly, Eftekhar (aged 54) felt her breasts to be “very shameful,” adding “I try to hide them by slumping.” These early feelings had long-lasting effects on feelings of one's body and cathexis more generally, with all participants speaking about hunching their bodies to hide their breasts.

Alongside shame regarding the visible sign of puberty, menstruation was also experienced as a significant source of social stigma (Johnston-Robledo & Chrisler, 2013). All participants believed menstrual blood is dirty and makes them unclean and polluted (Douglas, 1966). As such they regularly performed the ritual religious bathing, known as Ghusl. Iranian Muslim women are required to perform Ghusl after menstruation, sexual relations, childbirth, and touching a dead body—with the notion that menstrual blood is polluted and in need of cleansing. Indeed, participants used the phrase “getting clean” to refer to the end of the menstrual cycle.

Most participants had no knowledge about menstruation before its onset, and found it “scary” and “shameful.” Reihaneh (aged 59) explained that she was terrified at the time because she thought she had “got some bad illness.” Similarly, Zohreh (aged 47) was told by her parents that if girls knew about “those things [menstruation], they would become rude and cheeky.” Only the women with a health sciences background (Mehri, Nahid, Nakisa, and Sarah) knew about the sexual parts of their body and its anatomy. All participants hid their menstruation from other members of the family for fear of being blamed as immodest or unchaste. In this context, menstruation was seen as the fault of the girl and a blemish that impacted on her good character (Douglas, 1966; Goffman, 1963)—a form of pollution and stigma that must be silenced, with profound effects on their sense of self.

3.2 | Proving virginity, first sexual experiences, and hating sex

While virginity is imbued with meaning cross-culturally (Carpenter, 2001), it has special significance in Iran, as in many Middle Eastern countries, and is seen as a sign of family honor (Arjmand & Ziari, 2020). Therefore, proof of virginity is an important ritual in Iran, imbued with both symbolic and literal power. Women perceived to have

failed to uphold the norm of virginity before marriage face serious social and physical harm (Wild et al., 2015), and all participants had experienced virginity tests. Most did this the traditional Iranian way, which is showing a bloody sheet after first intercourse on wedding night, while a minority did so by visiting a physician. Participants experienced this as humiliating and traumatic. Anis (aged 50) said: "I hated myself that night for doing it, but I didn't have any other choice...but even now when I am talking about it, I feel very bad about it... I feel it is an insult to me." Pooran explained that proving virginity for her meant, "Not being trusted," so she "felt humiliated."

However, all participants continued to believe that the virginity test is necessary for all girls, although this about protecting women rather than for the importance of virginity. This was, according to Habibeh (aged 69), to "prevent possible future problems." These problems were primarily that others might doubt virginity, and Habibeh had kept the bloody napkin from her virginity test and showed it to female relatives including her mother-in-law to prevent "gossip." Indeed, Nahid, a midwife, explained that she had sought a virginity test after "seeing lots of arguments on this issue" as a midwife, and she also encouraged her sisters and daughter to do so.

All participants' first experience of sexual activity occurred on the first night of their marriage, and most did not have any knowledge about sexual activity beforehand. For example, Pooran narrated that she "had many questions" in her mind regarding the first night of her marriage, but "there was no one to ask." Zohreh stated that the lack of sexual information before first coitus made the experience of losing her virginity "very scary" and "painful," like a "nightmare." The only explanation or advice that her mother gave her was "keep quiet! Just keep quiet and be still and motionless and let him do it." Similarly, Anis "did not know what to do" during her first sexual experience, and her mother and aunt recommended her to be "silent and still" otherwise "it would be painful." She added, "During that time, I closed my eyes and prayed to God to finish as soon as possible. Still even remembering that night is painful."

The religious gender order of Iran exacerbated the negative experience in multiple ways. For example, Zahra, after explaining that she is very religious, narrated:

Hijab is important for my family. I had a Hijab from 9 years old ... My first sexual experience was very scary as suddenly I had to be naked for a man whom I had known for less than 2 months.... My mother didn't tell me anything and I didn't know what to do so; as soon as he started touching me, I wanted to cry and escape... I can remember that I shacked very badly.

Likewise, Reihaneh stated that she was 23 years old when she got married and that first sex came as a shock to her: "Think for a while; you have to cover yourself from head to toe from the time you are 7 or smaller and then, one night, they ask you to expose yourself suddenly."

Ghusl was another religious norm that contributed to negative experiences. Maryam, aged 50, mentioned that the need to do Ghusl after sex made her think of sex as a polluted and dirty act:

I was really worried, especially when I found that it needs obligatory Ghusl after that.... and I said that this is a terrible thing; how dirty it is ... you have to wash yourself from this dirty act so that you can be clean again. Otherwise, you are dirty, you are not clean.... I used to think that, you know, because of the Ghusl, I used to think that it must be a dirty and filthy action because we have to do the Ghusl afterwards.

Shokooh, aged 60, also believed that sex was dirty, saying, "Doing these things is dirty; if it's not dirty, why [do] we have to do Ghusl after it? You see, it is dirty."

Participants did not discuss sexual activity with family members to gain sexual knowledge. This hegemony of silence would continue into the women's married lives with their husbands—the structure of cathexis set in childhood continuing into adulthood (Connell, 1995). For example, Reihaneh believed that "sexual conversation is

not appropriate for a woman with modesty” so, she purposefully avoided discussing it with her husband. Similarly, Maryam, said she never talk about sex with her husband as he “knows well himself to what to do” and added:

I always tell myself it's not something important, he does know everything necessary himself, it never became necessary to tell him to do something, he himself knows better, and I never tell him that it's better to do this or it's better that you didn't do that.

State and religious discourse define the meanings of “proper sex” as women having penetrative sex with their husbands to give them satisfaction (Civil Code art. 1106–08), which participants had internalized. All participants described “real” sex as penetrative and in the terms of vaginal/phallogentric sex, which ends in an orgasm for their husbands. For example, Farnaz, Habibeh, and Masomeh narrated that they did not like “real sex,” defining this as penetration, stating that they liked instead “the cuddling part, but not the other one.”

The great majority of participants reported an active dislike of sex. Anis narrated that she disliked sex with her husband, rejecting sexual advances from him; providing evidence of agency, and control that is not always present in narratives of older Iranian women. Anis's rationale was that her husband is not religious and so having sex with him is like “having sex with a dog.” She added:

Because I've heard a Hadith [words of Prophet Mohammad] from Prophet Mohammad that says ‘to have sex with a man or woman who doesn't say her or his prayers is like to have a sex with a dog’. That was always on my mind. I always think about it. I think this is a matter always, but I always want to deny it. Whenever we sleep together, this comes to my mind and I hate it [Silence] yes, maybe the first reason was that.

Most of the participants avoided using the words “sexual” or “sex,” considering it rude, and either apologized when they used such a word or said it in another language; Nahid (a midwife) said it in English. Using a Western language disguises the erotic meanings of these words, associating sexuality with the West and thus against Iranian culture (Najmabadi, 1993; Sharifi, 2018).

3.3 | Sexual activity as obligation, Jihad, and rational choice

Most participants were disappointed in and traumatized by their sexual activity, yet they felt pressured to continue having sexual relations with their husbands. Three distinct attitudes toward sexual activity were evident, viewing it as an obligation, a Jihad, and a rational choice in a political economy of sex. Five participants believed that, as a wife, making their husband sexually satisfied is their responsibility. Raziieh (aged 50) explained it in such terms: “It's my responsibility as a wife to satisfy my husband,” fearing that not doing so would result in her “losing my husband.” In this context, sexual activity is a necessary chore of marriage. These participants viewed sexually satisfying their husband as an integral part of their feminine role, and their position as women in Iranian society.

Eight women located their experiences of sex within religious norms, arguing that sex was a form of Jihad. That is, they believed that satisfying their husbands is their religious, rather than purely matrimonial, responsibility, and if they want “to be a good faith believer, they have to fulfil their husbands' sexual needs” (Bita, aged 64). Nafiseh (aged 65) stated: “God gives reward to women for their Jihad.” Fatemeh (aged 53) also explained about the spiritual reward that she had received by fulfilling her “Jihad”:

I can remember clearly that I went to Imam Reza's shrine. I talked with Imam Reza and told him: ‘Oh holiness, I was only 14-years-old when I got married to a 40 year old man [cries], be my witness my dear Imam’, and suddenly a piece of green fabric was dropped on my skirt and I got my reward.

Although it was painful for Fatemeh, as displayed by her crying during her narration, she consciously elected to carry out her “feminine job,” in exchange for a spiritual reward.

Some women used sex as a bargaining tool. Nahid stated that she “had learned that whenever [she] wanted to ask something important from [her] husband, it would be better to do it after having sex with him.” She referred to this process as the “wisdom of a woman.” In line with Nahid, Pooran narrated that her aunt, who was 30 years older than her, always told her “to wear a special lipstick for her husband, and pay attention to the colour he likes,” then she “could have whatever she liked.” Pooran named this “women’s craft.”

The use of sex also included the faking of sexual satisfaction or pretending to have sexual desires. Zohreh faked her sexual desires as she decided she would not reveal her “shortcomings” to her husband. Reihaneh narrated that she “never let her husband know about her low sexual desire” and added “...so I’ve learnt to play along. You know, I’m a good actress [laughing].” Several of the women who did this stated it occurred more often in menopause, when their own sexual desire had decreased significantly (see Amini & McCormack, 2019). Yet, these women modified their bodily and sexual desires according to different statuses over time, by responding to their husband’s desires, while performing the sexual practice and pretending to have sexual desire themselves. Such practices may not align with Western notions of feminist agency and emancipation, and the traumatic experiences of sex for many participants is a profound harm, yet their narratives reflect a more nuanced perspective of constrained action than popular discourse allows (see Eid, 2015).

3.4 | Sexual experiences in menopausal time

Participants had rarely challenged Iran’s patriarchal gender order throughout their lives. The time they reported challenging and subverting these rules was during menopause—and relied on dominant gendered tropes of this life stage. Iranian culture has a medicalized view of menopause, which is widely viewed as a biological event that is the start of old age and even the approach of death (Amini & McCormack, 2019; Khademi & Cooke, 2003). Yet, despite menopause being seen as a medical problem and a great loss, many participants used it as a mechanism to discuss their dissatisfaction with their sexual relationships. Nine women cited their menopause as a reason to start a conversation with their husbands about sex, their attitude toward it, and to negotiate their sexual desires within their marriage. For example, Pooran narrated that during her menopausal time, sex was “torture” for her: “Nowadays, yes. I sometimes, I tell him that it’s not right for my age, but mmmm you see, before this happened, I didn’t talk to him about sex.” Similarly, Zeinab (aged 62) stated that her lack of sexual desire during menopause was “not in her hands,” adding “From the time when I started the menopause, I can say no to my husband [smiling], and he’s going to get less upset over it, because it’s not in my hands, it’s because of my menopause.” Thus, menopause enabled a discussion of sex which had not occurred before, including a rejection of a women’s role based on the gender order. The menopausal body is considered “old” in Iranian culture (Khademi & Cooke, 2003), and women used this to reject sexual intercourse which they previously had endured as obligation or necessity.

Iranian culture exerts significant control on participants’ lives. All participants who had visited a gynecologist during menopause stated they had been recommended using medication such as estrogen cream, lubricant gel, and hormonal replacement therapy, to improve their sexual experiences. Some participants were encouraged by a gynecologist to undergo perineorrhaphy/perineoplasty cosmetic surgery, to enhance their sexual experiences or to “prevent problems.” These types of cosmetic surgery involve the reconstruction of the vaginal muscles, where the gynecologist tightens the vaginal canal. Habibeh, the only woman who had the surgery, said:

My husband repeatedly told me he was not satisfied. After menopause and especially after normal delivery; you know I had three normal deliveries, so I think it was normal that it happened to me. [The nurse] told me the only solution was undergoing surgery to tighten it, and she said after doing the surgery it would be like the time I was young (smiling) and it would help my husband’s

satisfaction. It wasn't a very difficult surgery, so I did it. But to tell the truth, now it's more painful for me.

Habibeh's narrative adopts the dominant discourse where penetrative sex is an obligation in marriage, which also shaped medical care. The gynecologist did not give advice to Habibeh about having better sexual experiences, but recommended perineoplasty for the purpose of her husband's satisfaction; contrasting the aging menopausal body against a youthful ideal.

Whereas research on generational change in Iran related to gender has tended to explore this through the lens of younger women (Arjmand & Ziari, 2020; Sharifi, 2018), participant narratives show a different perspective. Most participants regarded the new generation as a stigmatized, dangerous other. For example, Fatemeh called them the "indecent generation" while Mahdiah believed "they know too much about certain things that they shouldn't know about," referring to the sexual knowledge. Disclosure of sexuality was the object of social stigma, considered as being *Gostakh*, which we translate as "shameless," "feisty," and "rude" as no direct translation is available. *Gostakh* was spoken frequently by the women when explaining their secrecy around sex or to discuss the new generation. Such language demonstrates the lasting influence of events across the life course and structuring power of cathexis on these women's lives.

4 | DISCUSSION

Sociological research on gender has a Eurocentric focus, while the small body of work on Iranian women's experiences of gender and sexuality examines younger women's experiences and generational change (e.g., Arjmand & Ziari, 2020; Khalajabadi-Farahani et al., 2019; Sharifi, 2018). Thus, by focussing on older Iranian women's narratives of sex and sexuality, we foreground the voices of a group who face oppression and constraint in their lives and marginalization within the academic literature. Adopting a biographical approach (Roberts, 2002) and considering sexuality as an ongoing aspect of their lives, we document the intersections between the structural gender order of Iran and these women's subjectivities. Considering gender and sexuality as vectors of power with internal politics, inequalities, and oppression alongside embodied practice, we show how the life course provides a trajectory of sex and sexuality that routes both in time, space, social and cultural context; constraining these women's life experiences in profound ways. It was only with menopause, which is understood as the death of sexual desire by these women (Amini & McCormack, 2019), that they challenged and contested dominant norms of sexuality. Even so, they have experienced profound harms around sexuality that can be considered human rights abuses (Bunch, 1990; Reilly, 2019).

Older Iranian women's sexual activity can be usefully perceived in terms of the interaction between women's agency in their interpretation of meanings and gendered socio-cultural structures (Mahdavi, 2009), which Connell (1995) calls cathexis. Most of the women in this research were disappointed in, and even traumatized by, their sexual activity, yet felt pressured to have sexual relations with their husbands: viewing it as an obligation, a *Jihad*, or as rational choice. Significantly, the women internalized the hegemonic gender norms of pollution and stigma related to sexual activity and sexuality (Douglas, 1966; Johnston-Robledo & Chrisler, 2013). These older Iranian women developed sexual meanings and values through structure of cathexis in Iran within the broader patriarchal gender order (Afary, 2009; Mahdavi, 2008); which also served as a symbolic break from pre-Revolution Iran (Najmabadi, 2005). Their sexual experience is a dynamic process that develops throughout life, with puberty, first sex, and menopause being key moments in their sexual lives. Participants' experiences of childhood events such as puberty sheds light on their sexual experience in their menopause, as does the meanings of sin shame and pollution that are connected to biological developments such as menstruation and growing breasts.

This study shows the importance of foregrounding older women's voices to develop a temporal and culturally grounded understanding of lived experience (see Erel, 2007). Rather than place the women in this study as passive

victims or as being dominated by an oppressive gender order, a biographical approach helps document feelings of trauma, hurt, and oppression while still recognizing agency and value in their lives. Yet, their resistance and negotiation of power structures is notably different from younger women in Iran, who often adopt more overt forms of political action (Hoodfar & Sadr, 2010; Khalajabadi-Farahani et al., 2019). It is in this context where Connell's (2012) gender order provides a framework to understand the older generation's lives. In Iran, the structure of cathexis is oriented through notions of pollution and stigma (Afary, 2009; Douglas, 2003) that is directed at women who embrace "Western" ideas of sexuality. Transgressing the gender order threatens the traditional sexual morality and is considered as a "danger" or "risk" (Douglas, 1966, 1992), as highlighted in the participants' perceptions of the younger generation. The differences in these women's experiences compared to younger Iranian women further highlights the temporal and generational aspects of gender and sexuality (Khalajabadi-Farahani et al., 2019; Sharifi, 2018)—and the role that notions of pollution and stigma played in their understandings of sex and sexuality (Douglas, 1966; Goffman, 1966; Tyler, 2020).

A women's human rights perspective also helps center the oppressive nature of Iran's gender order (Bunch, 1990). Sexual silencing, shame, and ignorance of sexual and reproductive health are in opposition to women's empowerment and in contravention of these human rights (Fried & Espinoza-Kim, 2019) and are far more damaging than still problematic discourses of sexuality in the West (c.f. Carpenter, 2001; Fileborn et al., 2015; Winterich, 2003). The Iranian regime's framing of feminism and various practices, such as gender integration and particular clothing styles, as Western and thus dangerous, is a rationale that is used in many oppressive regimes (Reilly, 2019; Winter, 2006) and using the women's human rights framework helps to recognize the oppressions these women experience even as they exert agency in their own lives.

By documenting the sexual and gendered biographies of Iranian Muslim menopausal women, we also contribute to methodological framings of gender in non-Western contexts. By placing these women's voices at the center of analysis and highlighting the complexity of the intersection of gender, sexuality, and aging in a patriarchal context, we demonstrate the importance of feminist and Indigenous centered methods in developing contextual, person-centered understandings of the social world (Chilisa, 2020; O'Neill, 2010). In a culture where "silence," "sexual purity," and "virginity" are highly valued, women's stories are often not heard, and our approach enabled us to explore the concepts and language that Muslim Iranian menopausal women used to make sense of their sexuality; it provided a reflexive space for participants, and facilitated listening and understanding, as well as agency. Participants' engagement with this research can be considered as political practice, both by enabling a re-evaluation of their life history and also by challenging the hegemony of silence on women's sexual life by telling their own sexual stories (Plummer, 1995).

Limitations are present with the study. Data are drawn from a sample of women in Tehran and Karaj, and through only six religion classes in these two cities; thus, generalization is not possible. Although we sought to access participants from different socioeconomic classes, the sample was non-random. Furthermore, we recruited the participants through volunteer sampling. Being self-selecting in this way, the women participating in this study thus may have more courage to speak up about their sexuality and challenge the hegemony of silence than might others. Even so, the sexual and gendered biographies of older Iranian Muslim women have been marginalized in sociological and feminist debates and this study advances understanding of this cultural context and how sexual biographies are shaped beyond the West.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There are no conflict of interest.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

The study received ethical approval from the first author's university, and the principles of the British Sociological Association were followed.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Given the highly sensitive nature of the qualitative data, it is not ethical to archive data in a public repository. As such, the author elects to not share data.

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Precarious bodies: The securitization of the “veiled” woman in European human rights

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Abstract

This article examines how judicial human rights in Europe have adopted the security politics that have swept across Europe in recent years and how, through the European Court of Human Rights' (ECtHR) decision-making over the veil they have contributed to the precarity of the Muslim woman's body. While suffering from stigmatization through securitization of the veil (I am using 'veil' to describe various garments such as the hijab, niqab and burqa. For the purposes of this article, this is a useful shorthand), covered Muslim women's (The concept of Muslim women is a misnomer because it suggests that Muslim women constitute a homogeneous group when they are not. Without denying their heterogeneity, its use here is suggestive of the way it is used by securitizing agents and narratives) attempts at strategic human rights litigation against bans on their clothing, including landmark cases such as SAS v. France, have failed. Institutional human rights in Europe have hijacked national governments' security narratives and thus been complicit in furthering the bodily vulnerability of covered Muslim women by sanctioning the public stripping of their clothing. This transgresses human rights' fundamental, normative, commitment to preventing bodily wounding. It exposes the conditionality and limitation of judicial human rights and endorses an idealized version of the exposed woman as free and equal. Moreover, by abandoning its role as neutral

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arbiter or audience, the ECtHR exposes human rights' ongoing link with neo-colonialism. The Court's decision-making raises the question of how veiled women might mobilize to desecuritize the veil. I suggest a return to the politics of rights combined with the "rebellious cosmopolitanism" resonant with Camus' politics to mount relentless protests against governance feminism and the Eurocentrism of institutional human rights for a return to "normal politics".

KEYWORDS

embodied rights, European human rights, Muslim women, securitization

1 | SECURITY POLITICS AND THE VEILED WOMAN

Theories of securitization have focused on the discursive practices of dominant actors (Buzan & Wæver, 2003) and the growth in institutionalized aspects of security, which have the potential to erode civil liberties (Balzacq, 2016). They have focused principally on the state as the main securitizing agent and although key theorists have recognized the need to move beyond a state-centered Eurocentrism, there is more work to be done (Wilkinson, 2007). Moreover, while securitization theory has considered the gendered nature of security, it has been less forthcoming in exploring insecurities tied up with postcolonial statehood and orientalist politics (Bilgin, 2010). The nation-state—with a distinctive but malleable history, culture, and stock of traditions—tends to be a uniquely powerful focus for narratives of solidarity and underlying security. Even when formally included in the nation-state, minorities' cultural difference (especially when preserved long after arrival) can lead to their exclusion from the narrative around national unity and security, with the implication that they threaten it, as observed by Ibrahim (2005).

This article complements and extends securitization theory in three ways. First, it explores the part played by so-called "virtuous" supra-national institutions, in this case the ECtHR. It uncovers the Court's entanglement in security politics by considering its treatment of covered Muslim women. Higher court decisions are especially important political signals in regions (like Western Europe) where judiciaries are viewed as neutral and non-political. However, here we shall see that judicial human rights, which are held up as morally superior to the nation-state and a check on its powers, have abandoned the role of neutral audience and become a player in national governments' security politics.

Second, this article looks not only at security actors but also at how securitization and security practices create insecurity through practices of normalization and exclusion, leading to psychological and physical harm (Kreide, 2019). Such harms include contributing to bodily precarity, and I explore this with reference to the covered Muslim woman. Elites' rhetoric and visible security preparations have a stronger effect on public perceptions if the threat is perceived as "direct" and "on-the-ground." If someone portrayed as "threatening" is in people's locality, whom they might even pass in the street, this will fulfill this direct-threat function. Political leaders or the media might label normal behavior a security problem to justify the implementation of policies to contain this constructed threat. It is, therefore, useful to conceptualize security as an institutional construction of security practices, which create insecurity through a dialectical process resulting in the normalization of exclusionary practices (Kreide, 2019).

Third, the article considers how securitization is part of racialized coloniality. It has its origins in colonialism as whole populations had to be subdued and regulated to prevent uprisings—part of which involved a regulation of

the colonial, exotic, and body (Said, 1978). Here, this facet of securitization will be illustrated by how the current censoring of the veiled woman across Europe, couched in the language of national security and gender oppression, echoes how the colonial body was marked in a postcolonial world at a time of heightened insecurity. Political and popular fixation on the veil resonates with the practice of differentiating the civilized “west” and barbaric “east” (Baldi, 2018).

Despite being a minor social phenomenon, government after government in the European Union (EU) have acted to prohibit various forms of covering from some public spaces and have enacted outright bans on full-face covering in public spaces. This pan European trend to proscribe the veil began in France, swiftly followed by Belgium, before spreading to include countries as diverse as Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, and Denmark. Although the prohibition of the burkini in 2016 was overturned by France's highest administrative court, a number of cities along the French Riviera continued with it. France has instituted national bans, Spain, Switzerland, and Germany have allowed individual municipalities to decide on whether to implement bans or not. Several towns in Italy have local proscriptions on face-covering and some mayors from the anti-immigrant Northern League also banned the use of Islamic swimsuits. In Germany, half of its 16 states stopped teachers from wearing headscarves. In Spain Barcelona announced a ban on full Islamic face-veils in some public spaces such as municipal offices, public markets, and libraries.¹ In Germany, Angela Merkel opposed the burqa for preventing integration and Denmark recently (August 2018) began its policing of the full-face veil in Copenhagen.²

A number of (sometimes surprising) nongovernmental movements and organizations have been complicit in this governmental regulation of Muslim women's bodies such as the media, feminists, anti-racist, and left-wing groups. Feminists like Elisabeth Badinter, anti-racist groups such as SOS-Racisme, and the Green Left have all rallied behind the narrative of the the veil as a form of oppression. These movements have used “testimonial figures” or the “exceptional Muslim” to project the image of the “ideal” Muslim, such as Hirsi Ali (Amiriaux, 2013) as part of the security drama. Fadela Amara (a French Algerian), who claimed that the ban reflected democratic principles protecting women from the “obscurantist, fascist, right-wing movement” that the burqa represents,³ has also been held up as the “good” Muslim woman. Paradoxically, the rejection of “difference” politics by these “progressive” movements has led them to side with the populists, rather than oppose them as they normally would, enabling politicians to pursue a populist agenda.

Governmental elites, such as Sarkozy and Hollande justified their excessive regulation of Muslim women's bodies in human rights language, problematizing the veil as oppressive, seeking to persuade women to uncover for self-protection. Recently, Macron maintained that France needs to convince covered women that the headscarf or burqa does not “conform to the civilities of French society” and contrasts unambiguously with France's efforts to promote women's rights and gender equality, whose importance needs to be explained.⁴ This statement perfectly captures the trope that covered women need to be saved by higher standards of civilization, which are essential to being properly European. These new forms of embodiment are excluded by powerful state actors resulting in the disqualification of this minority of women from the European community. Such women have been portrayed, moreover, as presenting serious security problems which justify differential treatment, regulation, and containment. Women who choose to cover have taken the “wrong choice,” leading governments seemingly to protect them while also presenting them as a threat, exposing a new intersection of orientalist and colonialist rhetoric in combination with popular nationalism (Sabsay, 2012).

Our entry into a new era of “unbound” security creates enemies and fears, mainly about an alleged “alien” presence, and rests on a popularized idea of the dangerous body. Securitization is a form of political mobilization which creates “dangerous” spaces and practices, inducing insecurity not only against the target “threat” but also the general population (Huysmans, 2014, p. 3). Securitization practices particularly affect unpopular, nomadic communities (Kreide, 2019). Muslims perfectly fit these criteria, being members of a diasporic community united by a commitment to a global ummah. The terrorist look-alike might be the bearded Middle Eastern man (Puar, 2007) or a Middle Eastern-looking man who wears a backpack in the underground, leading to tragedies such as that of Charles de Menezes. Now covered Muslim women in Europe have become the “suspect community” where the

control of terrorism has turned to Muslim dress (Bigo, 2002) with the veiled woman becoming an obsession among a growing number of European governments (Baldi, 2018). She is deemed a threat because, by being covered, she defies the technologies of surveillance just as she defies the gaze of others. She is hard to subject to surveillance regimes, invoking memories of Europe's colonialist struggles, such as the Algerian War of Independence, where liberation fighters used the veil as disguise, and where French colonialists forcibly unveiled Algerian women.

The human rights narrative mobilized by government elites protects only those who are seen to belong, namely those Muslim women who do not cover and assimilate into the mainstream community. Underlying this is an anxiety about multiculturalism and the religious pluralism associated with it. Governments in pluralistic societies seek to manage their religious minorities, adopting strategies of integration and assimilation, which are used to domesticate minority groups (Turner, 2012). Such assimilationist methods are disguised as progressive by emphasizing reintegration, liberty, and freedom for women (Huysmans, 2006, p. 4). Portrayed as a threat to the essential social fabric of Europe, the very small minority of women who choose to cover can only exercise their human rights by electing to uncover. In this article, I will argue that, by sanctioning the regulation of the Muslim woman's body, human rights law has become an agent rather than audience of security politics and thus a proponent of a neo-colonial agenda in the name of preserving national security.

2 | TAKING CONTROL? JURISGENERATIVE POLITICS AND STRATEGIC LITIGATION

Veiled Muslim women have contested the bans by mobilizing the language of human rights and national inclusivity. In addition to various forms of protest and juris-generative politics that advocate the "rights of others" (Benhabib, 2004), covered women also used strategic litigation to end the bans by turning to human rights law to ensure their security (Brown, 2018). This allowed formal human rights' institutions to transcend the divide between diversity and universalism where religious identity and the ideal national citizen were not seen as antithetical. The use of higher courts held out hope to these groups when mainstream politicians and normally progressive organizations let them down. This is especially so in the United Kingdom and other countries in Europe through "common law" or other traditions where courts have traditionally had a role in holding politicians to account or making law themselves. Cases of strategic litigation initially focused on the hijab but have since turned to national bans on wearing the burqa in public including, most notably, *S.A.S. v. France*,⁵ *Dakir v. Belgium*,⁶ and *Belcacemi and Oussar v. Belgium*.⁷

It was clear from their submissions that the complainants were not covering because of familial pressure. In *S.A.S. v. France*, for example, the litigant stated that she wore the burqa and niqab for religious, cultural, and personal reasons only. Moreover, she said that her choice to cover depended on her spiritual mood and, without wanting to annoy others, she simply wanted to "feel at inner peace with herself."⁸ Dakir started to wear the niqab when she was 16 for religious reasons.⁹ Belcacemi, a Belgian citizen, and Oussar, a Moroccan citizen, similarly stressed freedom of choice. Belcacemi said she wore the niqab purely out of religious conviction and always removed it when necessary. And Oussar, the second claimant, said she wore the veil because it was integral to her religious beliefs.¹⁰ The litigants alleged that their human rights had been violated in relation to various articles in the Convention, including the right to religious expression and for such freedom to be enjoyed without discrimination against religious, minorities, or other statuses.¹¹ Moreover, it is important to note that the complainants appealed to the principle of pluralism. Referring to the ECtHR's judgment based on the concept of "living together" in *S.A.S. v. France*, Dakir alleged that the ban did not uphold this principle because such a concept assumed a more pluralist and tolerant attitude to different dress codes.¹²

In accepting the governments' defense that full covering prevented positive interaction between people, jeopardizing the possibility of "living together" (*vivre ensemble*) and fell short of the "minimum requirement of civility that is necessary for social interaction" the ECtHR failed to protect Muslim women from the infringement of their

human rights by France and Belgium by arguing that “concealing one’s face in public breaks social ties and expresses a refusal to adhere to this principle.”¹³ These judgments relied on a vague and nonlegal concept based on a constructed ideal of what counts as harmonious interaction. It seemed as if the ideal of “living together” was a legally justifiable aim which could undermine fundamental freedoms if abandoned as well as individualization and the maintenance of public order. This exposed how the ECtHR accepted the French and Belgian defenses based on the appropriation of a concept originally embodied in the French Constitutional Court’s judgment which implied that individualization, and thus even democracy itself, was threatened by face covering (Burchardt et al., 2018). The ECtHR’s assimilationist and secularizing stance meant that its decision making was more allied with the retreat of multiculturalism than the protection of minority rights and religious freedoms.

The Court used a dubious legal concept to deny covered women their right to religious expression by claiming that the obstacle to the realization of human rights was the Muslim woman’s refusal to comply with European standards of what it means to be able to communicate harmoniously, endorsing old orientalist thinking. This view reflects a secularist rhetoric that posits the Western modern “invention” of face-to-face interaction as a universal signification of civilization (Fournier, 2013). The stress on “living together” could have been rendered compatible with the pluralism and tolerance potentially inscribed in the case if the Court had not insisted that to live together harmoniously depended on Muslim women making a sacrifice. Banning religious symbols in the public sphere did not signify a more open and pluralistic society (Steinbach, 2015, p. 42). Furthermore, the Court provided no evidence that “the face plays a significant role in human interaction,” and that the effect of concealing it would “break social ties” opinion (Ati, 2019).

The Court justified its decision making on the grounds that there was no domestic consensus within Europe, expressing its attachment to subsidiarity. In so doing, it abandoned its role as a check on state power by failing to establish an overarching consensus on such a politically sensitive ban. Instead, in *Belcacemi and Oussar v. Belgium*, for example, the Court held that the principle of subsidiarity should be prioritized and the question of protection of others should be left to domestic governments.¹⁴ Complicity with governmental securitization was instrumentalized by an inappropriately high level of commitment to the subsidiarity of the Convention.¹⁵ It should not have been beyond the ECtHR to have found some evidential basis for its judgment that wearing the veil could disrupt public order and infringe the dignity of others. By ignoring contrary evidence,¹⁶ the Court unthinkingly endorsed the security narrative that disproportionately targeted a soft target: the Muslim veil. While *Lachri v. Belgium* was an exception to this blanket ban, it was on the grounds that Ms Lachri was a civil party in a criminal case and not a representative of any public office.¹⁷

3 | JUDICIAL HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE HARMING OF MUSLIM WOMEN

In these judgments then the ECtHR abandoned its cosmopolitan impulses, becoming a vehicle of securitization by hijacking governmental security agendas and judging full covering to be a threat to public order. In all of the cases that the ECtHR has adjudicated on to date involving bans on the burqa, the Court has deferred to the national governments’ security agenda without assessing proportionality. Thus, it has ceased to take on the role of neutral audience which provides a check on excessive state power but has instead colluded with state tales about the threat to public order posed by a simple garment worn by a tiny minority of women, demonstrating the shift to rights to security in the name of “rebalancing” human rights (Lazarus & Goold, 2007, pp. 7–9) and supra-national institutions’ role in this move. Moreover, the judgments invoked the stereotype of national minorities as disloyal and irredentist (Banting & Kymlicka, 2010).

The ECtHR has endorsed state gendered and racialized security practices by presenting itself as “saving Muslim women from Muslim men” (Brown, 2016). Thus, the “unveiling” of women has been coded as a mark of modern liberal civilization and undermines human rights’ legal commitment to protecting humanity in favor of a

secular and liberal subject (Leckey, 2013). The Court's acceptance of governmental arguments in favor of the ban meant it endorsed the state's increasing intrusion into people's private lives (Baldi, 2018, p. 685). The mobilization of the ECtHR against covered women is an extension of state surveillance and disciplinary tactics exercised on the bodies of national citizens considered resistant to modernist ideology (Motha, 2007) thereby strengthening the state's control over their bodies and rendering them passive state subjects (Behiery, 2013).

So judicial human rights can easily be turned against the most vulnerable (Kreide, 2019, p. 62). In these cases, the ECtHR has betrayed its core function of protecting human embodiment based on a universal shared bodily vulnerability, which underpins cultural differences. Human vulnerability is based on shared bodily frailty and human rights should ultimately protect the body from harm, which might include persecution, incarceration, discrimination, and exclusion (Turner, 2006). The ECtHR judgments failed in their basic task, exposing the precariousness of the Muslim woman's body, and normalizing it by forcing women to unveil, obliterating aspects of Muslim identity (Leckey, 2013). The legal judgments effectively endorsed disturbing cases such as that where a woman was forced to remove her burkini on a beach with armed police officers standing over her (Baldi, 2016). This can be understood as a legally sanctioned form of gender-based violence, denigrating and humiliating women by stripping them of clothing. The Nice incident involved forcing a woman to remove clothing in a public space. Such indirect violence was enabled by a state apparatus which successfully depicted the body of the Muslim woman as a symbol of terror (Brayson, 2019).

This practice has become normalized as people in the street harass and strip women of their head coverings, creating a growing sense of insecurity for women who have become vulnerable to verbal and physical abuse in the street. Anti-Muslim hatred is gendered with the majority of victims being female because it is easier to target visible Muslim women who wear the hijab or burqa. Growing evidence of such practices across Europe and in North America suggest that the global increase in Islamophobia disproportionately affects covered Muslim women (Ati, 2019). By endorsing government bans, the ECtHR has contributed to a climate where the rise of hate crimes against covered women can be normalized. Securitization has, therefore, racialized Muslims in such a way that they become vulnerable to racist attacks through a form of "new orientalism," which specifically targets Muslim women's dress (Amin-Khan, 2012).

Far from liberating covered women from oppression, this forcible undressing of women promotes the myth that women's freedom is ensured by a "sexualised female form" (Abraham, 2007) and the view that uncovering allows movement from the margins to the privileged mainstream (Yoshino in Leckey, 2013). However, women's acknowledgment of their own form of compulsory feminine dress would undercut any sense of superiority (Brown, 2006, p. 189). This decision making reflects a clear commitment to assimilationism. Although the ECtHR, throughout the judgment in *S.A.S.*, reiterated that "pluralism, tolerance and broadmindedness are hallmarks of a democratic society," the court's conclusion that there was no violation of the applicant's rights legitimizes a law which removes pluralism from the public sphere and thus contributes to the intolerance of Muslims (Berry, 2014).

Judicial human rights have thus become agents of securitization based on techniques of control and processes of normalization, which lead to insecurity and have made covered Muslim women more vulnerable to abuse. The veiled Muslim woman is excluded from human rights because she recalls the nomadic culture of Muslims and their loyalty to the global ummah over and above loyalty to the state. State surveillance and disciplinary tactics exercised on the bodies of its citizens, particularly those perceived as resistant to modernist ideology, are called to mind when veiled women become embroiled in the state's struggle for power over bodies (Behiery, 2013). Human rights' protection is, therefore, based on a secular idea of womanhood and the undressed woman as a symbol of freedom and public safety. On the grounds of emancipating them, Muslim women's protections from human rights depend on their giving up external manifestations of their religion characterized as incompatible with the rights and freedoms of others (Ati, 2019).

It may, therefore, be deduced that the "judicialization" of politics has particularly affected the politics of religious difference. Judicialization has strengthened the rise of constitutional and international courts and the movement of controversies from the political to the judicial field. So local burqa disputes have become disrupted

in two ways: first, through transference from the political into the judicial fields and, second, by moving from local to national and finally to transnational arenas. As judicialization has tightened the framing of disputes about the burqa, legal templates have adopted standardized language so that socio-legal dynamics smoothly enable the spread of burqa bans (De Gambert & Koenig, 2014; Hirschl, 2008).

The Court's regulation of Muslim women's dress shows how securitization contributes to the normalization of racial violence through political and judicial power in the context of colonial modernity. It is infused by a mode of racial governmentality that draws on old colonial motifs in the modern setting. The Court has bought into the discursive framing of an issue—the Muslim veil—triggered by a crisis which has been used to endorse exceptional measures, including hard ones such as anti-terrorism legislation, and softer ones, such as the regulation of dress (Mofette & Shaira, 2016). While supra-national human rights institutions, such as the ECtHR, should be the neutral arbiter between state power and the rights of minorities, in this case at least, it has embraced the racialized security programs of some EU member states.

Thus we see judicial human rights departing from cosmopolitan ideals whose commitment to openness and tolerance of diversity is at odds with securitization. There has been the creation of general unease where multiple actors, through exchanging fears and beliefs, reinforce ideas of what counts as a dangerous society (Bigo, 2002). In line with Huysmans and Buonfino's (2008) thinking, the Court has been complicit in the securitization of the veiled Muslim woman through the politics of exception and unease (Ati, 2019). Through a combination of security fear and available technology anyone who defies surveillance is automatically a security risk. In Europe, Muslim communities defy surveillance because they live and worship separately, often speak a nonlocal second language, and cannot easily be penetrated by informers (as earlier "subversive" groups, like communists and anti-nuclear campaigners, could). Covered Muslim women are generally even harder to observe than men—this allows them to be portrayed as even more dangerous, more likely to be radicalized and harder to detect when they are.

4 | THE CONDITIONALITY OF HUMAN RIGHTS

So it appears that human rights are denied observant Muslim women, undermining what ought to be at the heart of universal human rights, namely, the prevention of bodily wounding (Turner, 2006). We see that human rights are stratified (Morris, 2013). In step with the new security agenda pursued by EU member states, the Court has accepted the Muslim woman's body and dress as a threat to public order. Human rights discourses do not figure in addressing the Muslim woman's choice to cover in accordance with her religious belief to the extent that this minority is rendered vulnerable to abuse in the street. Indeed, according to the way human rights are applied, Muslims who are formally full citizens are confined to marginal or quasi citizenship statuses (Nash, 2015) which underpins judicial human rights' denial of their right to external religious expression. Their rights, or right to have rights, have been derogated because they are perceived as "dangerous citizens." So human rights are not unconditional but depend on dressing the "right" way, namely by uncovering to avoid discrimination (Ati, 2019).

A central question then becomes: how can we explain human rights law's disproportionate response to a minor and harmless cultural trend? Why would the Court allow itself to be so caught up in security politics such that it denies the rights of a vulnerable and very small minority of women? The repeated failure of the ECtHR to uphold the right to religious expression, evident in *S.A.S v. France* for example, reflects a range of factors. Perhaps the most salient is the rise of populism to the extent of providing succour to populist parties such as the Danish People's Party, the Norwegian Progress Party, the Northern League Party in Italy, the Swiss People's Party, and the Freedom Party in the Netherlands, becoming more important than tackling real threats. It has been right-wing populist parties that have driven the veiling ban, presenting the veil as antithetical to democracy. Such parties contributed to the rise of negative cultural framing of immigration which put the Muslim veil at the center. Populism used this as a symbol of the divide between people and a cosmopolitan elite that allowed immigrants (they believed) to undermine the nation (Yilmaz, 2012). When a center right minority government came to power in the

Netherlands in 2010 in alliance with Geert Wilders's Party for Freedom (the third largest at the time) the coalition enacted a general ban on face coverings. The pan-European crisis of multiculturalism has provided a platform for human rights law to act disproportionately. In reacting to a non-threat, the Court was enacting a "symbolic strike against the symbolic representation of a challenging ideological opponent" (Cox, 2019, p. 249).

The Court's deference to populism is further understood in relation to the wider geo-political context such as the rise of unpredictable international terrorism by non-state actors (Cronin, 2002/03) combined with "home-grown" terrorism carried out by second and third generation Muslims in western Europe (and the United States), which has grown since 2001 in response to transnational grievances and which targets civilians (Wilner & Dubouloz, 2010). These developments coincided with the arrival of refugees displaced by Middle Eastern wars leading to the engagement in crisis governance including emergency controls, border controls and surveillance alongside intra-European conflict because European states differ in their refugee and immigration policies (Morsat & Kruke, 2018).

Attempts by the EU to establish a homogeneous identity have always been precarious, reigning over diverse national economies and cultures all of which have their own particular interests which are lobbied for in this supra-national entity. Now, with the exit of Britain and the threat of other member states copying it Europe is undergoing a further crisis. The movement of refugees from war-torn zones into some European countries has triggered the rise of anti-immigration populist movements across Italy, Germany, Spain, and other EU countries. And, the *bête-noir* of the refugee movement is the Muslim. The so-called carrier of extremism, violence and terrorism all of which collided in the rape crisis in Berlin. Juridical human rights are less favorable to the most unpopular minorities and have stolen the thunder of the populist right cloaked in so-called "liberal" and "progressive" values. European identity, forged in the 1980s, has started to unravel and the need to keep it together underpins the excessive regulation of the covered Muslim woman. The Court's permission for Muslim women to be forcibly unveiled placates popular prejudice and overshadows democratic pluralism and commitment to cultural difference, which are essential to protecting human dignity (Ati, 2019).

Intolerance of tolerance is often the product of some sort of existential crisis and in this case it is plausible to point to the insecurity produced by the crises of national and supra-national identities and the Court absorbing the state's traditional reaction to insecure identity. The juridical regulation of clothing has been critical to the establishment of an imagined homogeneous national identity and the means by which "foreigners" are defined as non-citizens (Baldi, 2018). Dress has long been a way to distinguish "alien" from "citizen" where the first is cast out from the law and the second reinforces the "order of things" (Baldi, 2018). Historically, veiling and unveiling play an important part in nation building (e.g., Turkey and Iran) and in solidifying national dominance. Such bodily regulation is common at times of national and international crisis and conflict. And where the nation is imagined, it is often done so in a "sexed" way (Mayer, 1999), which explains the disproportionate focus on Muslim women. In this case, Europe is responding to a transnational community which is challenging national norms that are themselves being questioned by the effort to provide a "glue" between different nations. This supports the contention that human rights have yet to escape their colonial heritage and decolonize (Samson, 2020).

The Court's decision making uncovers an engrained ambivalence within human rights (Kreide, 2019) where they have become both the "benchmark" of security and insecurity. This ambivalence stems from the normative individualism of liberal human rights that centers on the protection of individual security and which sits uneasily with the idea a community within a community (Kreide, 2019, p. 62). The use of human rights to uphold national bans on the veil exposes a tension between universalist and communitarian principles such that "liberalism's poorly drawn fight with communitarianism [lacks] a strong account of solidarity" whereby communitarianism is understood as an "enemy or at least a foil" (Calhoun, 2002, pp. 871–879). The liberal idea of rights needs to incorporate a stronger sense of what binds people to one another (Calhoun, 2002, p. 881) and includes recognition of communal, especially religious, identities. Human rights are, therefore, indecisive in combatting securitization—being simultaneously conditions for freedom and resistance as well as instruments of oppression (Kreide, 2019, p. 61). Women's rights are integral to this as they presume the (baseless) persona of "suspect terrorist" based on

a visibility of the supposed gulf between “the West” and “the Rest,” which leads to the instrumentalization of women's rights for the purpose of “security.”

The paradox of judicial European human rights has its roots in classical theory, in particular, in the views of Locke and Montesquieu and the dominant status of natural law (Kreide, 2019). John Stuart Mill, the defender of liberal human rights, had very fixed views on who were not sufficiently civilized to deserve rights. In his view it was the individual not the collectivity who should be at the center of all policy and people under colonial rule were considered undeserving. The “Rights of Man” went hand in hand with colonial rule and slavery (Samson, 2020, p. 23). Such principles continue to guide contemporary human rights law. Now it is about the exercise of life, liberty, property, and security. The major problem, however, is that freedom does not include the potential for social participation. The normative liberalism to do with protecting individual security is based on being a part of mainstream society. There is a tension between human rights and participation in a community rooted in the liberal tradition which pits the individual against others (Kreide, 2019).

From this perspective the regulation of Muslim women's clothing is, according to the liberal normative view of human rights, seen as extending human rights to these women and not denying them, that is, protecting the individual woman from gender abuse. But in doing this, by presenting a case that the law is protecting the human rights of Muslim women manifesting their religious commitments, it is infringing their right to be a people among a people and denying them agency while simultaneously highlighting them as a security threat without any evidence. This reflects the problematic dialectic nature of human rights, namely that it is useful for individuals to make claims against the state but those who make claims as part of the community cannot exercise their rights. Thus, in liberal democracies, those who most need to make rights claims do not have the means to do so (Kreide, 2019) rendering covered Muslim women precarious.¹⁸

5 | CONCLUSION: DESECURITIZING THE VEIL?

While Muslims' political and social exclusion has forced them to take a formal, legalistic approach to asserting and defending their rights, the outcomes are generally negative because the law—especially human rights law—is a slow and blunt instrument. Their cases (on Muslim dress and related issues) are forced upwards to supranational courts; and when these finally deliver a verdict, often months or years later, they almost invariably push back into a national jurisdiction, where (majority) cultural norms shape the law and its interpretation. Dambour (2006, p. 13), supporting this view, notes that there is in European human rights a multitude of problems, which might affect women's rights, because applications are often declared inadmissible or there may be disproportionate derogation of provisions in national emergencies or deferral to national states in public security. Judicial human rights, instrumentalized through the ECtHR, have become embroiled in the securitization process normally ascribed to national institutions and actors.

Strategic litigation on the part of Muslim women has failed to penetrate this process. Left legalism, whose scope for rallying behind individual cases has (at least in Europe) been limited. Muslim women cannot rely on the left to force human rights law to ensure justice through legal means as promised by the liberal state. Left legalism has been trying to give voice and agency to women affected by the burqa bans by appealing to freedom of religion and multiculturalism as a way of accommodating religious pluralism. The unintended consequences of this is that it engages in processes which shape the act of veiling in the West without reference to the multiple ways in which women might choose to cover and fails to see that the ban does not simply silence women but wholly constitutes the Muslim woman. Left legalism is not, therefore, necessarily an effective way of combatting state power and decentralizing it (Fournier, 2013).

Importantly, the Court in which these women find themselves is based on a legalistic process and speech acts which stand and fall on lawyers, but which might be culturally at odds with those who use non-verbal ways of enacting their rights. Muslim women, in these cases, are being forced into a Eurocentric rule system. Non-western

modes of protest are not necessarily vocal—they can be silent and physical. Veiled women for example, asserting their rights simply through dress. The difficulties they face by recourse to human rights law is that they are being forced into someone else's rule system and a Eurocentric judicial system (Ibrahim, 2005).

The desecuritization of the veil involves removing covered Muslim women from the political and legal security agenda. Desecuritization might best be practiced through creative, every-day micro practices and the production of counter-narratives (Legros and Lièvre in Kreide, 2019). A return to the politics of rights (Scheingold (2004), which are rooted in minorities' daily experiences of discrimination, may complement this. From this perspective, the gap between growing diversity and universalism may be overcome by locating human rights within "democratic iterative politics" (Benhabib, 2004) and an appeal to solidarity that calls for care for strangers (Calhoun, 2002, pp. 878–888). Such action would involve jettisoning strategic litigation in line with Scheingold's (2004) concept of the "myth of rights," that is the myth that legal rights are directly empowering. Lack of enforceability is more visible with human rights than most other legal rights because they do not depend on state power and nor do they correlate with duties (Turner, 2006).

As formal legal channels have been found wanting, rights mobilization should be used in conjunction with other approaches that do not depend on formal, legal challenges (Scheingold, 2004). Veiled women are making a rights claim, a claim to be a community within a community (Kreide, 2019) and a new politics of human rights could rescue them from the formal judiciaries and transform them into a political movement (Scheingold, 2004). This would involve the mobilization of particular causes using the wider framework of human rights language, in a way that connects with people's shared experience, and raises the legitimacy of human rights by showing their benefits to a wider community. Moreover, while human rights have been disconnected, judicially, from cosmopolitanism, it is worth reflecting on how they might be furthered through the "rebellious cosmopolitanism" characteristic of the politics of Albert Camus. Camus himself was no fan of the Muslim veil, but his emphasis on unrelenting rebellion and strategic use of nonjudicial human rights (Hayden, 2013) could be a useful model for future protest.

Unrelenting rebellion could only work through making effective alliances, which are so far missing because the veil ban has such popular appeal and strategic value for governments pursuing security as part of their neo-colonial agenda. The veil has the potential for "resistance identity-building" (Lorasdaği, 2009), but to bring it into normal politics and out of security, covered Muslim women will need to make alliances with sympathetic organizations such as *Amnesty International* and *Human Rights Watch*, both of which have consistently stated that bans on the headscarf and burqa violate international human rights and representatives of which have made statements in support of the women in *S.A.S. v. France* and the other cases.

One of the most problematic of schisms is within the feminist movement. This rupture centers on western liberal feminists versus decolonial feminists who argue that the former has silenced the experiences of so-called "Third World" women. There is a big gulf between liberal feminists such as Elisabeth Badinter and secular Muslim women in organizations such as *Ni Putes Ni Soumises* and FEMEN. Such movements have played an important part in (rightly) condemning women imprisoned for failing to wear the headscarf, the problem being that their protest trades on another form of objectification of women, namely, bodily exposure. Feminists who have accepted governmental bans on the veil have, in their argumentation, succumbed to the kind of orientalist stereotypes that the international feminist movement has been at pains to fight and have failed to see that feminism and anti-racism should be mutually reinforcing (Delphy, 2006).

Muslim women who choose to cover and those who choose to uncover need to find common ground. Both are subjected to the male gaze and governance, so they need to join together to create a diverse Muslim-ness and defy objectification. It is important that relentless rebellion joins the interests of both groups and harnesses them to a common goal. Thus, there needs to be a movement to overcome dichotomous thinking within feminism where the veil either represents repression or resistance and where there is an alliance between the former with liberal, universalist discourse and the latter with postcolonial feminist discourse, such that both end up neglecting the variety of reasons for choosing to cover (Bilge, 2010). There is a need to overcome the dichotomy within feminism where, for liberal/universalist feminists, the veil is seen as a marker of subordination and oppression- and where

cultural insiders such as Fadela Amara are mobilized to support their cause as experts versus post-colonialist feminists who see the veil as a form of resistance, albeit against commodification and westernization. Both approaches side-line the possibility of wearing the veil for religious reasons (Bilge, 2010).

To counter the securitization of the veil and the complicity of judicial human rights in this, there needs to be relentless rebellion rooted in the combined resistance of human rights groups, Muslim women of various persuasions, feminists, the left and anti-racists through realizing that framing the bans on the veil in terms of national security and gender oppression has served to disguise the neo-colonial agenda underpinning them and to decolonize the language of security which has demanded assimilation and an enforced "whiteness" of the public space dependent on age-old regulation of women's bodies under colonialism. This kind of activism has the potential successfully to disconnect European human rights from a securitizing, neo-colonial project (Brayson, 2019).

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-13038095.
- 2 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-45064237>.
- 3 <https://fcc.uchicago.edu/directory/neither-whores-nor-submissive-burqa-ban-france>.
- 4 <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/946947/emmanuel-macron-muslim-women-islam-burqa-heads-carf-ban-france>.
- 5 S.A.S. v. France, App. No. 43835/11.
- 6 Dakir v. Belgium, App. No. 4619/12.
- 7 Belcacemi and Oussar v. Belgium, App. No. 37798/13.
- 8 S.A.S. v. France, App. No. 43835/11, para. 12.
- 9 Dakir v. Belgium, App. No. 4619/12.
- 10 Belcacemi and Oussar v. Belgium, App. No. 37798/13 para. 6.
- 11 Articles 8, 9, 10, and 14, respectively.
- 12 Dakir v. Belgium, App. No. 4619/12.
- 13 S.A.S. v. France App. No. 43835/11.
- 14 Belcacemi and Oussar v. Belgium, App. No. 37798/13, para. 51.
- 15 Dakir v. Belgium, App. No. 4619/12, para 59.
- 16 Provided by The Human Rights Centre of Ghent University in S.A.S. v. France, App. No. 43835/11.
- 17 Lachri v. Belgium, App. No. 3413/09.
- 18 This is not to suggest that European Muslims are not divided over the veil, however, these complexities have been obfuscated by a defensive reaction to attacks on the veil that have been based on a racist portrayal of covered Muslim women (Amin-Khan, 2012).

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Unveiling everyday discrimination. Two field experiments on discrimination against religious minorities in day-to-day interactions

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Abstract

In recent years—particularly since the beginning of the refugee crisis in 2015—the political debate about issues of Islamophobia and resentment of Muslims has gained new momentum. Our research contributes to the growing experimental literature focusing on these phenomena. Unlike most previous empirical investigations, the present study does not examine “large scale” discrimination against Muslim minorities in situations which occur only periodically throughout an individual's life (e.g., on the rental-, labor-, or partner market); rather, it sheds light on (minor) discrimination events that occur on a day-to-day basis. Such “everyday discrimination” has been shown to be particularly detrimental to physical and psychological health. Specifically, our research examines the effect of open displays of religious identification—wearing a Muslim headscarf—on everyday discrimination against female Muslims. We report the results of two natural field experiments in Switzerland designed to examine such forms of day-to-day discrimination. Study 1 focuses on differential sanctioning, whereas study 2 investigates differences regarding helping behavior. We found pronounced discrimination against women wearing a headscarf in two distinctly different types of everyday interactions. In both scenarios, headscarf-wearing confederates were treated less favorably than bare-headed ones: they were sanctioned more often for violating the “stand

right, walk left"-norm on escalators and received less help when asking for a favor (borrowing a mobile phone for an urgent call).

KEYWORDS

everyday discrimination, field experiment, helping behaviour, Muslim headscarf, social norm enforcement

1 | INTRODUCTION

Especially since the beginning of the refugee crisis in 2015, the political debate about issues of Islamophobia and resentment of Muslims has gained new momentum in many European countries. Most empirical investigations of these phenomena to date have predominantly relied on data from large-scale surveys where respondents self-report their views of certain social groups, including Muslims (e.g., Helbling, 2014; Koopmans, 2015; van der Noll & Saroglou, 2015; Stolz, 2005). While these studies benefit from the representativeness of the data they are based on, they also suffer from various shortcomings. First, respondents' tendencies to answer sensitive questions untruthfully to conceal socially undesirable beliefs and attitudes endanger the validity of the results (Krumpal, 2013). Second, these studies generally examine *attitudes* instead of *behaviors*. Yet, since attitudes do not necessarily predict the discriminatory behaviors harmful to marginalized groups, focusing on the latter appears to be an appropriate strategy (Ahmed, 2010; LaPiere, 1934).

More recently, efforts have been made to overcome these problems. Increasingly, researchers draw upon different kinds of experimental approaches to focus on actual behavioral patterns. Experimental designs—mainly correspondence studies—have been used to examine disadvantages of Muslims on the labor market, such as lower chances of receiving a call-back or an invitation for an interview (Adida et al., 2010; Birkelund et al., 2019; Di Stasio et al., 2019; Pierné, 2013; Valfort, 2018; Weichselbaumer, 2020; Wright et al., 2013), longer waiting periods after a job application was sent (Zschirnt, 2019) or less positive interactions with prospective employers (King & Ahmad, 2010). Similar designs have been employed to study discrimination on the rental (Auspurg et al., 2017; Bosch et al., 2010; Carlsson & Eriksson, 2014) or partner market (Potârcă & Mills, 2015). These studies have revealed substantial adverse effects of a person's (perceived or actual) association with the Islamic faith. Yet, they all focused on discrimination in situations which arise only periodically throughout an individual's life. For most people, looking for a new job, a new place to live or a new partner is an experience that only occurs every few years (or even decades). During such an episode, individuals are likely to suffer many repeated failures related to discrimination; nevertheless, these challenges are not those which persons need to face in their everyday lives.

Research, however, suggests that—in addition to such major events—minor but recurrent forms of discrimination on a day-to-day basis can also represent a continuous, chronic stressor and may thus be particularly detrimental to physical and psychological health (Lewis et al., 2010; Lewis et al., 2015; Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009). Such forms of subtle discrimination in everyday situations have received less attention thus far. Some studies have examined differences in people's willingness to help native individuals compared to persons belonging to an ethnic or religious minority, for instance by returning lost letters or e-mails (e.g., Ahmed, 2010; Berger & Berger, 2019; Bushman & Bonacci, 2004; Koopmans & Veit, 2014). Findings from this line of research suggest that minorities have lower chances of receiving help than natives. To our knowledge, only one study has focused on everyday discrimination in form of differential sanctioning: in a field experiment, Winter and Zhang (2018) investigated if ethnic minorities in Germany have a higher risk of being reprimanded for norm-violating behaviors than German natives. Their results show that ethnic minorities are more likely to be sanctioned for littering than Germans.

The current study focuses on Switzerland, a European country where the controversy about the integration of Muslim minorities has advanced substantially in recent years, at least since 2009's "minaret initiative" prohibiting mosques from building new minarets passed (Gianni, 2010; Pratt, 2013). It relies on the design of a natural field experiment (Levitt & List, 2009). Natural field experiments have various advantages over the (rather artificial) setting of laboratory experiments: on the one hand, subjects do not self-select into participation, which prevents potential biases related to such self-selection. On the other hand, subjects are not aware that their reactions are being observed, which implies that their behaviors are not affected by the experimenter, the experimental (laboratory) situation or participants' beliefs about the aim of the study (Harrison & List, 2004; Levitt & List, 2007). Thus, natural field experiments are particularly suited to investigating socially undesirable attitudes and behaviors, including discriminating tendencies (Baldassarri & Abascal, 2017; Booth et al., 2012).

In this article, we report the results of two natural field experiments in the Swiss context. Study 1 focuses on differential sanctioning and was conducted in Zurich. Here, the "stand right, walk left"-norm on escalators was systematically violated by confederates either wearing or not wearing a headscarf. In study 2, we explore differences regarding helping behavior. In this experiment, research assistants—again with or without a headscarf—approached strangers and asked to borrow their mobile phone to make an important call.

Our research contributes to the existing literature by investigating everyday discrimination in the form of people's propensity to sanction as well as to help individuals who openly display their membership of a religious minority.

The remainder of the article is structured as follows: Section 2 discusses the relevance of everyday discrimination as well as the theoretical considerations from which we derive our research hypotheses. Section 3 provides relevant background information on Muslims in Switzerland and presents our research hypotheses. This is followed by a description of the experimental design, the data collection process and results of study 1 (part 4) and study 2 (part 5). Section 6 presents a critical discussion and conclusion.

2 | BACKGROUND

2.1 | The relevance of everyday discrimination

As pointed out by Jones and colleagues (Jones et al., 2017), discriminating behaviors can be viewed as occurring along a continuum of subtlety. They can range from overt forms where "differential and unfair treatment is clearly exercised, with visible structural outcomes" (van Laer & Janssens, 2011, p. 1,205)—which are widely prohibited by law in modern societies¹ (Lennartz et al., 2019)—to subtle kinds, which can be defined as "negative or ambivalent demeanor or treatment enacted toward social minorities on the basis of their minority status membership that is not necessarily conscious and likely conveys ambiguous intent" (Jones et al., 2016, p. 1,591). At this end of the continuum, subtle discrimination can be further categorized based on its specific setting: it can occur anywhere from formal contexts—such as one's professional or academic life—to seemingly insignificant day-to-day situations (Jones et al., 2017). In this paper, we focus on the latter.

Everyday discrimination refers to subtle but pervasive discriminatory acts that are experienced by members of stigmatized groups on a daily basis (Deitch et al., 2003). Everyday discrimination transpires in countless interactions that are spread out over the course of the day. They can manifest as microaggressions, incivilities, differences in tone and responsiveness to enquiries, perceived interest, avoidance of eye contact or social exclusion, to name but a few (Cortina et al., 2013; Hebl et al., 2002; Jones et al., 2016; van Laer & Janssens, 2011; Sue, 2010). Such behaviors need not be conscious—rather, the defining feature of everyday discrimination is that it affects targets on the basis of their minority status (Jones et al., 2016).

As acts of everyday discrimination often occur inadvertently, are low in intensity and do not necessarily have a clear intent to harm the target, they are difficult to detect. Nevertheless, their effect on the target can be

pernicious. In line with this insight, a growing body of research argues that everyday discrimination can have similarly adverse effects on physical and psychological health, well-being, job satisfaction and job performance as more overt forms of discrimination (Earnshaw et al., 2016; Gee et al., 2007; Jones et al., 2016; Lennartz et al., 2019; Lewis et al., 2015). For instance, studies have found that everyday discrimination negatively affects cardiovascular health (Guyll et al., 2001; Roberts et al., 2008; Troxel et al., 2003) and decreases overall life expectancy (Barnes et al., 2008).

This literature has highlighted different ways in which minor but pervasive everyday discrimination can be particularly damaging to the target. For one, the ambiguous nature of everyday interactions makes it difficult for a stigmatized individual to externalize the negative experience by attributing the cause of discrimination to prejudices of the discriminator. Experimental evidence to this effect indicates that subtle—and potentially unconscious—forms of discrimination may be more detrimental to the target's performance than overt discrimination (Crocker & Major, 1989; Salvatore & Shelton, 2007) and, more generally, that harmful actions with unclear intent can ultimately be more stressful to the target than open discrimination (Crocker & Major, 1989). Second, the low intensity of everyday discrimination makes it difficult to develop effective counter-strategies. Compared to policies and anti-discrimination legislature intended to minimize and mitigate overt discrimination, general and appropriate responses to the varied forms of everyday discrimination are more difficult to develop (Hebl et al., 2002). Finally, the pervasiveness of everyday discrimination can have chronic effects on the stigmatized minority as it is experienced more frequently than overt discrimination (Ayalon & Gum, 2011; Gee et al., 2007). In light of these aspects, there is a strong need for more extensive knowledge about the extent of everyday discrimination and the settings in which it occurs.

2.2 | Outgroup discrimination explained

Humans have a natural tendency to categorize objects and beings in their surroundings—including other humans—into groups. To avoid cognitive overloads, we “form generalizations, concepts, categories, whose contents represent oversimplifications of [our] world of experience” (Allport, 1958, p. 26). According to Allport (1958), a resulting preference for one's “own kind” is not necessarily born out of malicious intent, but, rather, often simply due to convenience and a degree of laziness: by spending time with those of our own group, we avoid the effort of adjusting to other languages, cultures, and outlooks on life. Nevertheless, giving priority to interactions with one's ingroup tends to result in prejudices toward the outgroup. This becomes particularly problematic when stereotypes of outgroups are irrational (that is, not based on facts), resistant to reconsideration (i.e., when evidence refuting the stereotype is not admitted) and result in discrimination of outgroups and their individual members. This phenomenon is especially pronounced when members of the ingroup perceive persons belonging to the outgroup as a threat (Mustafa & Richards, 2019; Strabac & Listhaug, 2008).

The notion of categorization into an “us” and a “them” and the resulting phenomena of ingroup favoritism and outgroup derogation have been elaborated on in the context of Social Identity Theory. The theory's basic premise is that humans not only strive for *individual* identity, but also for *social* identity, which captures people's sense of being who they are based on group membership (Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Tajfel, 1974). Once individuals identify with a group—the so-called *ingroup*—, they adopt its identity, develop an emotional attachment to it and their own self-esteem becomes linked to the group. To ameliorate their own self-image, individuals seek to boost their ingroup's image, which they achieve by drawing—legitimately or fictitiously—favorable comparisons to *outgroups* (Tajfel, 1974). This process results in the emergence of an ingroup bias, that is, a tendency to evaluate behaviors and attitudes displayed by members of the ingroup more positively than those exhibited by individuals belonging to the outgroup, which, in turn, leads to discrimination against the outgroup (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). It needs to be noted that incompatible group interests are not necessarily a requirement for the development of intergroup discrimination, but that “the mere awareness of an out-group is sufficient to provoke intergroup competitive or

discriminatory responses on the part of the in-group" (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 38). Nevertheless, a perceived threat fuels negative feelings within the ingroup toward the outgroup and increases discriminatory tendencies (Smith, 1993).

Taken together, the existence of prejudices toward outgroups and the affective component of group categorizations—positive feelings toward members of one's ingroup and a dislike of persons belonging to the outgroup—provide fertile ground for discrimination. This includes both "hot discrimination" (i.e., strong negative emotions and, possibly, actions) as well as "cold discrimination" (that is, differential treatment based on (alleged) group characteristics) (Fiske, 1998).

These processes are accelerated when symbolic boundaries between groups—which can, for example, be drawn along the lines of national or ethnic origin, socioeconomic status or religious beliefs—are institutionalized (Cesari, 2013). As posited by Securitization Theory, this is likely to occur when a minority group is perceived as a substantial threat and the members of this group are subject to a disproportionate degree of regulation (Fox, 2020). In many Western countries, for instance, Islam is increasingly constructed "as a direct security threat that needs to be addressed apart from normal legal and political processes" (Saiya & Manchanda, 2019, p. 4). Policy measures directly affecting this group can include restrictions regarding the building and maintenance of places of worship or the exercise of certain rituals and practices (Cesari, 2013; Fox, 2012, 2020). A prominent example of such a measure is the banning of veils in the public sphere. Here, policy makers argue that veils pose a direct threat to national security because of three aspects: first, they allow women to carry concealed weapons; second, they prevent a successful integration of female Muslims and make them more vulnerable to radicalization; and third, they are—particularly in case of full-body veils such as the burka or the "burkini"—a symbol directly associated with Islamist terrorism (Saiya & Manchanda, 2019). While intended to mitigate (actual or perceived) risks, such policies can also accentuate the boundaries between ingroup and outgroup and thereby contribute to an increase in discrimination against the minority—both at an institutional and a societal level (Fox, 2020).

From this general discussion, we now turn to the question of why Muslims may be seen as a threat-posing outgroup in Switzerland and, consequently, why they might face an elevated risk of being discriminated against.

3 | MUSLIMS AS A RELIGIOUS OUTGROUP IN SWITZERLAND

Our research is situated in Switzerland, a European country where the controversy about the integration of Muslim minorities has been particularly pronounced, at least since 2009's "minaret initiative" prohibiting mosques from building new minarets passed (Gianni, 2010; Pratt, 2013). As reported by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (2020a), Muslims make up 5.3% of the population of people over the age of 15 with permanent residence in Switzerland (with 35% of Muslims being Swiss citizens and most non-Swiss Muslims being either nationals of the Balkan countries (36%) or Turkey (11%)) (Federal Statistical Office, 2020b)). Based on a non-representative survey conducted by Swiss national newspaper *Tagesanzeiger* (Schindler & Soukup, 2017), the public perception of the rate of persons of Islamic faith, however, seems to be substantially higher: respondents ($n = 21,698$) were asked "Out of 100 inhabitants in Switzerland, how many do you think are Muslims?". The average estimate was 12, overestimating the true percentage by almost 7 points.

The experiments reported in this article were conducted in Switzerland's largest city, Zurich, and the country's capital, Bern. Both cities have shares of Muslim inhabitants marginally higher than the national average, with 6% of people living in Zurich and 5.5% of those living in Bern identifying as followers of Islam (Statistik Stadt Bern, 2019; Statistik Stadt Zürich, 2019).

The aforementioned debate about the integration of Muslims in Switzerland has recently been further fueled by the proposal of a right-wing people's initiative aimed at a nationwide ban on wearing face-covering garments such as a burka or niqab (Vallier & Zimmermann, 2020). While those types of veils are rather rare sights in the European context, the Muslim *Hijab* (hereafter: headscarf) is commonly worn by women across Europe as

an expression of cultural and religious identity (Elver, 2011; Korteweg & Yurdakul, 2014). Its religiously motivated function of body covering, which it shares with the more concealing *Niqab* and *Burka*, has made it a locus for recurrent controversy about the integration of foreign cultural and religious differences, freedom of expression and gender roles across Europe (Sauer, 2009). In recent years—in the wake of the ongoing refugee crisis and under the ascendancy of populist political movements—the wearing of headscarves has become embroiled in intense debates about religiously motivated body covering and the integration of Islamic religion and practices into European societies (Ferrari & Pastorelli, 2016). Whether in its own right or by its association with the *Niqab* and *Burka*, the headscarf has arguably (re-)gained salience as a symbol of religious expression. This also becomes evident in the results of a study conducted in Switzerland (Gianni, 2010), which suggest that Muslims who openly display their religion—e.g., by wearing a headscarf—do perceive discrimination against their religious group to be stronger than Muslims who do not outwardly signal their religious affiliation.

While research has established that the wearing of headscarves can prompt large-scale discriminatory behaviors in situations which are of great personal significance but occur only periodically—such as in the process of a job application (Ghumman & Ryan, 2013; Leckcivilize & Straub, 2018; Unkelbach et al., 2010)—, our aim is to understand possible effects of religious identification on *everyday* discrimination. To our knowledge, only one experimental study has been conducted with a similar goal of investigating the effect of wearing a headscarf in everyday interactions. Diekmann et al. (2014) report on a field experiment in which two female students approached passersby to solicit support for a political cause. The student in the treatment condition wore a headscarf, the one in the control condition was bare headed (switching roles on the second day of the study). Each confederate approached subjects and tried to engage them in a conversation about the cause and, if possible, to convince them to sign the petition. The results revealed no statistical effect of the headscarf on subjects' willingness to stop and listen or their propensity to provide a supportive signature. While an important step toward uncovering minor discriminations, the chosen design of soliciting support for a political cause might capture interactions which are the exception rather than the rule and, thus, only partially reflect a true "everyday"-setting. In an attempt to examine interactions that are even more commonplace, we therefore focus on two types of behavior: first, people's likelihood to sanction minor norm-violations and, second, persons' willingness to grant assistance to a stranger.

Specifically, our research hypotheses can be stated as follows:

Hypothesis 1 Women who wear a headscarf are more likely to be sanctioned for violating the "stand right, walk left"-norm on escalators than bare-headed women.

Hypothesis 2 Women who wear a headscarf are less likely to receive help from strangers when they need to make an important phone call than women without a headscarf.

In the following section, we describe the field experiments devised to test these hypotheses.

4 | STUDY 1: DIFFERENTIAL SANCTIONING

4.1 | Experimental design

4.1.1 | Setup

Various field experimental designs have been employed in previous studies of reactions to norm-violations in everyday situations. Researchers have, for example, systematically disturbed the flow of traffic (Diekmann et al., 1996; Doob & Gross, 1968), openly ignored the anti-littering norm (Balafoutas & Nikiforakis, 2012; Balafoutas et al., 2014; Berger & Hevenstone, 2016) or exposed train passengers to noise annoyances (Przepiorka & Berger, 2016). This strand of designs also includes violations of the—explicit or implicit—rule to stand on the right

side of escalators while leaving the left side empty for people who wish to walk up (or down), which is prevalent in many large cities. Studies generally have a confederate stand on the left side of the escalator and measure how different treatments affect sanctioning behavior (Balafoutas & Nikiforakis, 2012; Wolbring et al., 2013). The present study employs such an “escalator experiment”.

As in the locations of previous escalator studies—such as in Athens (Balafoutas & Nikiforakis, 2012) or Munich (Wolbring et al., 2013)—, the “stand right, walk left”-norm is a well-known rule in Zurich. For instance, at Zurich Central Station (Zurich HB), where our experiment took place, the norm is pointed out by the city’s transport authorities at the start of each escalator as illustrated in Figure 1.

The assumption that people traveling through Zurich HB are aware of this rule is further corroborated by a survey at the station in December 2017. Results indicate that the vast majority of respondents (96.5%, $n = 141$) knows about the “stand right, walk left”-norm; most people furthermore believe that most or all of their fellow travelers (75.0%) are also aware of it.

4.1.2 | Procedure and data collection

As mentioned above, the experiment was conducted at Zurich Central Station. With almost 3,000 city and inter-city trains daily and roughly 440 000 travelers on working days, Zurich HB is Switzerland’s largest railway station and busy throughout the day, including outside rush-hour periods. Trials were run on weekday mornings (Tuesdays and Wednesdays between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m.) during a three-week window in November 2017 and restricted to platforms 41/42 and 43/44. These platforms were chosen for several reasons. First, they are among the busiest platforms with trains arriving or departing every 3 to 6 min. Second, these platforms are served by local trains (S-Bahn) running throughout the city as well as to the city’s suburbs, which has two major advantages: it maximizes the share of local residents in the sample and minimizes the share of long-distance passengers traveling with luggage, which might have interfered with the experimental intervention.

The experiment was carried out by four female students² of the University of Zurich, who systematically violated the “stand right, walk left”-norm and collected data on the targets’ responses to the intervention. Each trial was conducted in teams of two with one person serving as the experimental stimulus (i.e., the norm transgressor who either was or was not wearing a headscarf) and one as the observer.



FIGURE 1 Visual instructions to stand right and walk left on escalators at Zurich HB [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

All interventions followed a predetermined script: after a train arrived, the confederate acting as the norm-violator waited for 20 s before entering the escalator. This waiting period was implemented to allow people in a rush to pass by, and thus, to increase the likelihood of sanctions occurring due to a genuine desire to enforce a norm (rather than based on the need to pass the confederate as quickly as possible). Once the confederate had entered the escalator, she stopped on the left side next to a stranger standing on the right. By doing so, she now blocked the path for people intending to walk on the left. The observer followed the confederate and found a position on the right side approximately two steps further down. The norm-violating confederate remained on the left side until a clear verbal or nonverbal sanction occurred or the end of the escalator was reached. If a sanction occurred, she cleared the path for the target by finding a vacant position on the right. After each trial, the transgressor and the observer jointly filled in an observation sheet and recorded the type of sanction (verbal and/or nonverbal).

The norm-violating confederate and the observer switched roles after a set number of trials: each confederate remained in the stimulus role for four rounds, during two of which she wore the headscarf (treatment condition). On the beginning of the day, the first experimental condition (treatment or control) was determined randomly through the toss of a coin, and then systematically varied after four trials. The operationalization of the stimulus is illustrated in Figure 2.

A total of 255 trials was conducted.³

4.2 | Results

4.2.1 | Descriptive results

In 143 out of the 255 interventions (56.1%), the norm-violating confederate was sanctioned. The vast majority of reprimands was expressed verbally (90.2%). Nonverbal sanctions as well as a combination of verbal and nonverbal rebukes were comparatively rare (4.2% and 5.6% of cases, respectively). Sanctioning frequencies and types are summarized in Figure 3. We did not find significant differences with regard to the type of sanction between the two experimental conditions ($\chi^2(2, N = 143) = 5.36, p = .068$).



FIGURE 2 Headscarf treatment in study 1 [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)]

In the sample, men were slightly overrepresented (52.1%) among the targets. Male and female targets sanctioned the norm transgressor with similar frequencies: 54.8% of the men and 57.5% of the women reproached the confederate.

4.2.2 | Regression results

For the remaining analyses, we combined the different kinds of sanctions (verbal, nonverbal or combined sanction) and work with a binary outcome variable (any sanction yes/no). As predicted, the probability of being sanctioned was substantially higher in the treatment condition: controlling for individual confederates, the likelihood of being reprimanded was 19.7 percentage points higher for a norm-violator wearing a headscarf than for a confederate not wearing a headscarf (average marginal effect of headscarf treatment ($p = .001$); $n = 255$).

As illustrated in Figure 4, the predicted probability for the occurrence of a sanction for norm transgressors in the treatment condition was 66.1% and only 46.3% for those in the control condition. These findings thus corroborate hypothesis 1. Regression results of logistic as well as linear probability models are summarized in Table 1.

5 | STUDY 2: HELPING BEHAVIOR

5.1 | Experimental design

5.1.1 | Setup

Previous studies on helping behavior have been based on a wide variety of field experimental setups. Some researchers have utilized scenarios with implicit cues signaling a confederate's need for help, for instance by

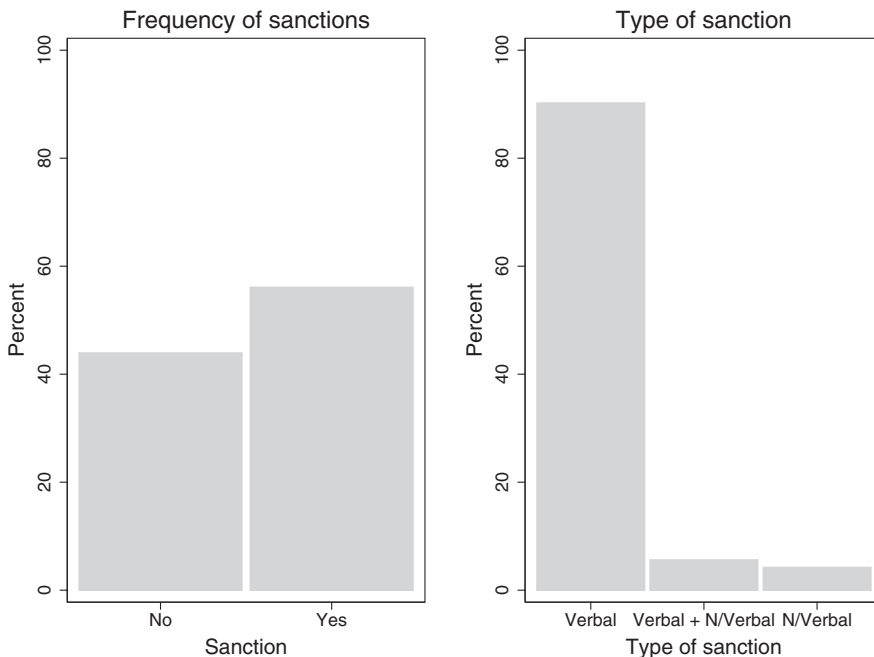


FIGURE 3 Sanctioning frequencies and types in study 1

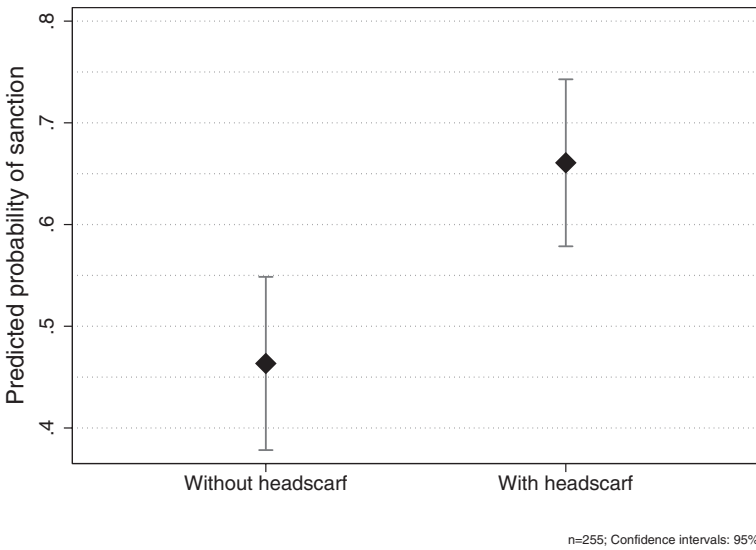


FIGURE 4 Predicted probability for the occurrence of a sanction

TABLE 1 Sanctioning—Effects of headscarf treatment

	Logistic regression model	Linear probability model
Headscarf treatment	0.836** (0.265)	0.197** (0.061)
Constant	-0.692 (0.378)	0.337*** (0.088)
N	255	255
R ²		0.064

Note: All models controlling for confederate; Standard errors in parentheses; ****p* < .001; ***p* < .01; **p* < .05.

having a confederate drop items on the ground (e.g., Guéguen & Lamy, 2013; Regan et al., 1972) or by making bystanders witness an alleged crime and observing if they intervene (Fischer & Greitemeyer, 2013). Others have employed designs with explicit requests for help, for example by asking target persons for financial assistance (Diekmann et al., 2014; Hendren & Blank, 2009; West & Brown, 1975), by requesting help to make a phone call or post a letter (e.g., Lamy et al., 2016; Langer & Abelson, 1972; Wilson, 1978) or by asking for voluntary participation in a time-consuming task (Rittle, 1981).

The approach chosen here falls into the latter category: our confederates approached strangers under the pretext of needing to make an important phone call, but having run out of battery on their own mobile phones, and asked the target to borrow their phone. This design is similar to that of a study examining persons' willingness to assist strangers of different national backgrounds by lending them their mobile phone for an important call (Zhang et al., 2019) and was chosen for three reasons. First, an explicit request (as opposed to an implicit cue) guarantees the target is actually aware that the confederate is in need of assistance. Second, this approach avoids imposing unreasonable psychological stress on the target because the request can be refused quite easily (for instance, by claiming not to have a mobile phone at hand). Lastly, the direct financial costs for a phone call are negligible; at the

same time, the request is associated with the risk of the loss of a valuable device. Thus, lending a mobile phone to a stranger demonstrates a certain degree of trust.

5.1.2 | Procedure and data collection

The second experiment was conducted in Switzerland's capital Bern. Trials were run on weekday mornings (8–10:30 a.m.) and afternoons (3–5 p.m.) in April 2018 at four different locations in close vicinity to the city's central station. The locations were chosen for two reasons. First, they are characterized by high pedestrian traffic flow, which permitted an inconspicuous implementation of the experimental intervention. Second, all locations are easily observable and allowed research assistants to discreetly document the interaction between confederate and target.

The experiment was carried out by students of the University of Bern, who approached strangers with a request for help and documented targets' responses.

All interventions followed the same script. At the beginning of each trial, the third person walking past a location-specific predetermined point (e.g., a particular bin) was chosen as this trial's target. One female confederate—with a headscarf in the experimental condition, without one in the control condition—approached the target. She explained that she was running late for a doctor's appointment and needed to call ahead, but could not use her own phone. She then asked the target if she could borrow his or her phone to make the call. The observing confederate unobtrusively documented the interaction and recorded the target's reaction. The operationalization of the stimulus is illustrated in Figure 5.

A total of 178 trials was conducted.

5.2 | Results

5.2.1 | Descriptive results

In 85 out of the 178 trials (47.8%), help making the phone call was granted. In the majority of cases (87.1%), targets handed over their mobile phones to the confederate so she could place the call herself; on some occasions (12.9%), targets offered other forms of assistance, mainly by proposing to call on the help-seeker's behalf. We did not find statistically significant differences with regard to the type of help between the two experimental conditions ($\chi^2(2, N = 85) = 2.60, p = .272$). Helping frequencies and types are summarized in Figure 6.

In this sample, women were marginally overrepresented (51.7%) among the targets. Male targets were slightly less likely to help the confederate: 50.0% of the women and 45.4% of the men offered to help in some way.

5.2.2 | Regression results

For all further analyses, we pooled the different types of aid (handing over the phone, calling on the help-seeker's behalf and any other form of help), which results in a binary outcome variable—either targets offered assistance or they did not. As expected, the probability of being granted help was substantially lower in the headscarf-condition: the likelihood of receiving assistance making the phone call was 16.7 percentage points lower when the confederate was wearing a headscarf than when she approached the target bare headed (average marginal effect of headscarf treatment ($p=.023$); $n = 178$).



FIGURE 5 Headscarf treatment in study 2 [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

As illustrated in Figure 7, the predicted probability of being offered help in the treatment condition was only 39.8% and 56.5% for those in the control condition. These findings thus support hypothesis 2. Regression results of logistic as well as linear probability models are summarized in Table 2.

6 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The research presented in this article focused on discrimination against a religious minority in everyday situations. We found pronounced discrimination against women wearing a headscarf in two distinctly different types of everyday interactions. In both scenarios, headscarf-wearing confederates were treated less favorably than

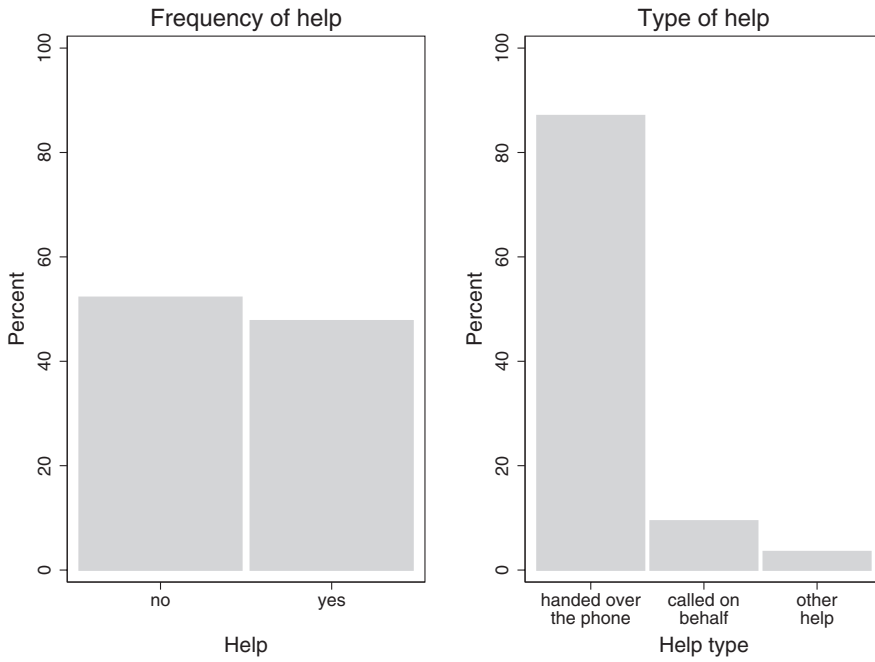


FIGURE 6 Helping frequencies and types

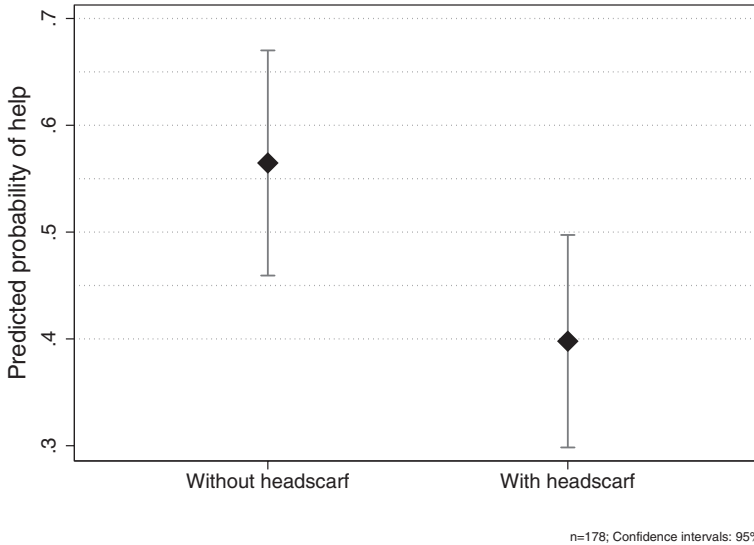


FIGURE 7 Predicted probability of receiving help

bare-headed ones: they were sanctioned more often for violating the “stand right, walk left”-norm and they received less help when asking for a favor—borrowing a mobile phone for an urgent call.

At first glance, these results are in contrast to the findings of an earlier field experiments conducted by Diekmann et al. (2014), who did not find discrimination in everyday interactions against female Muslims in Switzerland. Two

TABLE 2 Helping behavior—Effects of headscarf treatment

	Logistic regression model	Linear probability model
Headscarf treatment	-0.675* (0.304)	-0.167* (0.074)
Constant	0.260 (0.218)	0.565*** (0.564)
N	178	178
R ²		0.028

Note: Standard errors in parentheses;

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

explanations for this discrepancy appear plausible. On the one hand, their research was conducted before the enormous influx of refugees in 2015 rekindled the debate about the integration of migrants across Europe and further fueled anti-foreigner—including anti-Muslim—sentiments. On the other hand, their study examined subjects' willingness to engage in a conversation with (bare-headed vs. headscarf-wearing) female students collecting signatures for a political cause as well as their likelihood to sign the petition. Thus, the (alleged) Muslims in the research of Diekmann et al. (2014) clearly appeared as politically active members of society and engaged in the democratic process and, therefore, potentially prompted impressions of being well-integrated. The confederates in our own experiment, however, gave no clues regarding their degree of assimilation to Swiss society. Hence, the design employed by Diekmann et al. (2014) may have been more likely to inhibit stereotypes subjects might have been holding. Taken together, we believe that the marked differences with respect to the timing of the research by Diekmann and others (which was published in 2014, but was based on data collected as part of a student project in 2010) and our own (2017) as well as with regard to the types of interactions account for the diverging results.

It also seems conceivable, however, that the discriminatory patterns we find in our two experiments are driven by different mechanisms: in our first study, discrimination could stem from the fact that sanctioners presume that "foreign" norm-violators are not aware of the social norm and wish to educate them without malicious intent. In our second study, our findings could be due to a lower level of trust toward religious minorities and this suspicion could be the trigger of discriminatory behavior. The absence of any significant differences between the various types of help (handing over the phone ($n = 74$) versus calling in the help-seeker's behalf ($n = 8$) or other types of assistance ($n = 3$)) does not support this supposition, but could also be related to insufficient cell frequencies. Disentangling these potential mechanisms behind discriminatory tendencies, however, is not possible based on our data and might be a fruitful avenue for future research.

As any research endeavor, our study has limitations. First, observations are restricted to a particular subgroup of religious minorities. We only measured discriminatory behavior against female, but not male, members of a religious minority. We also only focused on followers of the Muslim faith without shedding any light on whether Christian, Jewish or other believers outwardly signaling their religiosity might suffer a similar fate. Switzerland is a modern, secularized society; the majority of Swiss citizens distances itself from religion and considers religious practice a strictly private matter (Swiss National Science Foundation, 2011). Thus, it might also be the case that persons who are perceived as "too obviously" religious are discriminated against irrespectively of their concrete faith (as suggested by Berger and Berger (2019)).

Second, the headscarf-stimulus may be amalgamating different traits of minority groups. While the hijab is a clear signal of religious affiliation, it could also signal a different ethnicity. Moreover, the perceived social status

of a person is correlated with their ethnicity. As such, also the observers' assumptions about the confederates' ethnicity and/or social status could explain discriminatory behavior (Winter & Zhang, 2018).

Third, an experimental approach can only offer limited opportunities to reveal individual motives that drive discriminatory behavior. Although measuring actual behavior is an important complement to the existing survey-based evidence on attitudes, the latter are often indispensable when it comes to uncovering such motives—which are especially relevant to developing political intervention strategies. Future research, if possible, should bring together the best of both worlds and link behavioral with attitudinal measures of discrimination (for example, by combining natural field experiments with surveys among the participants of these experiments). Additionally, future studies should include an even broader range of everyday situations. After all, more knowledge about discriminatory behavior, its scope, situational preconditions, and its individual motives are key for diminishing discrimination in everyday interactions.

A major problem associated with everyday discrimination is that it is far more difficult to develop appropriate policy responses than for large-scale overt discrimination (such as hiring practices openly discouraging certain groups from applying for a position). Minor discrimination on a day-to-day basis occurs with lower intensity and tends to manifest itself in subtle and often unconscious actions which are difficult if not impossible to legislate. Thus, to reduce everyday discrimination, it appears vital to address this problem at its roots by reducing feelings of otherness and, thereby, prejudices themselves. Based on Allport's *contact hypothesis*, one way this could be achieved might be by actively promoting contacts between persons of different backgrounds as increased interactions can reduce unfounded preconceptions and animosities toward minority outgroups (e.g., Dinesen, 2011; Kanas et al., 2017). On that note, it would appear counterproductive to implement laws that restrict the wearing of religious garments, including veils, in public or in schools. Not only do such measures place particular emphasis on the strangeness of the affected individuals, but might also suppress the benefits of interfaith contacts in childhood by concealing and pre-empting engagement with differences in faith.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data for all analyses reported in this article are available through the Open Science Framework at <https://osf.io/xgybk/> <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/XGYBK>

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ENDNOTES

¹ Even though overt discrimination against religious (and other) minorities has been legally outlawed to a large degree in Western societies, some institutionalized types of discrimination persist, mainly in form of what Fox (2020) labels “government-based religious discrimination.” Examples include—in the case of discrimination against Muslims—regulations on wearing religious attire such as the hijab or burka in public, the building of new mosques and minarets or particular religious practices such as burial or slaughtering rituals (for detailed discussions see Cesari 2013; Fox 2020; Grim & Finke, 2011; Koesel, 2014; Sarkissian, 2015). While these forms of discrimination are certainly important issues, they are formal phenomena at the “macro-level” and discussing them would go beyond the scope of the present article (which focuses on informal “micro-level” discrimination in interpersonal interactions).

² All four confederates were of similar age (in their early twenties) and demographic background. Three of the students were Swiss while one was of Turkish origin. Several precautions were taken to minimize possible effects of the

confederates' ethnicities and outer appearance on targets' perceptions. Confederates dressed for the experiment in nondescript clothing. As they faced forward while blocking the escalator, they were only seen from behind. In all statistical analyses presented in this paper, we control for confederate identity. In line with our interpretation, the confederate of Turkish origin did not provoke significantly more (or less) sanctioning than the others.

³ In both experiments, fieldwork was conducted for the duration of prespecified time slots and research assistants realized as many trials as possible in each slot. The resulting sample size is comparable to the number of observations in other field experiments. For example, our "escalator study" contains 255 observations, a similar one by Wolbring, Bozoyan, and Langner (2013) featured two conditions and included 254 observations, another one by Balafoutas and Nikiforakis (2012) considered three treatments and comprised of a total of 300 observations.

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Just what is critical race theory, and what is it doing in British sociology? From “BritCrit” to the racialized social system approach

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Abstract

Critical race theory is growing in popularity in Britain. However, critics and advocates of critical race theory (CRT) in Britain have neglected the racialized social system approach. Through ignoring this approach, critics have thus “missed the target” in their rebuttals of CRT, while advocates of CRT have downplayed the strength of critical race analysis. By contrast, in this paper, I argue that that through the racialized social system approach, critical race theory has the conceptual flexibility to study British society. As a practical social theory, critical race theory provides us with the tools to study the realities and reproduction of racial inequality. To demonstrate this strength of CRT, and to demonstrate its theoretical nature, I discuss the conceptual framework of the racialized social system approach, paying specific attention to the notions of social space, the racial structure and racial interests; the racialized interaction order, racialized emotions, and structure and agency; and racial ideology, racial grammar, and racialized cognition.

KEYWORDS

critical race theory, race theory, racism, theory

1 | INTRODUCTION: BRITISH CRITICAL RACE THEORY?

As a sociologist of race working in Britain, I feel stranded between two communities either side of the Atlantic. While scholars of race in the United States (US) have been responsible for much race-critical theory production, they often limit their empirical focus to their own nation. Meanwhile, scholars of race in Britain meet my work on British racism with curiosity, given that I draw extensively on the US critical race tradition. While critical race theory may be growing in popularity in Britain, it is still predominantly quarreled into the field of education studies. Furthermore, scholars in educational studies have largely overlooked one of the most important contributions within critical race theory: the racialized social system approach.

In this paper, I argue that through the racialized social system approach, critical race theory (CRT) has the conceptual flexibility to study British society. While scholars of education have begun to show the efficacy of CRT in the British context, through neglecting the racialized social system approach, such scholars have *underplayed* the strength of critical race analysis. To demonstrate this strength of CRT, I discuss the conceptual framework of the racialized social system approach, paying specific attention to the notions of social space, the racial structure and racial interests; the racialized interaction order, racialized emotions, and structure and agency; and racial ideology, racial grammar, and racialized cognition. Rather than having a specific empirical case study to examine these concepts, I use empirical illustrations of British society along the way. In doing so, I show both the use of CRT in the British context, and the wider point that CRT is a *social theory*. Before proceeding to this discussion, it is useful to provide a brief genesis of CRT as it traveled from the US to Britain.

2 | THREE WAVES OF CRITICAL RACE THEORY IN THE UNITED STATES

There were “three waves” of CRT as it emerged in the US. First, CRT emerged within critical legal studies, spearheaded by Crenshaw (1988) and Bell (1992). These legal scholars used CRT to expose and transcend two contradictions born in the post-civil rights era. On the one hand, CRT analyzed how decades after the introduction of civil rights legislation, Black people were worse off on many educational and economic measures (Crenshaw, 1988). Through exposing this contradiction, CRT critiqued the neoconservatism of the 1980s, which argued that activists were demanding equal *outcomes*, rather than equal *opportunities*—and the duty of the state was only to offer the latter. Through this frame, the existence of civil rights legislation was taken as evidence that the US provided equal opportunities to everyone, and that any resulting inequality was, therefore, the fault of the group. CRT thus developed in order to take an institution that was supposedly race-neutral—the legal system—and to work against its structural racism. This ethos of racializing the race-neutral appealed to education scholars, as we see in CRT’s second wave.

In 1995, two legal scholars, Delgado and Stefancic, helped spread the interest of CRT through their co-edited book *Critical race theory: the cutting edge*. Here, Delgado and Stefancic (2000 [1995]) argued that CRT had three guiding principles. First, “racism is normal, not aberrant, in American society” (Delgado and Stefancic (2000 [1995], p. xvi). Second, the methodological point that CRT provides counter-narratives to dominant racial discourse, analyzing “the myths, presuppositions, and received wisdoms that make up the common culture about race and that invariably render Blacks and other minorities one-down” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000 [1995], p. xvii). Third, akin to Bell’s (1992) concept of racial realism, Delgado and Stefancic (2000 [1995]) claim that white elites only make anti-racist concessions if this benefits the white elite.

Through outlining these principles, CRT was then assimilated into education studies. After Delgado and Stefancic’s book in 1995, Parker et al co-edited *Race is... Race isn’t: Critical race theory and qualitative studies in education* in 1999, featuring Ladson-Billings’ (1999) popular paper *Just what is critical race theory, and what’s it doing in a nice field like education?* In Ladson-Billings’ (1999) paper, she shows how Delgado and Stefancic’s principles of CRT apply to education. For instance, racial realism, to Ladson-Billings (1999), is visible in virtue of the main

beneficiaries of affirmative action in education being white. Further, Ladson-Billings (1999) shows how the education system demonstrates the point that racism is “normal, not aberrant”; while the education system was meant to be a public good, Ladson-Billings shows how through biased curricula, stigmatization from teachers, biased assessments, and unequal school funding, Black folks face a significant deficit in the US’ education system. While many recast resulting educational inequalities through the lens of cultural racism—arguing that Black people do not care about education—Ladson-Billings (1999) thus stresses the need for counter storytelling: to unearth the structural inequalities in the education system to reject myths of Black inferiority.

This dialogue between the educational and legal studies continued throughout the 21st century. As Delgado and Stefancic (2001) published *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, further explicating the key tenets of CRT, Ladson-Billings (2003a) edited the collection *Critical Race Theory Perspectives on the Social Studies: The Profession, Policies, and Curriculum* putting the CRT principles to use in empirical research on education. In the same year, Ladson-Billings (2003b) published *It's Your World, I'm Just Trying to Explain It*, further buttressing CRT's status in educational research. A few years later, Dixson and Rosseau (2006) co-edited *Critical race theory: All God's children got a song* featuring one of Ladson-Billings' most widely cited papers *Toward a Critical race Theory of Education* (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006). Within this paper, Ladson-Billings and Tate (2006) reiterate the tenets of CRT laid out by Delgado and Stefancic (2001). In the 21st century, therefore, the formulation of CRT in legal studies found a “second home” in US educational studies.

Yet, there was another wave of CRT happening in sociology at the same time as these dialogs in legal and educational studies. Sociologists were also interested in the strength of CRT, and were specifying its concepts and principles, although their work was not centred in the same way that Delgado and Stefancic's (2001) tenets were this is particularly apt when we consider Bonilla-Silva's (1997) racialized social system approach. Bonilla-Silva published *Rethinking Racism: Toward a Structural Interpretation* in 1997. In this paper, Bonilla-Silva (1997) argues that racism begins with racialization—the process whereby society's “economic, political, social, and ideological levels are partially structured by the placement of actors in [socially constructed] racial categories” (Bonilla-Silva, 1997, p. 469). This racialization of society leads the formation of a “racialized social system”. Within such a racialized social system, Bonilla-Silva (1997, pp. 469–470) clarifies:

The race placed in the superior position tends to receive greater economic remuneration and access to better occupations and/or prospects in the labor market, occupies a primary position in the political system, is granted higher social estimation (e.g., is viewed as “smarter” or “better looking”), often has the license to draw physical (segregation) as well as social (racial etiquette) boundaries between itself and other races, and receives [...] a “psychological wage”.

The seminal CRT scholarship in legal and education studies largely ignores this racialized social system approach.¹ Bonilla-Silva's name is not mentioned in Delgado and Stefancic's (2001) introduction to CRT, nor in the central edited collections on CRT in education (Dixson & Rosseau, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2003a; Parker et al., 1999). This is surprising given that Bonilla-Silva's, 1997 paper, and his publications in the early 21st century, explicated CRT *concepts* later analyzed in this paper—such as racial ideology, racialized emotions, and racial grammar—rather than just loose guiding principles. Unfortunately, British advocates of CRT engaged with the US legal and educational studies traditions. Given that these two US schools neglected the racialized social system approach, it is unsurprising that British CRT also overlooks this contribution.

3 | ABSENCES IN “BRITCRIT”: SEARCHING FOR BONILLA-SILVA

The first recorded paper using the term CRT in Britain was in 2003, when David Gillborn presented “Education policy as an act of White supremacy” at the British Educational research Association.² Since then, CRT gained

traction in educational studies, while also facing criticism over its supposed “class blindness” (Warmington, 2019). The problem is that both advocates and critics of CRT overlook the racialized social system approach, and therefore, argue for or against CRT without specifying its conceptual framework.

This equivocation over CRT’s theoretical status is not solely limited British debates. In the US, for instance, Emirbayer and Desmond’s (2015, p. 1) *The Racial Order* claims “there never has been a comprehensive and systematic theory of race”, yet, does not mention CRT or the racialized social system approach. However, an issue particular to Britain is that there is a growing community of CRT scholars using the racialized social system approach in the US, while the burgeoning British literature explicitly defending CRT (Gillborn, 2005, 2006, 2010, 2013; Gillborn et al. 2018; Hylton et al., 2011; Rollock et al., 2015; Warmington, 2012, 2019), or criticizing “BritCrit” (Cole, 2009a, 2009b, 2017; Cole & Maisuria, 2007; Hill 2009a, 2009b; Parsons, 2016; Parsons & Thompson, 2017) do not mention Bonilla-Silva’s name. This has led to a significant problem in BritCrit.

First is the issue that in Britain, opposing sides support or oppose CRT without agreeing what CRT is. For instance, a key critic of BritCrit, Mike Cole (2009a, 2009b), argues that CRT’s framework centers around the works of Du Bois and Fanon.³ Any explanation for why these two thinkers were chosen is lacking, so it seems as though Cole has just picked two names out of a hat. Given that Cole (2009a, p. 247) never fully engages with a complex account of CRT’s conceptual framework, he thus makes misguided comments such that CRT believes “white supremacy” better describes oppression based on ‘race’ in contemporary societies than does the concept of ‘racism’. Such (mis)understandings occlude the racialized social system approach, which shows how “white supremacy” is a descriptor for the material racial structure within which whites are at the top of the hierarchy—meaning “racism” and “white supremacy” are synonymous. Further, other critics of BritCrit, such as Hill (2008), criticize CRT for lacking a “materialist” dimension, despite the fact that the racialized social system approach argues that racism involves a *material* structure, involving the unequal distribution of *material* resources, within actors develop *material* interests.

Furthermore, the proponents of CRT in Britain have also failed to explicitly formulate its conceptual repertoire. Thus, as Gillborn (2011) argues, CRT’s inception into the UK was beneficial because it created a context where British racism could be taken as a *starting point* for analysis in education rather than something that had to be “proved”. However, aside from sharing the belief in the centrality of racism to British society, BritCrits have not specified CRT’s conceptual framework. For instance, in the co-edited *Atlantic Crossings: International Dialogues on Critical Race Theory* (Hylton et al., 2011), which aims to analyze the inception of CRT in Britain, none of the papers define CRT’s concepts, aside from the occasional reference to the structural centrality of race. Believing in the centrality of racism to British society is a starting point for analysis, but it does not itself explain how racism works, is reproduced, and is articulated at micro, meso, and macro levels. To address these areas, a set of concepts are needed. In some cases, BritCrits have evoked the concept of WhiteWorld (Rollock et al., 2015), but again, it remains more so descriptive than explanatory. WhiteWorld is used to describe “the socially constructed and constantly reinforced power of White identifications, norms and interests” (Rollock et al., 2015, p. 14), but what is missing are the concepts that can explain how these identifications, norms, and interests are formed and reproduced, and how they structure and interrelate with a *material* system of inequality.

This critique of CRT in Britain is more than an exercise in scholasticism, and is it not intended to devalue the existing scholarship. Part of the reason we make social theories and concepts is to provide other sociologists with helpful tools to understand parts of social reality that were not necessarily under the remit of our own studies. While BritCrits have produced invaluable evidence of racial inequality in the education system, from means testing (Gillborn, 2010), through to academic hiring (Rollock, forthcoming), and stigmatizing pupils (Rollock et al., 2015), these studies have not necessarily provided wider sets of CRT concepts that can be used to understand the production and reproduction of racism *outside of the empirical confines of the original studies*. This is why the racialized social system approach is appealing.

4 | THE RACIALIZED SOCIAL SYSTEM APPROACH IN BRITAIN

Through the racialized social system approach, CRT can help understand the key workings of racism in Britain across the micro, meso, and macro levels. I will use the rest of the paper to explicate what the racialized social system approach entails, how it can be used to study British society, and why it justifies being valued as a critical social theory. I engage in these discussions through focusing on social space, the racialized social system, and racial interests; racialized emotions, the racialized interaction order, and structure and agency; and racial ideology, racial grammar, and racialized cognition.

4.1 | The racialized social system and social space

When Bonilla-Silva (1997) sketched out the racialized social system approach, he was not attempting to analyze a system *within* society, but to analyze society in its totality. Unlike rival approaches in race theory, such as Omi and Winant's (1994) racial formation theory which focuses analysis on the state's practice in racialization and racism, the racialized social system approach thus aims analysis toward the total social structure. As Bonilla-Silva (1997, p. 474) thus claims, racialized social systems refer to "*societies that allocate differential economic, political, social, and even psychological rewards to groups along racial lines*" (emphasis added). The racialized social system approach, therefore, breaks free from the view that "race" only influences specific areas of society, and instead argues that it influences the totality of society's structure. In social theoretical terms, therefore, the racialized social system approach is an interpretation of *social space*.

Social space is, simply, social reality; as Bourdieu (1998, p. 32) thus argues "all societies appear as social spaces". By this, Bourdieu (1998, p. 6) is highlighting how societies—appearing as social spaces—are characterized by unequal distributions of capital:

Social space is constructed in such a way that agents or groups are distributed in it according to their position in statistical distributions based on the *two principles of differentiation* which [...] are undoubtedly the most efficient: economic capital and cultural capital.

Studying societies as social spaces moves us away from substantivism and toward a relationism. Through this approach, social groups are defined as relational, constructed in social space, defined in virtue of their "position relative to other locations (as standing above, below or in between them) and by the distance which separates them" (Bourdieu, 1998a, p. 12). These social groups, moreover, are not just statistical clusters of people, but are *practical* groups that are made through forming *symbolic boundaries* (schemes of valuation, social practices, dispositions, shared cultural repertoires) around their material position (Lamont & Molnár, 2002).

Social space offers a frame through which we can develop the concept of the racialized social system. Foundationally, as previously stated, the racialized social systems refer to societies in which capital is unequally distributed across racialized lines. In this regard, the racialized social system is a particular description of social space. Moreover, the racialized groups within this social space are not pre-existing, but are socially constructed and defined relationally—"races are not 'things' but relations" (Bonilla-Silva, 1999, p. 901). As Bonilla-Silva (1997, p. 474) thus argues, while the racialized social system allocates capital unequally across racial lines, these are "lines that are socially constructed". By saying that these racialized groups are constructed, it means that "race" is a human creation with a "social reality", having symbolic and material effects on all racialized actors.

The reason why "race" has symbolic and material effects on racialized actors is because racialization was (and continues to be) an uneven process—those who "invented" race (whites) were the only people who racialized themselves. In this reading, whites were the racialized group who were able to impose their *vision* (symbolic meanings and classifications) and *division* (material distributions) of race across social space. As per Bourdieu's (1998)

understanding of social groups in social space, not only are the meaning of different racialized groups and their possession of resources defined relationally in terms of their relative opposition and location to one another in a racial hierarchy, but also these racialized groups are constantly *made* through practical struggles over unequal resources and valuations. Highlighting this practical making of race, Bonilla-Silva (2015, p. 75) thus comments that “racial contestation is the crucial driving force of any racialized social system”. Through focusing on the racialized social system's driving force of contestation, Bonilla-Silva (2015) additionally provides insights into how interests and strategies develop within social space.

This brings us to what Bonilla-Silva (2015, p. 75) describes as the “most controversial” element of the racialized social system approach: “the notion that whites form a social collectivity [...] and that, as such, they develop a racial interest to preserve the racial status quo”. In arguing that whites form a social collectivity, the racialized social system approach positions itself against other race theories—such as Feagin's (2006) systemic racism theory—which tend to disproportionately focus on the actions of elite whites. Moreover, Bonilla-Silva's point about white social collectivity again echoes the Bourdieusian principle that social space is characterized by ongoing struggles and strategies between different social groups and agents. At the heart of this struggle is the desire to “conserve or modify [social] space” (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 734)—in other words, to reproduce (for the socially dominant) or contest (for the subdominant) the social order. This materialist component of the racialized social system approach allows us to answer *why* racism continues centuries after the invention of “race”: simple, because it “benefit[s] members of the dominant race” (Bonilla-Silva, 2017, p. 15).

So far, there seems to be nothing to suggest that the racialized social system approach cannot be used to study British society. The racialized social system approach merely posits that racism is fundamental to social space, and that racialized actors within this social space develop interests and strategies to conserve or contest this hierarchy. Quantitative sociologists, for instance, have routinely demonstrated that in Britain all racialized minorities are overrepresented in underemployment and poverty relative to whites (Fisher & Nandi, 2015), that they require higher educational achievements to translate into the same economic rewards (Lessard-Phillips et al., 2018), that they face higher barriers to upward mobility (Li & Heath, 2016), and that they are underrepresented at “elite” educational institutions (Boliver, 2016). It seems straightforward to say that race *is a central* principle of vision in British social space.

Indeed, we also see that in British social space whites “develop a racial interest to preserve the racial status quo” (Bonilla-Silva, 2015, p. 75). Thus, if we look at Bonilla-Silva's (2019a, 2019b) example of whites forming a social collectivity in the US, he focuses on Trumpamerica, and how white voters endorsed overt racialized nationalism. In Britain, we see a similarity with Brexit. With Brexit, the majority of white Brits voted for a political project constellated around strengthening Britain's borders, keeping the racialized “others” outside of these borders, and consequently re-making the “interior” of Britain as a white nation (Bhambra, 2017). Throughout British history, moreover, we have seen this binding of whites across class in support of strengthening the racial order: from white capitalists and workers agreeing to exclude Black and Brown Brits from trade unions throughout the 20th century (Fryer, 1984), through to elite social policy makers shifting educational policy from race-based inequalities to focusing on the white working-class (Gillborn, 2005). Through Britain's past and present, therefore, it seems whites *do* form a social collectivity in social space, with aligned racial interests. By acknowledging this, we can respond to another criticism of BritCrit. For instance, Cole (2009a) argues that CRT homogenizes all white people, and in doing so, significantly overlooks the marginalization of white workers. However, through the racialized social system approach, we see how whites are not presented as a homogenous group, but rather *articulate themselves* as a heterogeneous social collectivity who—across their constructed differences—share an objective interest in reproducing the racial order.

Nevertheless, claiming that British social space involves the unequal distribution of resources across racialized lines, and a contestation over these resources, is a starting point for analysis, but we also need to explicate “the mechanisms, practices, and social relations responsible for the production and reproduction of racial inequality”

(Bonilla-Silva, 1999, p. 904). The racialized social system approach provides us with further concepts to study such reproduction, allowing us to study structure and agency, and racialized cognition.

5 | STRUCTURE AND AGENCY: RACIALIZED INTERACTION ORDERS AND RACIALIZED EMOTIONS

In criticizing CRT, Parsons and Thompson (2017, p. 595) claimed that “CRT is [...] short on theory [...] What CRT lacks is a structural dimension which seeks to bridge agency and social structure” However, considering the racialized social system approach, Parsons and Thompson's critique is not convincing.

For instance, we can link structure and agency in the racialized social system approach through focusing on “racialized emotions”. Racialized emotions are “the socially engendered emotions in racialized societies” (Bonilla-Silva, 2019a, p. 3). Central to Bonilla-Silva's (2019a, p. 2) argument is that “races fashion an emotional subjectivity generally fitting of their location in the racial order”, meaning that one's racialized emotions are related to, and often reproduce, one's position in the racial hierarchy. Whites, for instance, may feel justice in their position in the racial hierarchy, while the racially subordinate may feel injustice and anger. Racialized emotions, therefore, can be “negative” or “positive”. Whites may have negative emotions such as fear of “Black thugs” and “Muslim terrorists” and indeed—as Simi et al. (2017) show in the case of far-right radicalization—negative emotions such as hatred often act as fundamental building blocks for acts of racialized violence. On the contrary, however, whites may also have “positive emotions” of joy in reproducing the racial structure (extreme examples may include lynching parties). Rather than seeing such racialized emotions as irrational impulses, therefore, we should view them as “part and parcel of material interests [...] in the race game” (Bonilla-Silva, 2019b, p. 9). This connects with the work of Collins (2019, p. 46), who argues that through feeling the same emotion, a social group can generate a stronger “solidarity and shared social identity”. Racialized emotions—no matter how “micro” they appear—are a driving force for articulating social groups and maintaining their interests.

This approach directly tracks over to British social space. Taking Brexit as an example again, we see whites' emotions of fear and devaluation embodying their material interests in reproducing the racial structure. Thus, white voters bound together through their emotive fear of foreign invasion from the racialized “other” (Bhambra, 2017). Such fears were particularly concentrated around the figure of “the Muslim terrorist” who, through the EU's principle of freedom of movement, were said to be coming to Britain at dangerous levels; thus, why the imagery of Farage standing in front of a billboard picturing male Syrian refugees was so powerful. This fear additionally fueled whites' emotions of devaluation—of becoming strangers in their own land. Such emotions materialize, for instance, in the growing belief among whites that areas of Britain are governed by Sharia law.⁴ Such racialized emotions of non-recognition and fear, while based on falsehoods, are “socially real and have a materiality that cannot be ignored” (Bonilla-Silva, 2019a, p. 8)—they act as the driving force for whites' racial interest, and provide a basis for whites becoming a social collectivity. While racialized emotions may begin at the micro level, they transcend the individual and become central in sustaining the racial hierarchy. Such a bridge between agency and structure is also captured in the concept of the racialized interaction order.

Drawing on Goffman's (1983) notion of interaction orders, the racialized interaction order refers to the explicit and unwritten rules that govern interactions between differently racialized agents (Meghji, 2019a). Such interactional rules have both physical and symbolic extensions. Physically, racialized social systems *limit* face-to-face interactions between differently racialized people, such as with apartheid, Jim Crow, and Britain's “No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs” housing policies. Symbolically, the racialized interaction order governs *how* differently racialized actors are supposed to act in the presence of one another. For instance, Garrett (2011, p. 13) comments that if you are Black in the US outside of a Black-majority neighborhood, “you are taught don't shop with your hands in your pockets for fear that one's body is mistaken for a shoplifter”. The racialized interaction order, therefore, relates to the racialization of space, construing many spaces as being off-limits for people of color. Through focusing on

the “racing” of space, the racialized interaction order shows the relationship between the micro, meso (i.e., organizational), and the macro levels of society. Through producing the rule that some spaces are “white only”—or, more subtly, that whites “belong more than others” in certain spaces—organizations can continue to unequally distribute their material resources across the racial hierarchy (Ray, 2019). Interactional practices at the micro level, whether that be schoolteachers stigmatizing Black pupils as being unacademic (Lewis, 2003), professional colleagues constantly misrecognizing their only two Black co-workers (Wingfield, 2010), police workers using disproportionate violence against Black people (Gilbert & Ray, 2016), and elite university staff treating Black students as intruders on campus (Moore, 2007), end up excluding or marginalizing people of color from organizations (i.e., the meso level), and consequently those excluded people are then denied the resources which such organizations provide—thus, the reproduction of the social structure.

In Britain, the racialized interaction similarly functions as a set of routinized micro-interactions that relate to the meso and macro. For instance, Black people often experience microaggressions when they appear in spaces that are supposedly “off limits”: Black politicians in the Houses of Parliament get misrecognized as cleaning staff (BBC News, 2016), Black celebrities are met with disbelief when they sit in a first class train carriage (The Guardian, 2020), and Black alumni visiting their elite educational institutions (such as Oxford University) are suspected as criminals (The Times, 2019). Each of these described social events starts with micro-interactions: a train conductor not believing the person has the correct ticket, university staff assuming that a Black student is a criminal, and Black politicians being misrecognized. Such interactions thus help shape the meso level of British society by racializing particular spaces as normatively white: whether that be the political sphere, educational organizations, or even middle-class spaces more generally. Moreover, each of these interactions are justified by an overall racial structure (“the macro”) in which certain ideas about race, racial etiquette, and racial inferiority are naturalized. In this respect, the racialized interaction order *brings* social structure into the daily lives of racialized minorities through limiting their range of acceptable actions, while justifying acts of exclusion toward such minorities in places deemed to be outside of their acceptable interactional remit—thus, why people joke that Black British actor Idris Elba could never be cast as James Bond, as he would not be able to make it down his street driving an Aston Martin without being labeled as a criminal. Indeed, these examples of the racialized interaction order show a constant process of perception: Black people are *perceived* to be transgressing their *perceived* boundaries of behavior. The racialized social system approach further develops this focus on perception through the concepts of racial ideology and racial grammar.

6 | RACIALIZED COGNITION: RACIAL IDEOLOGIES AND RACIAL GRAMMAR

Racial ideologies “set paths for interpreting information” concerning racial matters (Bonilla-Silva, 2017, p. 39). Such ideologies are described by Bonilla-Silva (2017, p. 15) as “the racially based frameworks [including arguments, styles, stories, beliefs, stereotypes] used by actors to explain and justify (dominant race) or challenge (subordinate race or races) the racial status quo”. It is helpful, therefore, to think of racial ideologies as particular *cultural repertoires*—the “set of tools available to individuals to make sense of the reality they experience” (Lamont et al., 2016, p. 21). Through viewing racial ideologies as “sense-making” tools that shape social action, we can show how individual perception reproduces structural relations. For instance, through the repertoires of liberalism and cultural racism,⁵ Bonilla-Silva (2017) shows how whites often construe the unemployment rates of Latinx and Black Americans as the result of these groups being work-shy, or incapable of dealing with the market forces. Such schemes of perception, moreover, consequently shape social action by, for instance, withdrawing state support or affirmative action for these groups as their marginalization is said to be their own fault rather than a by-product of injustice.

Of course, it is too large a project to list all racial ideologies in British social space, but it is possible to list some key moments where racial ideology has fundamentally shaped British society. For instance, postracial ideology

has been dominant in Britain for at least the past four decades (Meghji, 2019b). This ideology holds that Britain is not characterized by structural racism, and has been used to justify actions from dissolving the Race Relations Board into a broader Equalities and Human Rights Commission in 2010 (Kapoor, 2011), redirecting educational policy toward class inequalities (Gillborn, 2013), and rejecting “ethnic quotas” for hiring in the public sector (Meghji & Saini, 2018). Beyond guiding legislation, postracial ideology has also worked as a conceptual scheme through which white Brits have positioned themselves as victims of racism. Through this postracial interpretation of reality, whites have argued that because minorities are not disadvantaged, anti-racist legislation is actually *anti-white*, such as we saw with the grime artist Stormzy’s scholarship for Black students at Cambridge being labeled as “racist” because it excluded white people. Such racial ideology matters because it shapes how individuals both *perceive* and *act* in the world. This link between structure, perception, and action is pertinent in the last concept we will examine—racial grammar.

Racial grammar refers to how “we see or don’t see race in social phenomena” (Bonilla-Silva, 2012, p. 174). We can see this in the examples Bonilla-Silva (2012) uses: in the US, we have HBCU’s (Historically Black Colleges and Universities), but *not* Historically *White* Colleges and Universities (the existence of which necessitated HBCU’s). Similarly, we have notions of “Black music” and “Black TV”, but we do not have white inverses. Racial grammar, therefore, serves to *universalize* and *invisibilize* whiteness as an implicit social norm.

In British society, it is apparent that such a racial grammar also shapes the “‘deep structure’, the ‘logic’ and ‘rules’ [of] what can be seen, understood, and even felt about racial matters” (Bonilla-Silva, 2012, p. 174). Hall et al. (1978), for instance, described how discourse in the 1970s used language of integration, immigration, and cultural pathology in order to frame the “crisis” of mugging in British society as being a “race problem”. This same process happened forty years later in the 2011 “London riots”. Popular journalist David Goodhart blamed the unrest on “the Anglo-Jamaican tragedy” with roots in a Black “hip-hop culture”, while others construed these events through racialized language of “gangster culture” and “cultural integration” (Solomos, 2011). More recently, such a racial grammar is evident in the way that “Black music” has been blamed for the nation’s spike in knife crime (while, of course, there is no matching “white culture” blamed for the spike in hate crimes), with media across the political spectrum legitimizing the discourse that grime and drill bear a relation to a knife crime “crisis”, as symbolized by their headlines of “Grime music linked to knife crime rise” (Jackson, 2017), “Drill Music: Is it right to blame the genre for violence?” (BBC News, 2018), “Does drill music encourage knife crime?” (Sky News, 2018), and “What is drill music and why is it linked to violent crime in London?” (Lindsay, 2019). These examples, from the 1970s to the present day, show how a racial grammar is a central feature used in British society to oppress Black people through the very way that we “see” certain matters as being racial (or nonracial) to begin with.

7 | CONCLUDING THOUGHTS: CRT, SOCIAL THEORY, PESSIMISM, AND HOPE

In this paper I have attempted to fight several intellectual battles. First, I have sought to show that the racialized social system approach, despite being neglected in Britain, offers a clear direction for CRT to develop in British scholarship. The conceptual tools it provides—from the racialized social system and racial interests, through to the racialized interaction order, racialized emotions, racial ideologies, and racial grammar—allow us to analyze the workings and reproduction of racial inequality in British society. While I had no empirical “case” in this paper, I have used a range of examples to illustrate how the racialized social system approach’s framework has empirical viability in studying British society.

At a deeper level, I have also been concerned more broadly with the status of CRT *as a social theory*. This comes in the wake of many scholars arguing CRT “is not a unified theory but a loose hodgepodge of analytic tools” (Treviño et al., 2008, p. 9). By contrast, I have shown the racialized social system approach is a *practical social theory*—it allows us to describe the material life of racism, *and* its reproduction. Furthermore, as I highlighted through

drawing connections between the racialized social system approach with Bourdieu's work on social space, Collins' work on emotions (when discussing racialized emotions), Goffman's work on interactions (when discussing the racialized interaction order), and Lamont's notion of cultural repertoires (when discussing racial ideology), I have implicitly shown that not only does the racialized social system approach develop its own theoretical framework, but it also enters into dialogue with key debates and concepts in social theory.

Of course, this is not to say that the racialized social system approach ought to be praised for its similarity with "acceptable" scholarship—this counters CRT's status as a critical knowledge project (Collins, 2019). Similarly, neither has my aim been to reproduce an intellectual imperialism whereby US scholarship needs to be globally exported (Meghji, 2020). Rather, the contribution of this paper is humble. While the racialized social system approach offers a fruitful avenue for theorizing racism in Britain, it has not been adequately assimilated into British scholarship. I hope that this paper can begin a more systematic conversation around the racialized social system approach this side of the Atlantic.

Of course, such transatlantic conversations are apt in our current juncture. On September 2020, President Trump described CRT as being "a cancer", consequently signing an executive order banning the teaching of CRT in employee training schemes run by the federal agency. This presidential furore traveled over to Britain, whereby reactionary pundits labeled CRT as the latest edition to "wokeist" politics. I want to conclude by reflecting on this "CRT backlash". In virtue of CRT's focus on the structural nature of racism—where the problem is not "bad apples" inasmuch as society's roots, soil, fertilizer, and trees—it is easy to read CRT as a pessimistic theory offering no hope for an anti-racist future. Indeed, one of the main critiques to structural and functionalist theories over the years has been that they are good at analyzing reproduction, but no useful for understanding social change. Ironically, this critique to structuralism is why many find CRT appealing: it shows that for the past centuries there has not been radical social change inasmuch as an underlying "structural stability" of racism (Seamster & Ray, 2018, p. 329). At the same time, however, CRT is also dedicated to the pursuit of social change via its focus on racial justice. The racialized social system's focus on racial contestation, for instance, is based around the historical fact that so long as there is a racial hierarchy, there will be people actively attempting to transform these relations. This is why CRT is important; it shows that all individuals, groups, institutions, and social structures are part of the racialized social system, and consequently that any anti-racist movement has to not *just* tackle micro phenomena (e.g., prejudice, microaggressions, racial ignorance), or the role of organizations (e.g., classrooms, courtrooms, and workplaces), or the macro structure (e.g., employment and health inequalities), but *the totality of these relations*.

CRT, therefore, is not pessimistic inasmuch as it is realistic. It shows, simply, that overcoming racism is hard; if racism has been around for centuries, there is no reason to assume that getting rid of it is an easy task. After all, if CRT is merely pessimistic and does not in fact contain transformative capabilities, why are reactionaries—including the President of the US—trying so hard to delegitimize it?

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ Of course, there are interdisciplinary researchers who work in both legal studies and sociology who have tried bringing the two disciplines into conversation with another to buttress CRT's status. Cleve and Mayes (2015), for instance, called on sociology to engage with legal theory's CRT framework to understand social processes such as bias in criminal justice proceedings. However, such work does not focus on the racialized social system approach as much as the need for sociology to open its conceptual borders to other disciplines.
- ² Later published as a journal article in Gillborn (2005).
- ³ Indeed, as Mills (2009) points out, the choice of Fanon and Du Bois is peculiar given Cole's aim to show an incompatibility between Marxism and CRT. Both Fanon and Du Bois drew on Marxist thought, so if Cole argues these two thinkers are foundational to CRT, he contradicts his claim that Marxism and CRT are inconsistent.

⁴ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/uk-no-go-zones-muslim-sharia-law-third-poll-hope-not-hate-far-right-economic-inequality-a8588226.html>

⁵ Two 'frames' within the larger racial ideology of color-blindness.

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Intersectionality on the go: The diffusion of Black feminist knowledge across disciplinary and geographical borders

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Abstract

Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term "intersectionality" in 1989 as a critique of feminist and critical race scholarship's neglect of—respectively—race and gender. Since then, the concept has been interpreted and reinterpreted to appeal to new disciplinary, geographical, and sociocultural audiences, generating heated debates over its appropriation and continued political significance. Drawing on all 3,807 publications in Scopus that contain the word "intersectionality" in the title, abstract, or keywords, we map the spread of intersectionality in academia through its citations. Network analysis reveals the contours of its diffusion among the 6,098 scholars in our data set, while automated text analysis, manual coding, and the close reading of publications reveal how the application and interpretation of intersectional thinking has evolved over time and space. We find that the diffusion network exhibits communities that are not well demarcated by either discipline or geography. Communities form around one or a few highly referenced scholars who introduce intersectionality to new audiences while reinterpreting it in a way that speaks to their research interests. By examining the microscopic interactions of publications and citations, our complex systems approach is able to identify the macroscopic patterns of a controversial concept's diffusion.

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KEYWORDS

complexity science, diffusion, feminism, intersectionality, sociology of knowledge, women's studies

1 | INTRODUCTION

Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term “intersectionality” in 1989 as a critique of feminist and critical race scholarship's neglect of—respectively—race and gender. Focusing exclusively on either, Crenshaw argued, failed to apprehend the experiences of Black women inhabiting the intersection of two dimensions of inequality. The idea that Black women face different forms of exclusion than White women due to the intersection of sexism and racism was not new (e.g., Collins & Bilge, 2016; Combahee River Collective, 1983; Hooks, 1984; Wilson, 1978). Yet, the term was novel. How has intersectionality traveled within academia since its coinage?

“Intersectionality” today is seemingly everywhere. Leslie McCall was already writing in 2005 that the concept “is the most important theoretical contribution that women's studies, in conjunction with other fields, has made so far” (2005, p. 1771). A “buzzword” with dedicated conferences, special issues, and journals (Davis, 2008), intersectionality today is part of the standard curriculum of women's studies (Collins & Chepp, 2013). Intersectionality has also broken out from its original moorings in feminist, legal, and critical race scholarship to cross countries and continents, disciplines, and subfields. At the time of writing, Google Scholar lists 59,900 publications on intersectionality, while Web of Science counts over 100 distinct research areas under its umbrella. Along its journey, “intersectionality” has been interpreted and reinterpreted to speak to its new disciplinary, geographical, sociocultural, and political surroundings.

Intersectionality is variously understood as a theory, a research paradigm and a strategy to transform power relations (e.g., Hancock, 2016). How the concept has evolved has also been heavily contested. Some argue that intersectionality's newfound popularity comes at the expense of Black women, whose voices and knowledge rooted in lived experience has been erased (e.g., Jordan-Zachery, 2007). Others argue that race has been eclipsed by class in the hands of continental European scholars (Carbado et al., 2013) and that “Whitewashed” intersectionality has lost its transformative potential (Bilge, 2013). Nash (2018) describes the “intersectionality wars” in which Black feminists defend intersectionality from “misuse and abuse.” By now nearly everything about intersectionality is contested: “its histories and origins, its methodologies, its efficacy, its politics, its relationship to identity and identity politics, its central metaphor, its juridical orientations, its relationship to ‘Black woman’ and to Black feminism” (Nash, 2017, pp. 117–118). Scholars have therefore suggested that intersectionality should be defined by what it does, rather than by what it is (Cho et al., 2013).

The aim of this article is not to offer another reflection on what intersectionality is or does. Inspired by Mügge et al. (2018)—who trace intersectionality's journey within political science—we broaden the scope and empirically scrutinize how it traveled through networks consisting of thousands of scholars. How is the concept defined and applied across disciplines and geography? What is the role of individual scholars in this process? Drawing on all ($n = 3,807$) publications in Scopus that contain the word “intersectionality” in the title, abstract, or keywords, we map the spread of the concept through its citations. We use network analysis to study the citation structure and automated text analysis, manual coding, and the close reading of publications to analyze how intersectionality has been interpreted and applied during its spread. Our complex systems approach focuses on the micro-interactions of publications and citations, and how these generate macro patterns of diffusion (Byrne, 1998; Granovetter, 1973) and interpretation (Abbott, 2001). Our contribution is twofold. First, rigorous empirical analysis improves our understanding of the multiple dimensions of intersectionality's spread and incorporation into the mainstream of many disciplines. Second, our study gives detailed insight into the process of the diffusion of scientific concepts and what happens if a new concept takes root in new disciplines. Confirming the worry of critical scholars, we find

that interpretations, understandings, and applications of intersectionality increasingly diverge from its original meaning and sources as it travels. This process is similar to the diffusion of academic knowledge more generally.

In what follows, we first review the literature on the diffusion of intersectionality and its relation to the politics of knowledge production and the sociology of knowledge. We then detail our methods. Our findings are organized under four headings: (1) macroscopic patterns in the diffusion network of intersectionality scholars, (2) the role of disciplines and geography, (3) how different diffusion communities use and conceptualize intersectionality, and (4) the role of leading figures in the translation of the concept across disciplines and subfields. We find that how intersectionality is understood changes as the concept travels to new audiences. For example, the largest diffusion community consists of primarily U.S.-based scholars who see intersectionality as a tool to empower Black women. While the development of methodological tools to operationalize an intersectional lens to identity is a key concern for a diffusion community of psychologists. Leading figures—whom we call “hubs”—are central in introducing and translating the concept to their peers so that it becomes thematically, theoretically, or methodologically interesting. This, at least, is the role they are credited with by scholars who cite them.

2 | THEORIZING INTERSECTIONALITY'S JOURNEY

Works addressing the genealogy of intersectionality and the current structure and future prospects of the field contain numerous clues about the diffusion of intersectional thinking and scientific ideas more generally. Many of these works point to the central role of Crenshaw (1989), the role of disciplines and geography, and the politics of academic knowledge production. Our review of the key works generates five expectations about the diffusion of intersectionality.

Genealogies of intersectionality point out that intersectional thinking has a much longer history than the term itself; many refer to the speech “Ain't I a Woman?” by Sojourner Truth at the 1851 Women's Rights Convention in Akron (Brah & Phoenix, 2004). Born into slavery, Truth campaigned for its abolition and for equal rights for women; by focusing on the oppression of Black women, she challenged essentialist thinking in single categories. Crenshaw (1989) is often referenced as the foundational article on intersectionality (Nash, 2016), with Crenshaw's location in law and critical race and feminist studies informing how intersectionality subsequently spread in academic publications.

Feminist and critical race scholars have studied the spread of intersectional thinking to other disciplines. Cho et al. (2013)—two legal scholars and a sociologist—reflect on two decades of scholarship in their special issue on the emerging “field of intersectionality studies” and describe a loosely connected patchwork of disciplinary islands, which they hope will be bridged to bring greater cohesion to the field. Cho and colleagues distinguish between two ways in which intersectional thinking spreads. The first process is *centrifugal*, when ideas travel and adapt to new disciplines; the second is *centripetal*, when scholars at the margins of their respective disciplines draw on literatures from further afield. The centrifugal process is driven by institutional forces that mold intersectional thinking to the methodological standards, practices, and discourses of specific disciplines; centrifugal works include Hancock (2007) in political science, Cole (2009) as well as Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach (2008) in psychology, Choo and Ferree (2010) in sociology, and Walby (2007) in philosophy. Cho and colleagues (2013, p. 807) further point to the relative privilege or marginality of intersectionality scholars, knowing that mainstream disciplinary work is credited more within academic institutions than critical interdisciplinary work.

A 2012 special issue edited by Devon Carbado, Kimberlé Crenshaw (law), Vickie Mays (psychology), and Barbara Tomlinson (literature) on intersectionality's travels highlighted the role played by geography and disciplines in intersectionality's diffusion and conceptualization. In the introduction, the editors emphasize the differences between European and U.S. approaches. European scholars, they argue, often use intersectionality to articulate abstract interactions but are less attentive to race, which is deemed less important than class (cf. Lutz et al., 2011). Bilge (2013) argues that this European treatment has neutralized intersectionality's political potential.

In line with findings from the sociology of science, Carbado et al. (2013) find that contextual differences—be it geographies or disciplines—generate alternative engagements with the theory. Kathy Davis (2008) frames the spread of intersectional thinking as a success story, which she attributes to the open-ended ambiguity of the initial theory. Davis draws on the work of sociology of science scholar Murray S. Davis (1971, 1986), who posits that novel scientific theories must be specific enough to be of interest to experts in the field. The theory should also be open and incomplete enough so that scholars in other fields can adjust it to their interests and be encouraged to build on it.

Collins and Chepp (2013) identify six core ideas addressed by intersectional thinking: interrelations between systems of power; the co-construction of knowledge and power; attention to relational processes; the co-construction of knowledge and social relations; the significance of boundaries; and a concern for complexity. Particularly the last three themes are relevant for our study. The co-construction of knowledge and social relations refers to the idea that standpoints and world views—and not just social relations—but also are relational and construct each other (Collins, 1990, 1993). Following Collins and Chepp, we argue that social relations between academics influence the production and diffusion of knowledge. The role of boundaries refers to the construction of group identities; here the authors argue that intersectionality has been successful in transcending disciplinary boundaries within the academy. The concern for complexity connects intersectionality to complexity science, which can be seen as a diffused field or a “collection of work that addresses fundamental questions on the nature of systems and their changes” (Walby, 2007, p. 449). Both intersectionality and complexity science interrogate system complexity, privileging notions such as emergence, the relation between micro-interactions and macro patterns, and nonlinearities.

Building on this extant work on the spread of intersectional thinking, we expect the following: first, the trail of intersectionality's spread will appear as clusters of disciplinary communities loosely connected by scholars working at their margins. Second, communities will be tied together geographically. Third, interpretations of intersectionality will correspond to scholars' disciplinary and geographical locations. Fourth, Crenshaw (1989) will be referenced by nearly all scholars and will be the most central scholar in the network. Fifth, each community will have local central scholars like scientific stars (Merton, 1968) or leaders of invisible colleges (Carley, 1990; Crane, 1972)—likely established scholars within their disciplines.

3 | DATA AND METHODS

The diffusion of intersectionality is a complex process of micro-interactions between scholars referencing and building on each other's work. To reveal regularities and exceptions in this process, we adopt the approach developed by Keuchenius et al. (forthcoming). We construct a network representing the diffusion of intersectionality in terms of citations. We analyze the macroscopic structures of this network and how these relate to geography and disciplines. Consequently, we investigate how intersectionality is used and adapted by individual scholars and communities in the network. This methodology allows us to study the entire trail of intersectionality including its spread among scholars, conceptual journey, and how these two relate.

Our sample includes data on publications in the Scopus database with “intersectionality” in the keywords, abstract or title. We retrieved: author(s), title, journal, publication date, author research areas, keywords, abstract, and references. Although Scopus has broad coverage, it privileges journal articles over books and book chapters (Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016). We therefore manually included all publications that received more than 30 references from publications in our sample but which were missing from Scopus (see online Appendix A). We also retrieved meta-data on journals' subject areas from Scimago Journal & Country Rank. Our data set contains 3,807 publications authored by 6,098 scholars, published between 1983 and November 2018.

Network analysis enables us to reconstruct intersectionality's journey. Nodes in the network represent authors ($n = 6,098$) who have published on intersectionality. Edges in the network are drawn from new scholars

publishing on intersectionality (edge source) to previously published intersectionality scholars whom they cite (edge target). These directed edges represent influence from earlier to later authors. When publications are coauthored by multiple authors publishing on intersectionality for the first time, we draw edges between them. This generates a diffusion network that includes 6,098 scholars (nodes) and 45,264 edges.

For the analysis of the community structure of this network—the degree to which the network can be split into communities of scholars that predominantly reference each other—we use the Leiden algorithm (Traag et al., 2019). We determine statistical significance by comparing the network's community structure to that of a random network with the same degree distribution (see online Appendix B). Additionally, we analyze the in-degree distribution of the network—the number of incoming edges each scholar obtained—over time and the location of the high in-degree scholars in the network. The in-degree is a proxy for the scholar's importance in diffusing the ideas of intersectionality to their peers. Finally, we investigate the relation between detected communities and their geographical and disciplinary constitution.

To provide an overview of how intersectionality has been adapted by scholars in the network, we use topic modeling followed by the close reading of key publications (Törnberg & Törnberg, 2016). Topic modeling is an unsupervised machine learning method that identifies topics in large textual data sets, allowing us to identify principal themes and frames in the data (Bail, 2014; DiMaggio et al., 2013). We use a topic modeling technique called Latent Dirichlet Allocation (Blei et al., 2003; Pritchard et al., 2000) that outputs topics—list of words—present in the abstracts in our data set. To investigate the relationship between communities and topics, we examine whether scholars of different communities engage with distinct topics. We have set the model parameter for the number of topics, a contested value in the literature, to 15, but found similar relations between topics and diffusion communities for higher and lower parameter settings (see online Appendix C for more details).

Whereas topic modeling provides a bird's eye view of how different scholarly communities narrate intersectionality, the close reading of key publications helps us to see in granular detail how groups of scholars conceptualize intersectionality. We are aware that our own positions as White female researchers employed by a wealthy institution in a western democracy may influence our readings (Labelle, 2020). To circumvent this bias we picked a random sample of publications from each community, between 25 and 100 depending on the community's size, to explore how authors use intersectionality and refer to key publications and scholars in their community. This manual coding consisted of first selecting passages that reference key figures within communities and their publications, and then, identifying common themes and narratives within these passages.

4 | MAPPING THE STRUCTURE OF INTERSECTIONALITY'S DIFFUSION

Figure 1 shows that the diffusion network has a clear community structure (modularity value = 0.60, p -value < .01 see online Appendix B). Intersectionality did not spread like an oil stain, evenly and outward from a single center. Instead, the trail shows multiple centers and local webs within the 6,098 scholars in our data set, much like the loosely connected arenas theorized in the literature (Carbado et al., 2013). Whereas the network can be categorized into communities, these are not segregated. The three largest communities comprise 42% of all scholars in the giant component, and the largest 12 communities (each size > 100), 86% of all scholars (see Figure 2). Our analysis focuses on these 12 communities.

The in-degree—the number of incoming edges—is very unequally distributed in the network. The most influential scholars—for example, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Patricia Hill Collins, Leslie McCall, Elizabeth Cole, Lisa Bowleg, Kathy Davis, Nira Yuval-Davis, Ange-Marie Hancock, and Olena Hankivsky—are each cited by 448 up to 2,320 distinct scholars. Most other scholars (90%) receive less than 13 references. Scholars with high in-degree can be seen as hubs in the diffusion of intersectionality since later scholars reference hubs' works in their first intersectionality publication. We find that the hubs are spread across various communities (see Figure 1). In-degree within

The diffusion network of intersectionality

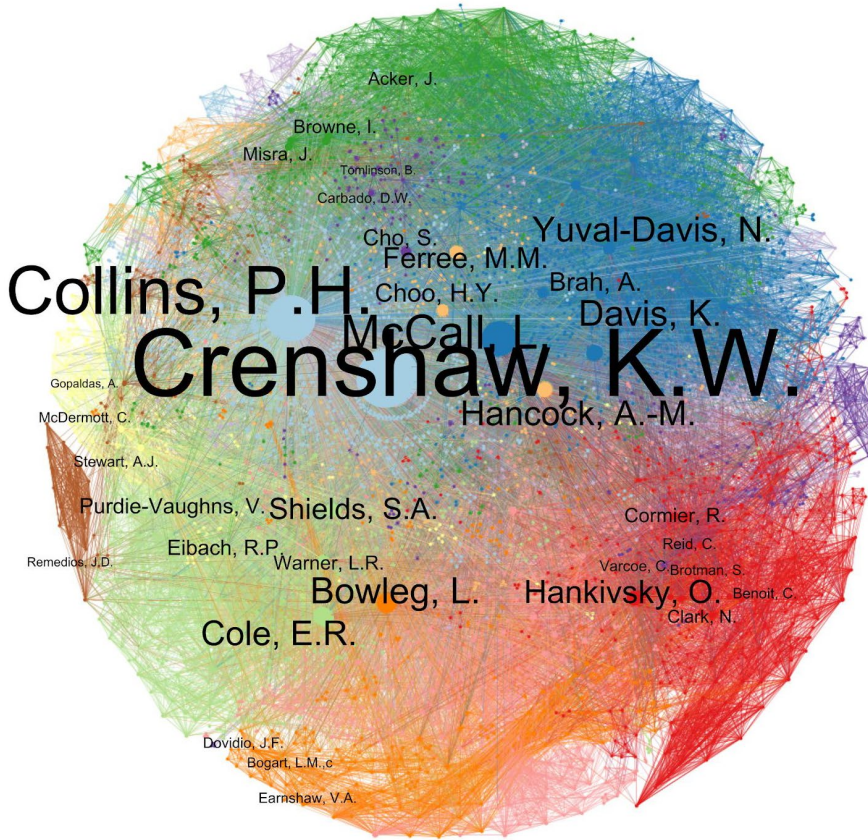


FIGURE 1 The diffusion network of intersectionality. The nodes are scholars who have published on intersectionality. Directed edges are drawn from scholars publishing on intersectionality for the first time (edge source) to published scholars whom they cite (edge target). The nodes are coloured by community. The most important scholars for the diffusion of intersectionality are labelled, with the labels sized according to their in-degree [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

communities is likewise very unequally distributed. Most communities contain one or several hubs (e.g., Bowleg in community 7, Olena Hankivsky in community 5) cited by between 25% and 58% of community members.

While all communities grow exponentially, the speed and timing of their growth differ (Figure 3). Community 0, a U.S.-centered community around Crenshaw and Hill Collins, grows first; community 2, located in psychology, only takes off after 2005. In this growth, the hubs are often forerunners in their respective communities (Figure 4).

Given their central location and timing, we can view these hubs as scientific opinion leaders in a two-step flow of communication (Katz, 1957). Innovations first spread to a small number of opinion leaders who in turn diffuse it to their followers. Similar leading roles exist in the diffusion of scientific innovations (Carley, 1990; Crane, 1972). But before turning to this, we ask: how do community structures in the diffusion network relate to geography and disciplines?

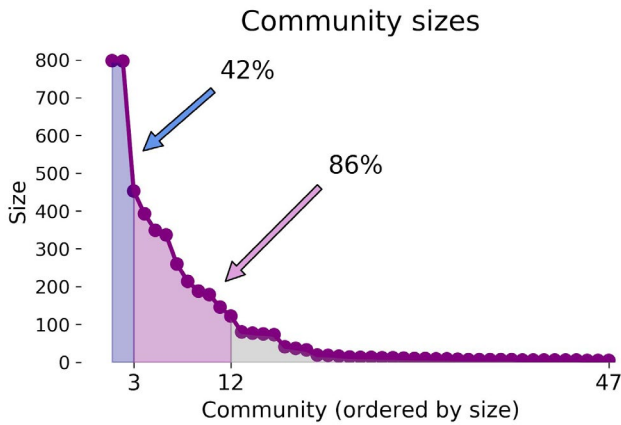


FIGURE 2 Distribution of community size in the diffusion network, with a small number of large communities and a large number of small communities. The largest 3 and 12 communities respectively contain 42% and 86% of all scholars in the giant component of the diffusion network [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Growth and share of communities over time

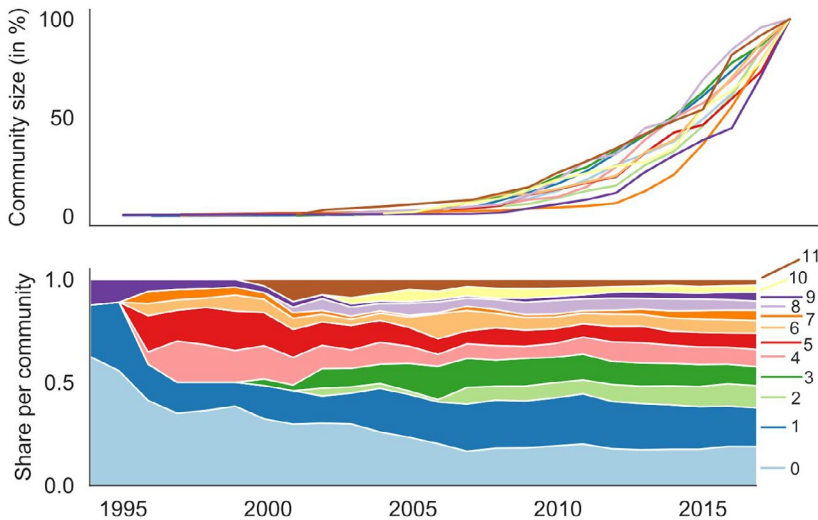


FIGURE 3 Temporal evolution of the largest 12 communities. The top figure shows the communities' growth curves, most of which are exponential. The bottom figure shows each community's share of total scholars at different points in time. Some communities (0 and 1) emerged early, others (2, 3 and 10) later [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

5 | THE ROLE OF GEOGRAPHY AND DISCIPLINES

The scholarly communities in the diffusion network of intersectionality are to some extent informed by geography (Figure 5). Communities 1 and 3, for example, are dominated by scholars based respectively in continental Europe and the United Kingdom. This is in contrast to all other communities, in which the vast majority of scholars—from 57% in community 5 to 88% in community 10—are based in the United States. This overview suggests that while

Growth of communities and indegree of researchers over time

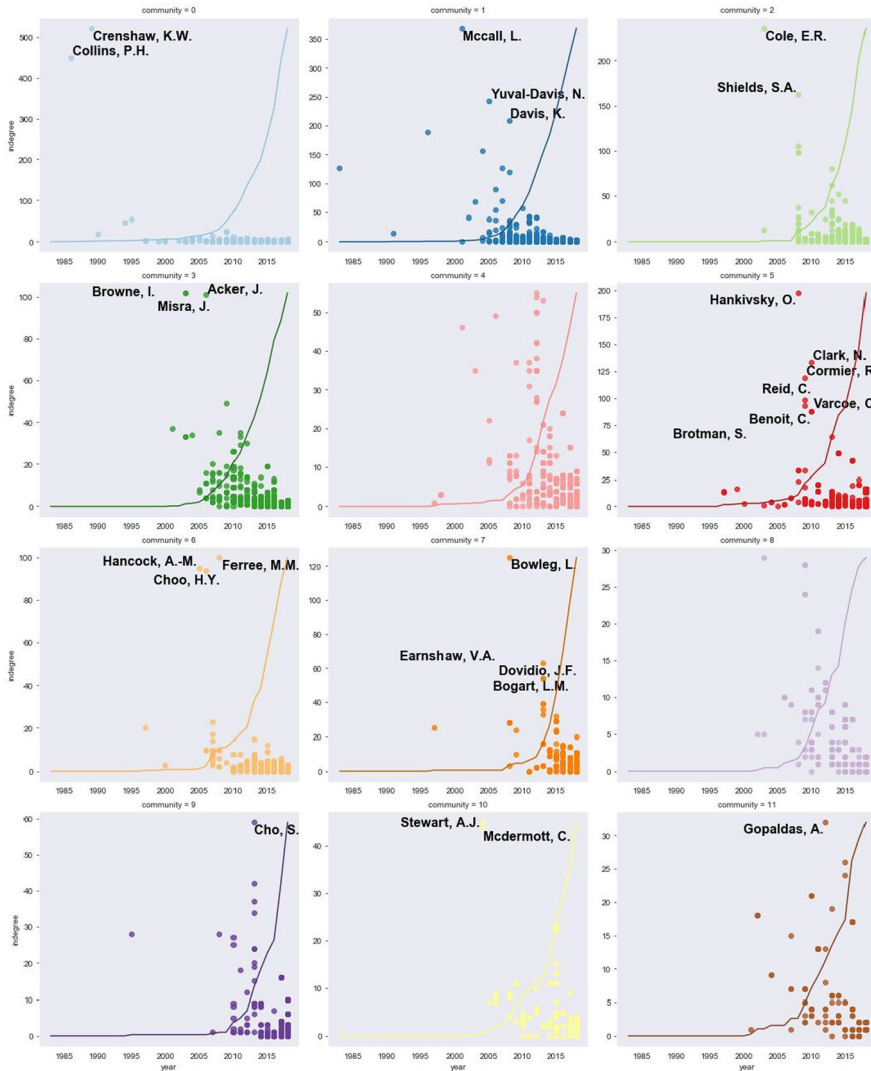


FIGURE 4 The growth (line) and local—within community—in-degree of researchers (scatter) in each community over time. The hidden y-axis for growth runs from 0% to 100%. Local hubs (scholars referenced by more than 25% of their community) are labelled. Most communities have at least one hub, among the first in the community to publish on intersectionality [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

geography has influenced the diffusion of intersectionality, it is far from the only compass. The data do not present neatly demarcated geographical communities.

How do disciplines tie scholars together? Cho et al. (2013) argue that institutional forces pull scholars toward their respective academic disciplines, subjecting intersectionality to established power structures and research practices, while marginalized scholars often remain skeptical of integrating mainstream methods and theories into their intersectional research. The latter act as centripetal forces, rendering the field a more connected and cohesive whole. Academic disciplines have been identified as the main foci around which the work of intersectionality scholars is organized. In our data and diffusion network, this would mean that communities are organized around disciplines, with scholars on the margins forming ties between communities.

Communities' geographies

georegion	AF	AS	EU	NA	OC	SA	UK	Total
community								
0	2.8%	2.1%	6.9%	75.2%	1.4%	1.6%	10.0%	100 %
1	1.3%	4.6%	35.9%	25.0%	6.4%	2.0%	24.9%	100 %
2	0.9%	0.7%	5.2%	86.5%	4.7%	0.0%	2.0%	100 %
3	2.1%	7.3%	21.3%	36.9%	8.1%	1.0%	23.4%	100 %
4	0.0%	1.5%	7.3%	82.3%	4.1%	0.3%	4.7%	100 %
5	4.9%	10.7%	13.4%	57.3%	3.4%	1.8%	8.5%	100 %
6	0.4%	0.4%	11.3%	79.8%	2.7%	0.8%	4.7%	100 %
7	2.9%	0.5%	1.4%	84.7%	4.3%	2.4%	3.8%	100 %
8	0.0%	4.4%	11.6%	68.0%	9.9%	0.0%	6.1%	100 %
9	1.1%	0.0%	7.5%	76.4%	7.5%	0.0%	7.5%	100 %
10	0.0%	2.1%	2.8%	88.0%	0.7%	0.0%	6.3%	100 %
11	0.0%	6.7%	10.9%	68.9%	1.7%	0.0%	11.8%	100 %

FIGURE 5 Geography of diffusion communities. Each cell presents the percentage of scholars (row) based in this geographical area (column). Significantly high or low column cells values are coloured green (high) or pink (low), based on a two-sided z-test with $\alpha = .05$. The geographical areas are Africa (AF), Asia (AS), Europe (EU), North America (NA), Oceania (OC), South America (SA) and the UK separately. Values are based on the location of scholars' current institution, available in Scopus [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Figures 6 and 7 visualize the disciplinary embedding of the communities. On the one hand, some communities stand out in terms of their research disciplines. For example, 22 and 16% of scholars in community 7 publish in "Public Health, Environmental and Occupational Health" and "Health Social Science" journals, respectively. Scholars of community 11 are unique in publishing on intersectionality within business, econometrics, and

Communities' main research areas

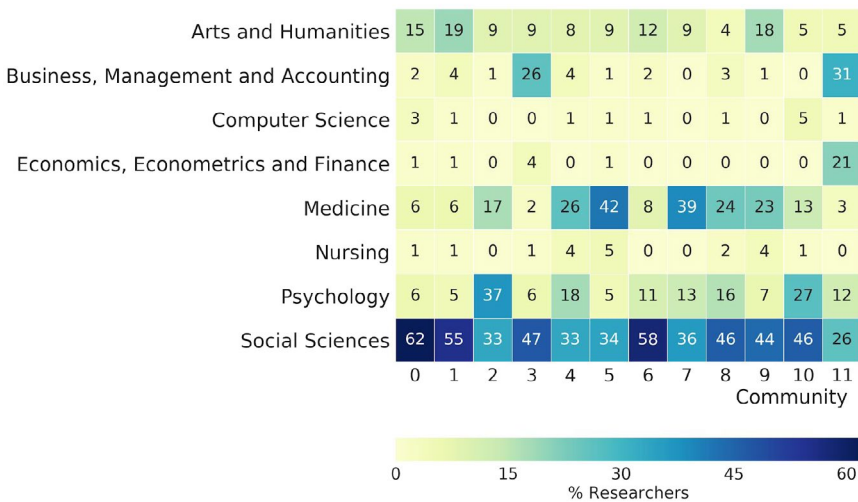


FIGURE 6 Main research areas of the communities. Each cell value and colour represents the percentage of researchers of that community active in a particular research area (e.g., 26% of researchers in community 3 published in business, management and accounting). The figure only contains research fields for which at least one community significantly deviates from the overall network (two-sided z-test) and which involve at least 5% of the community's scholars [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

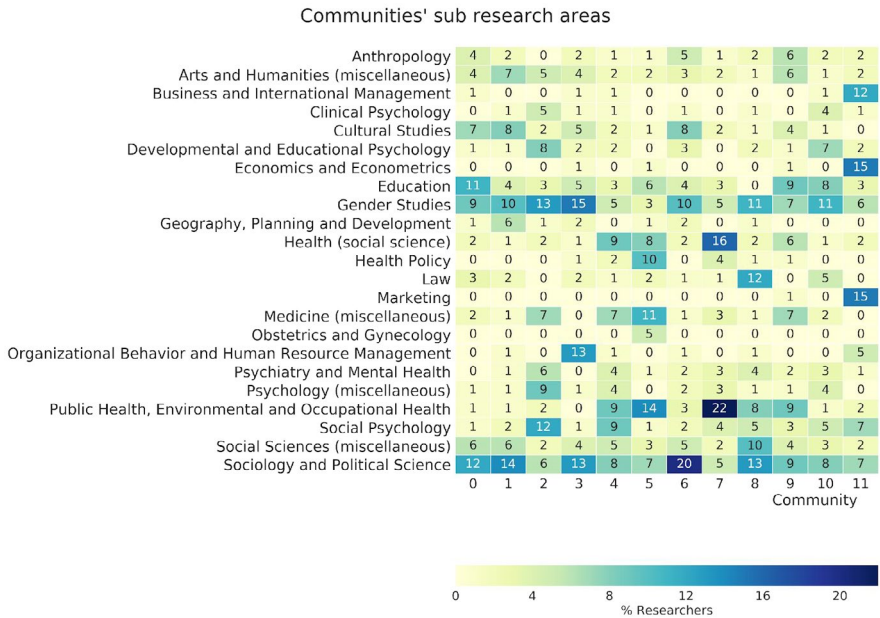


FIGURE 7 Sub-areas of research for the communities. Each cell value and colour represents the percentage of researchers of that community active in a particular subfield (e.g., 22% of researchers in community 7 published in public health, environmental and occupational health). The figure only contains research fields for which at least one community significantly deviates from the overall network (two-sided z-test) and which involve at least 5% of the community's scholars [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

marketing. On the other hand, some communities are very alike in their disciplinary focus yet remain separate in the diffusion network, such as the two largest communities (community 0 and 1).

These results allow for many more detailed observations, but the key take away is that disciplinary forces have indeed shaped the spread of intersectionality but, like geography, cannot fully account for the observed community patterns. To better understand how diffusion communities emerged, we delve deeper into how scholars in these communities narrate intersectionality.

6 | COMMUNITY-SPECIFIC ADAPTATIONS

Now that we established the structural patterns of intersectionality's spread we explore its conceptual journey. Building on the community structure, we study how scholars in these communities understand and apply intersectionality. To do so, we turn to the content of their publications. Aided by topic modeling, we find the intersectionality literature covering topics ranging from migration to domestic violence and stigmatization (see online Appendix C). Figure 8 shows the relation between the diffusion communities and the topics they write about, illustrating differences in the communities' research narratives and interests. For example, community 7 is interested in "stigmatization" (topic 2), which hardly registers in other communities. Community 2, consisting mostly of social psychologists, focuses on "multiple identities" and "sexual orientation" (topics 11 and 12).

Although the distribution of topics provides general insight into the interests of scholars in the various diffusion communities, it does not yield granular understanding of how intersectionality is interpreted and narrated. We therefore describe in more detail discussions within the network's three largest communities, which we have labeled "The Black Feminist Core," "Categorically Extended Intersectionality," and "The Intersectional Psychologists." Each community has a distinct understanding of intersectionality. For the predominantly

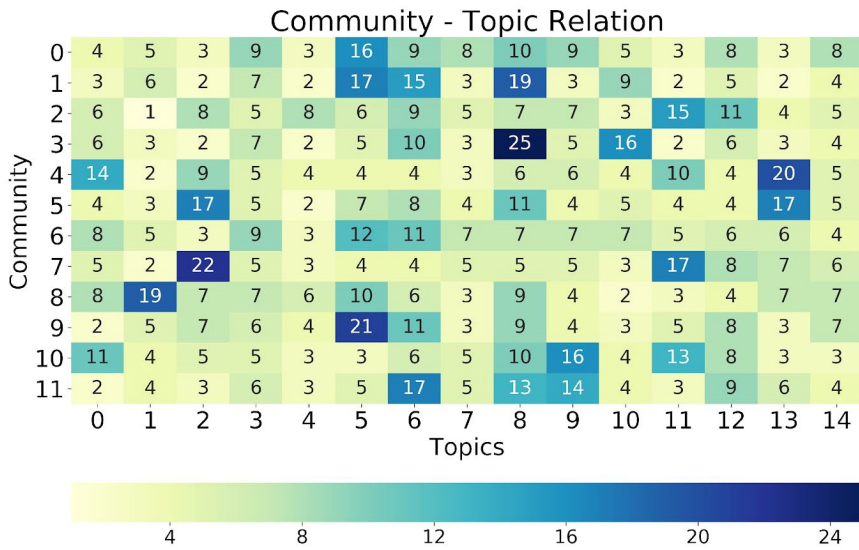


FIGURE 8 Topics (columns) that the members of communities (rows) cover in their publications. Each cell value and colour represents the percentage of a community's researchers addressing the topic (e.g., 21% of researchers in community 2 address topic 11, sexual identity and orientation) [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

U.S.-based scholars of the “Black Feminist Core,” improving the lives of Black women is central to the intersectional project. Scholars within the “Categorically Extended Intersectionality” community—largely based in continental Europe and the United Kingdom—focus on interdisciplinary women's studies and treat intersectionality as an analytical framework and work-in-progress. They bring in more categories than race and gender and tend to focus on ethnicity and migration background rather than race. Finally, “The Intersectional Psychologists” focus on the methodological questions of intersectional research in individual psychology.

6.1 | Community 0: The Black Feminist Core

This community (798 scholars) is centered around the founders of intersectionality: Crenshaw and Hill Collins. Although the three most cited works in this community are canonical and cited by scholars in other communities too, they are particularly frequently referenced by scholars in community 0 (see online Appendix D). Hill Collins' book *Black Feminist Thought* (1990) is referenced by 42% and Crenshaw (1989) by 33% of scholars in Community 0. Surprisingly, only a third cite Crenshaw (1989), which many reviews consider to be *the* conceptual birth of intersectionality. Crenshaw (1991) is referenced by 30% of the scholars. Crenshaw's articles are located in law and closely related to critical race theory.

Angela Harris, part of the inner circle of critical race studies scholars who gave birth to intersectionality, argues that the voices of Black women are too often ignored in feminist and legal theory and that the gender essentialism in much feminist theory perpetuates the problem. In her critique of second wave feminists espousing a putative “women's experience” (Harris, 1990, p. 588), Harris builds on the work of the American writer, feminist, and civil rights activist Audre Lorde (1984). Reflecting on the field in her foreword to *Critical Race Theory* edited by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (2001), Harris recalls a 1989 workshop attended by Derrick Bell, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, Mari Matsuda, and Patricia Williams. Since then, critical race theory has “exploded from a narrow subspecialty of jurisprudence... of interest to academic lawyers into a literature” spanning departments (2001, p. xx).

Characteristic of this community is the view that intersectionality should be used to improve the lives of Black women. The majority of publications in this community (75%) are written by North American scholars and focus on the U.S. experience. A strong activist tone suffuses the work of this community, whether it is addressing its research subject of marginalized Black women or the current and future direction of intersectionality. In their edited volume, Bonnie Thornton Dill and Ruth Enid Zambrana treat intersectionality as “a systematic approach to understanding human life and behaviour that is rooted in the experiences and struggles of marginalized people” (2009, p. 4). Their mission is to: (1) rethink curricula and promote institutional change in higher education, (2) apply knowledge to create a society in which all voices are heard, and (3) advocate for public policies that are responsive to multiple voices (2009, p. 2). Researchers in this community are generally critical about using intersectionality for pursuits other than empowering Black women (Collins & Chepp, 2013). In this community, intersectionality is conceptualized as tool to unveil and change systems of oppression, for marginalized Black women in particular.

6.2 | Community 1: Categorically Extended Intersectionality

The second largest community, consisting of 797 scholars, reveals how intersectionality has crossed the Atlantic; it includes, in both absolute and relative terms, the highest number of scholars based in continental Europe and the United Kingdom (see Figure 5). The community's main contribution is applying intersectionality to categories beyond race and gender. Its members thereby treat intersectionality as an analytical framework that is not specific to Black women per se.

The central figures in this community are sociologists: McCall (based in the United States), Kathy Davis (based in the Netherlands), and Nira Yuval-Davis (based in the United Kingdom). Their geographical location influences how they frame and apply intersectionality: while scholars based in the United States and the United Kingdom largely focus on race, those based in continental Europe generally focus on ethnicity, applying the intersectional lens to individuals with migration or multiethnic backgrounds (Prins, 2006). Scholars in this community also introduce new disciplinary approaches from political science (e.g., Verloo, 2006), psychology (e.g., Staunæs, 2003), and geography (e.g., Valentine, 2007).

Many European and U.K.-based scholars apply intersectionality to a wider set of categories. Valentine (2007), for instance, brings in ability, arguing that theories of intersectionality overestimate the ability of individuals to create their own lives. Verloo (2006) analyses how categories are represented in policies and how these are linked to inequality in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, sexuality, and class; she uses intersectionality to show that a one-size-fits-all approach to multiple discrimination, based on the assumption of the sameness of social categories, is inadequate. U.K.-based scholars (Brah & Phoenix, 2004; Yuval-Davis, 2006) in this cluster working in the tradition of Crenshaw and Collins see potential for intersectionality in the praxis of feminism and see opportunities for global feminism in the context of global threats.

U.S.-based authors in this cluster are concerned with what intersectionality is and/or does. While Cho et al. (2013) focus on collaboration, Nash (2008) is more critical. Drawing on critical race legal scholars such as Harris, Crenshaw, and Matsuda central in the “Black Feminist Core,” Nash argues that intersectionality aims to disrupt cumulative approaches to identity. “Re-considering intersectionality enables activists to ask under what conditions organizing as ‘women’ or ‘blacks’ or ‘Black women’ makes sense, under what conditions temporary coalition-building makes sense” (Nash, 2008, p. 4). Nash (2016) also criticizes scholars in this community for rereading intersectionality's inaugural text and rewriting intersectionality as a feminist contribution driven by disciplinary politics.

Interestingly, Nash (2008) and Bilge (2013)—the most ardent critics of the broad appropriation of intersectionality—are part of this community that widens intersectionality's scope. This shows that many scholars are taking notice of their criticisms by citing them. This makes Nash and Bilge, perhaps to their own discomfort, part of this diffusion community. Diffusion communities are far from homogeneous academic communities that think alike; their members may indeed be unaware of being part of the clique. Nevertheless, diffusion communities lay bare

the trail of how intersectionality has spread. Nash, alongside other high in-degree scholars, has been crucial in diffusing and narrating intersectionality to this community.

6.3 | Community 2: The Intersectional Psychologists

This community (453 scholars) revolves around intersectionality in psychology. Scholars publish predominantly in the field of psychology including its subfields social psychology and developmental and educational psychology. A key objective is to develop tools to study intersectionality empirically at both the individual and structural levels. "Sexual identity" and "orientation" are among its leading research topics (topic 11). The journal *Sex Roles* is the community's preferred outlet, publishing more than half of its top 15 publications and two special issues on intersectionality edited by Stephanie Shields (2008) and Parent et al. (2013). The paper "Intersectionality and research in psychology" by Elizabeth R. Cole (2009) is referenced by almost half (46%) of the community's members, making Cole and Shields its principal hubs.

As psychology largely focuses on individuals and the intersectional lens challenges the discipline's quantitative and empirical orientation, scholars in this community frequently discuss methodological questions. How, for example, can regression analysis be combined with an intersectional approach? Bowleg notes that "the positivist paradigm that undergirds much (but not all) quantitative research appears to be orthogonal to the complexities of intersectionality" (2008, p. 317). Several highly cited publications offer "best practices" for applying intersectionality to psychological research (e.g., Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Warner, 2008). Members of this community hold fewer meta-discussions about the origins, state and purpose of intersectionality, focusing instead on operationalizing the concept for empirical psychological research.

The detailed descriptions of the largest three communities demonstrate that diffusion communities closely relate to specific interpretations of intersectionality. These interpretations presumably developed in diverging directions and in conjunction with the growth of the communities. To gain a deeper understanding of this interpretation process we take a closer look at the role of communities' hubs.

7 | THE EMERGENCE OF FIGUREHEADS

What is the role of hubs and the two-step flow of communication in the diffusion and interpretation of intersectionality? The latter identifies two phases in the diffusion of new ideas, where the innovation first spreads to opinion leaders and thereafter to their followers. To examine this leading role, we focus on the communities with the most prominent hubs (see Figure 9) in different disciplines: McCall, Davis, and Yuval-Davis in community 1 (sociology); Elizabeth R. Cole and Stephanie Shields in community 2 (psychology); Olena Hankivsky in community 5 (public policy); and Lisa Bowleg in community 7 (psychology). We explore how Collins, Crenshaw, and these hubs are referenced and how their work is narrated based on the coding of a significant number of publications with references to these scholars (Figure 9).

While Collins and Crenshaw are often referenced when authors write about the origins of intersectionality or are providing a definition of the term, far from every new scholar references Crenshaw or Collins (see online Appendix D). Different communities also refer to specific contributions by Collins or Crenshaw which speak to their research interests. For example, community 7 references Collins almost exclusively in relation to stigmatization, particularly HIV-related stigma, which is the community's main research topic: "For midlife and older Black women, manifestations of HIV-related stigma intersected with and was compounded by various forms of inequality rendered through ageism, racism, and sexism, what Patricia Hill Collins (1990) has described as a matrix of oppression" (Sangaramoorthy et al., 2017, p. 1,338). Hubs are often credited for their translation work. For instance, Hankivsky is accredited for introducing intersectionality to health research and public policy, the main interest of

Communities hubs

community	name	nr. edges from community members	% edges from community members	nr. citations analyzed
1	McCall, L.	369	46%	55
	Yuval-Davis, N.	243	30%	39
	Davis, K.	209	26%	40
2	Cole, E.R.	236	52%	96
	Shields, S.A.	162	36%	55
5	Hankivsky, O.	198	59%	47
	Clark, N.	133	39%	
	Cormier, R.	119	35%	
	Reid, C.	98	29%	
	Benoit, C.	93	28%	
	Brotman, S.	88	26%	
	Varcoe, C.	88	26%	
	Bowleg, L.	125	58%	27
7	Earnshaw, V.A.	63	29%	
	Bogart, L.M.,c	54	25%	
	Dovidio, J.F.	54	25%	

FIGURE 9 Hubs in communities 1, 2, 5 and 7, and the number and percentage of first-time intersectionality scholars in their community who reference them. The last column indicates how many community citations to the hub we analysed [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

community 5: "The paradigm of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1994[1991]), proposed in the field of women's health, has been highly useful in understanding the interplay between systems of power and oppression on the structural level (Hankivsky et al., 2010)" (Mora-Rios et al., 2016, p. 698).¹

Similarly, Cole—community 2's hub—is explicitly praised for her work in translating intersectionality for the field of psychology:

The construct of intersectionality has been used extensively by feminists, queer theorists, and critical race theorists; however, it has been only recently that scholars within our own fields of counselling and psychology have pointed to intersectionality as a critical analytic tool in understanding the experiences and consequences of holding membership in multiple social identity categories (Cole, 2009; Conwill, 2010) ... Cole (2009) has provided an excellent guide for how to integrate the rubric of intersectionality into psychological research. Cole also highlighted the bias in the literature on intersectionality toward the investigation of those who experience multiple dimensions of disadvantage.

(Smith, & Shin, 2015, p. 1462)²

This last passage also reveals a process of academic positioning, identifying the author and reader as part of "our field of counselling and psychology."

Sometimes Crenshaw and Collins are no longer referenced but eclipsed by the community hub:

The related concept of intersectionality, which suggests that social categories and identities are not independent but rather multidimensional and linked to structural inequalities (Bowleg et al., 2013), provides a useful reference in understanding how layered stigma works. However, while theory and research highlight the importance of understanding layered stigmas and intersectionality in relation to HIV vulnerability among BMSM, these factors have been largely overlooked in most quantitative research.

(Wilson et al., 2016)³

Our exploration of the role of community hubs shows that these scholars are not only introducing their peers to the idea of intersectionality, but also translating the concept in ways that make it relevant to their particular disciplines, fields, and subfields. Scholars who reference these leading scholars reinforce their role as hubs by creating narratives that credit them this role. Hubs thus seem to function as scientific opinion leaders or focal points (Collins, 1983) in a chaotic academic landscape that helps stabilize the concept of intersectionality. In extreme cases, we find that the origins of intersectionality have been forgotten as later references to the concept only cite these hubs, who become figureheads for intersectionality in their own communities. This aligns with what Cho et al. (2013) describe as the centrifugal process in the diffusion of intersectionality.

8 | CONCLUSION

Thirty years after its coinage, intersectionality has entered most disciplines that study people in some way. While there is no shortage of critical interventions that question the competing interpretations of what intersectionality is, does, or should be, our study—to the best of our knowledge—is the first systematic empirical attempt to combine quantitative and qualitative methods and a complex systems approach to reconstruct the macro and micro dimensions of intersectionality's spread through the academic literature.

In contrast to extant genealogies of intersectionality that tend to focus on highly cited works and those that are central to specific circles (for an exception in political science see Mügge et al., 2018), our study draws on all ($n = 3,807$) works available on Scopus that include the word intersectionality in the abstract, keywords, or title. Based on the extant literature, we formulated five expectations: (1) the trail of intersectionality's spread will resemble clusters of disciplinary communities; (2) communities will be tied together geographically; (3) scholars' interpretations of intersectionality will correspond to their geographical and disciplinary locations; (4) Crenshaw (1989) will be the most referenced work; and (5) each community will have its own scientific star.

Our findings reveal that intersectionality's diffusion trail is made up of highly connected webs within the 6,098 scholars in our data set. Within each of these communities, we find a few central and highly referenced scholars—whom we have referred to as “hubs”—who were crucial in introducing the concept to their peers. While these communities are oriented around disciplines—and to some extent, geography—our analysis suggests that they mostly form around specific narratives of intersectionality. For example, a “Black Feminist Core” of scholars based in the U.S. considers intersectionality primarily as a tool to empower Black women, while another large community made up primarily of psychologists seeks to operationalize intersectionality for psychological research on identity. The hubs are influential in creating these narratives of intersectionality for their respective communities, while their roles are recognized and reinforced by other scholars in the community. For example, scholars in the community around Hankivsky credit her for “bringing intersectionality to the field of women's health research.” While Crenshaw has the most central position in the overall diffusion network, acknowledged for both coining and defining intersectionality, she is not consistently referenced. At times intersectionality is introduced with a reference to the community's local hub, transforming the hub into a figurehead of intersectionality for this community. Previous studies underline the importance of academic stars or opinion leaders in the diffusion of ideas due to their status and reach (Carley, 1990; Crane, 1972; Price, 1963). Our study reveals that these hubs *also* translate ideas in ways that make sense to their surroundings. Scholars citing these hubs reinforce these new narratives. This way, hubs are credited for their role as translators, and references to the original works in some cases disappear.

The diffusion pattern of intersectionality supports broader findings from the sociology of knowledge, particularly how researchers' social relations inform the knowledge they produce (Collins & Chepp, 2013). Academics self-organize into social circles (Crane, 1972) or epistemic communities (Knorr Cetina, 1981) that uphold particular stories and knowledge claims. New scientific theories are transformed and redeployed as they traverse academic landscapes (Kaiser, 2009; Keuchenius et al., in press). Generally, scholars in various research communities will

agree on the importance of the novel theory, but will—often not knowingly—disagree on the particular content (Kuhn, 1970, p. 44; Gilbert et al., 1984). In that light, intersectionality's journey is no exception. Unlike Davis (2008), who ascribes the success of intersectionality to its ambiguous and open-ended nature, we suggest that the multiplicity of perspectives that developed during intersectionality's spread is a precondition and natural consequence of a novel idea that travels far. What is unique to intersectionality, is the—often heated and political—contestation that accompanied the transformations of the concept.

Our analysis focused on the most notable patterns in the diffusion network of intersectionality—its community structure and the existence and role of local hubs—which correspond to the centrifugal spreading process of intersectionality. While the 3,807 publications in Scopus that contain the word “intersectionality” in the title, abstract, or keywords represent the visible “elite” within intersectionality studies, we expect that there are many more works produced by scholars of color and other marginalized groups underrepresented and excluded in academia (Cho et al., 2013). Although we did not pursue the in-depth analysis of centripetal actors, the diffusion network detected scholars working on the margins of communities and at times bridging them. Future research will be needed to examine their role in the production and diffusion of knowledge. Additionally, we identify a novel research avenue on the emergence of hubs. We analyzed their leading role, but the question remains why certain scholars—and not others—acquire a central network position. Finally, our complex systems approach—which focuses on the emergence of macroscopic patterns rooted in microscopic events and interactions—does not explicitly capture power imbalances and racialized hierarchies that influence knowledge production and diffusion. Nevertheless, macro structures including power inequalities and institutional incentives feed back into individual actions and interactions. We hope that our work will inspire scholars to explore methods able to incorporate such feedback loops into systematic empirical research on intersectionality.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in figshare at <https://doi.org/10.21942/uva.12155982>.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ This citation is one example of numerous quotes in our sample that references Hankivsky in this manner in community 5. We analyzed a random selection of 25 publications, which contained 47 references to Hankivsky.
- ² Similar to the previous Hankivsky quote, this citation is an illustration. The analysis is based on 90 randomly selected publications by scholars of community 2, which include 96 references to Cole.
- ³ This citations illustrates how Bowleg is referenced alongside a definition of intersectionality, without citing Collins or Crenshaw. Our data shows the same phenomenon for other hubs.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information section.

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Agricultural capitalism, climatology and the “stabilization” of climate in the United States, 1850–1920

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Abstract

Drawing from theory on the “co-production” of science and society, this paper provides an account of trajectories in US climatology, roughly from the 1850s to 1920, the period during which climatology emerged as an organized branch of meteorology and government administration. The historical narrative traces the development of climatology both as a professional/institutional project and as a component of a larger governmental logic. Historical analysis of climatologists' scientific texts, maps, and social organization within government provides a sociological explanation for the emergent “stabilization” of climate as a geographic-statistical category. Climatic *stability*, defined by the view that climate is unchanging, was advanced over this period in a way that linked the interests and practices of climatologists to actors invested in facilitating and administering commercial agriculture and trade. I position the logic of climatology and the discourse of climatic stability historically, with reference to prior concern with climate change and, in recent decades, efforts to govern global warming through geoengineering climatic stability.

KEYWORDS

climate change, climate science, co-production, rationalization, sociology of science, state formation

1 | INTRODUCTION

With the aim of achieving just social and ecological outcomes in the face of the possibly devastating impacts of climate change, historical analysis can render visible the variable social meanings and actions attached to climatic phenomena. Historicizing climate in sociological terms can open up opportunities to envision social transformation, rather than representing the current situation as the end of the world or an external fact of nature to which society must simply adapt (Hulme, 2017; Swyngedouw, 2010; Watts, 2015).

This article focuses on a historical period in the United States that has received minimal attention among social scientists dealing with the relationship between climate, knowledge, and society—namely, from the 1850s to 1920. My argument regarding the emergence of climatology as a discrete science during this period is two-fold. The first shows how climatology emerged as both a professional project and a component of a governmental logic specific to capitalist society and a bureaucratic state. The second centers on how the science of climatology reshaped the substantive view of climate. I argue that a discourse of *climatic stability*—the basic view that climate is unchanging within a delineated geographic space—emerged in a way that linked the social interests and practices of climatologists with the broader administration of commercial agriculture, trade, and finance.

The historical situation for “stabilized” climates is important to recognize. From the 18th to mid-19th centuries, climatic theory among meteorologists, physicians, natural philosophers, and their publics held that climates were *changing*. Historians have analyzed these ideas with renewed interest, given contemporary climate change (Fleming, 1998; Golinski, 2008; Zilberstein, 2016). Scholars have likewise historicized the authority of climate change science since the mid-20th century (Baker, 2017; Edwards, 2010), an important effort for charting the role of science in what many hold as a need for societal transformation (IPCC et al., 2018). In the problem space of the science-society relationship, conceptualizations of climate as an entity that does *not* change (or can be made to be so) also can be problematized.

To explain the transition, which began in the mid-19th century, toward treating climate as stable I center my analysis on climatologists' texts, maps, and social organization in order to situate climate knowledge in its broader context. Methodologically, the analysis is informed by a “symmetrical” approach (Bloor, 1974) that analyzes the institutional structure and technical content of scientific knowledge without positing in advance the progression of scientific rationality. This approach opens up analysis to how social actors may “co-produce” (cf. Jasanoff, 2004) on the one hand, a new meteorological order within science, and on the other hand, governmental practices. Transformation of concerns about the stability/instability of climate, as a co-production approach suggests, may not be simply keyed to climatic shifts or to the logic of scientific discovery, but also to changes between the domains of science and government.

The article proceeds as follows. I begin by establishing the fact of a major definitional change regarding climatic stability and situate it in the US context. I then draw upon scholarship tracing the rise of industrial capitalism to frame an analysis of how meteorologists and allied actors constructed “stable” climates and put them to work, on the one hand, for the formation of climatology, and on the other hand, as basic categories of modern capitalist society. The article concludes by suggesting that understanding the “stabilization” of climate can yield insights into ongoing debate in climate governance regarding “climate stabilization,” including the increasingly common assumption that “solving” climate change can be achieved by technical intervention (i.e., geoengineering).

2 | THE PUZZLE OF CLIMATIC STABILITY

A convenient way to locate changes in knowledge is to uncover novel basic definitions within a field in order to recognize them not as simply given by nature but as effects of definitional struggle among people situated in time and place. Scientists' understandings of “climate” exhibited just such a definitional struggle and transformation in the latter 19th century. By 1903, climatologist Robert DeCoursey Ward translated the Austrian meteorologist

Julius von Hann's influential *Handbook of Climatology* and revised it for an American audience. Ward, who was the first professor of climatology in the United States (at Harvard), defined climate as "the sum total of the meteorological phenomena that characterize the average condition of the atmosphere at any one place on the earth's surface" (in Hann, 1903 [1883], p. 1). As meteorologist Willis Milham likewise made clear in his influential textbook, *Meteorology*, published in 1912: "Weather changes from moment to moment, but climate remains the same" (Milham, 1918 [1912], p. 426). The "constancy of climate," as Milham (p. 437) put it, meant that climate had not changed either in recent or historical times (he cited 7,000 years).

Definitions of climate as "normal" weather, rather unsurprising today, compare sharply with earlier relational conceptions of climate. Just decades prior to the publication of the above-cited definitions, people did not typically treat climate as a geographically stable set of averaged physical parameters, but rather as a set of dynamics relating human populations to their environments. Consider American meteorologist Samuel Forry's (1842, p. 127) definition, borrowed from Prussian geographer Alexander von Humboldt (see Humboldt, 1849 [1845], p. 338): "Climate, in a word, constitutes the aggregate of all the external physical circumstances appertaining to each locality in its *relation* to organic nature." It followed for Forry (1842, p. 128) that "[to] deduce from this knowledge the influence which they exercise on the physical and moral state of man, such is the wide field which climates present to our investigation." Although classical Aristotelean meteorology understood climates to be latitudinally defined climatic "zones," such zones were more heuristic compared to later cartographic representations (Hann, 1903 [1883]; Humboldt, 1817; Köppen, 2011 [1884]; Martin, 2006). Instead, those advancing climatic theory in the first half of the 19th century primarily focused on regional or local variants of neo-Hippocratic environmental medicine (Jankovic, 2010; Rupke & Wonders, 2000). In urban and rural contexts, many meteorologists up to the 1840s were physicians and reformers. To know climate was centrally to understand how and why it may be *changing*, and with what consequences for equally dynamic human and social developments. In 1857, climatologist Lorin Blodget (1857, p. 481) frustratingly characterized the situation when working to establish a new vision of climatology in the US: "Attached ideas of change to the whole subject [of climate] is difficult to remove."

So, a central question concerns how to explain a definitional change in climate and evaluate its consequences? Other scholars have analyzed the 18th to mid-19th centuries to emphasize that, as a category of science and a set of social anxieties, "climate change" is hardly new, but rather "the modern revival of the debate in a new version" (Thompson, 1981, p. 238), for which analysis much find one or another "valuable historical analog" (Stehr & von Storch, 2000, p. 13; see also Fleming, 1998; Hulme, 2008; Zilberstein, 2016). This position has two limitations. First, historical scholarship on climate change risks presuming a false parallel between the contemporary situation of global warming and climatic theory in prior periods. Second, this scholarship hardly problematizes the better part of a century during which climate change was relatively peripheral to science and public consciousness.

It is necessary to consider whether those who enacted a definitional change regarding a stable climate were simply correct. Recent reconstructions of climate history hamper the otherwise plausible claim that climatologists' data speaks for itself and, therefore, straightforward discoveries had closed the "debate" about climate change in the mid-19th century by empirical falsification. In a review of 19th-century climate theory, for example, climatologist Thompson (1981, p. 238) writes, "Ironically, the period of extended debate on the climate-change issue, when opinion was essentially polarized on either climatic amelioration or climatic stability was actually a period of distinct climatic deterioration for the western world." By "deterioration," Thompson meant the cooling period, which climatologists later labeled the "Little Ice Age." Climate historians and climate reconstruction modelers (Bradley & Jonest, 1993; Mann et al., 2009) have consistently identified this cooling trend, which was global in scope up to the late 19th century (although it expressed temporal regional variation).

Recognizing that climatologists' views on climatic stability do not neatly correspond with reconstructed trends suggests that climate data itself provides an insufficient explanation for the transformation, within the logic of climatology, towards a "stabilized" climate. Explanation must in part be sought elsewhere. For that, attention to the social contexts of climate knowledge is necessary for ultimately situating how climatology may have related to the broader rationalization of US society.

3 | THE SOCIAL PRODUCTION OF CAPITALIST CLIMATES

Confluences of government, economic development, and climate knowledge have formed over the historical long term and across national, imperial, and colonial contexts (Mahony & Endfield, 2018). From colonial North Africa (Davis, 2016; Locher & Fressoz, 2012), to India and the West Indies (Harrison, 1996) and Australasia (Beattie, O'Gorman, & Henry, 2014), debates about the "acclimatization" of the colonizer and the racial character of the colonized established, for colonial officials, the "natural" basis of social hierarchy that informed policies regarding hygiene, settlement, assimilation, land development, and military strategy. Within colonial discourse, climate change could result in social degeneration or be amenable to anthropogenic "improvement" (Drayton, 2000). The relationality between dynamic climates and bodies formed an anchor for climate knowledge in "new" territories and uncertain colonial situations.

Scientists advancing climatic theory in the US up to the mid-19th century focused on two major issues that resonated with the Euro-colonial meteorological community: American climate change and the climate-disease relationship. Self-consciously American natural philosophers and physicians brought international debates about American climate into their efforts to establish regional and national meteorological standards of practice (Baker, 2018). Internationally, the co-production of climate knowledge and state- and empire-building in the late-19th century benefited from refined techniques for representing and mapping climates geographically, what Coen (2018) has labeled the process of "scaling." By elaborating the spatiality of climate, climatologists in diverse contexts informed political and economic interests, ranging from land use policy to global imperial ambitions and racially coded geopolitical ideology (Coen, 2018; Mahony, 2016; Ratzel, 1896). The rationalization of society and its environments, which transformed many elements of natural and social reality into discrete units for the purposes of bureaucratic administration and commercial exchange was thus not limited to the US context.

Given the configuration of science, capitalism, and state-making, the US from the 1850s to 1920 provides a case of how those working in or connected to the domain of climatology helped to build what can be labeled *industrial-capitalist climates*. Climates under this conceptualization are "scaled" in a manner that provides a basis upon which markets and capitalist society can be progressively and predictably built by economically exploiting land, water, air, soil, and labor productivity. Analysis of industrial capitalist climates can draw from a Marxian understanding of nature, the state, and knowledge as comprising what Shnaiberg (1980) labels "production science," which facilitates the capitalist "treadmill of production." The natural sciences in the latter 19th century formed one "hand" of capitalist state formation by helping to facilitate the "legibility" and accessibility of territory, land, and natural resources (Morgan & Orloff, 2017; Scott, 1998). Physical scientists during this time oriented toward the innovative, if destructive, extraction of raw materials and labor-power, among what Karl Polanyi later labelled the "fictitious commodities" upon which capitalist production depends (Polanyi, 2001 [1944], pp. 187–200). To use political economist James Dunbar's (1781, p. 308) prescient late-18th-century terms, "economic government" must "recover...our patrimony from Chaos." The production of capitalist nature must confront, and hence exploit or overcome, nature's complexity. A capitalist order called forth the legibility and standardization of nature and society in ways previously unimaginable, a process that became even more rationalized within a 19th-century international market system in which profits were only secured through competitive production, financial innovation, and efficient trade on relatively open markets (Davis, 2004).

The period from the 1850s to 1920 marks the industrialization of the US economy. Moore (1966) has argued that the US Civil War constituted a bourgeois revolution that consolidated a national capitalist class in manufacturing and finance, paralleled by the "freeing" up of Western land to property development and the "freeing" up of labor through the abolishment of chattel slavery in the American South. Historian Clark (2012) has shown that agrarian development complemented the rise of industrial manufacturing through more intensive capitalization of land, property, natural resources, and agriculture, compared to the antebellum period. New state institutions facilitated this process (Skowronek, 1982), and they advanced infrastructural and land development, reclamation, navigation, and public works. Accounts of capitalist state formation thus suggest that the interests and activities

of scientists, those oriented to incorporating natural resources into market society, and bureaucratic state officials could meet one another in the spaces of climate knowledge. An empirical account of this historical process begins with the rise of climatologists concerned with agricultural development.

4 | WORKING LANDS: AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND CLIMATIC STABILITY

Climatologists resettled an otherwise fragmented science of climate primarily by leveraging a capacity to speak for the agricultural productivity of geographically delineated areas. Within science, climatology emerged at a time of deep challenges to prevailing concerns among meteorologists. Beginning around the 1850s the logic of “medical geography” as the basis for meteorology was beginning to break down as developments within medicine had begun to displace miasmatic-atmospheric theories of disease (Ackerknecht, 1948; Mitman & Numbers, 2003). Although variable across contexts, internationally, the contagionist-bacteriological paradigm for disease generally shattered the prospects of a medically centered climatology (Rupke, 2000). Furthermore, natural-historical accounts of life, earth history, and social organization underwent deep challenges within the emerging social sciences and Darwinian/evolutionary theory. These developments in science provided distinct understandings of long-term developments that were not, as the previous generation largely believed, climatically determined.

4.1 | Seeds of climatic stability within scientific agriculture

In the mid-19th century, meteorologists in the United States advanced their profession by explicitly linking it to the larger movement in science and government toward “scientific agriculture.” In 1858, meteorologist and founding Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution Joseph Henry wrote a treatise, titled “Meteorology in its connection with agriculture.” Henry sought to bridge the development of experimental science with the recent institutionalization of meteorological data collection at a national scale, at the time organized by a Smithsonian-based network of weather observers. The observation network that facilitated collection of meteorological data was connected via correspondence and telegraphy to other meteorological data infrastructure organized by the Army Medical Department, the Navy, and the American Philosophical Society (Fleming, 1990). Most of these systems were finally integrated into the US Signal Service network in the 1870s.

To outline a national meteorology, Henry (1858, pp. 456–457) provided a political philosophy of climate and agriculture:

To our political organization, under Providence our prosperity has mainly been promoted by the ample room afforded us for expansion over the most favored regions of this continent. It becomes, therefore, important for us to ascertain the natural limits, if there be any, to the arable portion of our still untenanted possessions.

Henry was beginning to reconsider problems of climate with reference to possible “natural limits” of the nation, a political problem that science could help to address. On this basis, the US Patent Office and Smithsonian Institution began to develop a climatological view of the continent, understanding that “A knowledge of the peculiarities of the climate of a country is an essential requisite for the adoption of a system of scientific [agri-] culture” (Smithsonian Institution, 1864, p. 31).

Around that time, in 1858, the US Agricultural Society (1858, p. 37) reported that the Patent Office also partnered with other organizations to circulate forms to US diplomats and merchants abroad with the aim of formalizing intelligence on “economical plants, growing in the countries you may visit.” Reporters were told to

describe, among other features, crops' "periods of sowing and harvesting, the character of the soil and its elevation above the sea, the mean, maximum, and minimum of the thermometer, and the amount of rain, in inches, each month of the year, together with the periods of the latest spring and earliest autumnal frosts." By obtaining this data, agricultural reformers aimed to compare, evaluate, and establish the attributes of climate zones. The effort of comparative agricultural climatology, haphazard at first, envisioned that climate knowledge would ultimately facilitate the proper economy of inputs, agricultural productivity, and trade.

The relationship between the Smithsonian and the federal government propelled Henry's vision of a national agriculture-centered meteorology. On the eve of the Civil War, on January 25, 1860, Joseph Henry wrote to the US Commissioner of Patents, W.D. Bishop, in the preface to the joint Smithsonian-Patent Office *Meteorological Observations*:

The results are considered as furnishing very interesting and valuable statistics, not only in regard to the science of meteorology, but to that of agriculture, which will be of increasing importance in determining the climatology of different portions of the country. (US Patent Office, 1861, p. iii)

The budding expertise of the "climatologist" was central to developing this vision into a formal program. As one result, many scientists could afford to let go of—and deride as "speculative"—climate change and medical geography as organizing issues for their science.

4.2 | The emergence of "positive climatology"

An important initial effort to formalize the project of climatology can be found in the work of statistician Lorin Blodget. In *Climatology of the United States*, published in 1857 and compiled using Army Medical Department and Smithsonian meteorological records, Blodget demonstrated a novel approach to science that he labeled "positive climatology." The positivist approach would reject climate-change theory and instead advance statistical-geographic representations of the "permanence of special features," meaning spatially demarcated, stable climates. Blodget (1857, pp. vi, ix) organized statistical tables and maps with a goal to provide "a general discussion of the records from all sources in the sense of a CLIMATOLOGY," and to verify the statistical record for "the purpose of using it as a valuable approximation to the various fixed quantities of climate." Blodget contrasted "the illustration of fixed or average conditions" as standing "against the general opinion" and other "historical absurdities and extravagances," alleged to result from "blendings of sagacity and charlatanism which have been always busy in prediction [of] the weather" and provoking anxiety about climate change (p. vii). If the 2000-year time series of climatological records were as available in America as in Europe, Blodget stated, "it would be found to dissipate the apprehensions so frequently entertained that it is becoming more variable or extreme" (pp. 24–25). Climate change had no place in a positive climatology.

Blodget's program denoted the "permanence" of climate with reference to monthly averages of atmospheric measurements, which upon representation could serve as a basis for regional economic development. "Climatology," in its instantiation by the 1860s, signified claims to expertise about the atmosphere as relevant primarily to the emerging concern to establish scientific agriculture. Climate, thus configured, could provide solutions to regional disparities in "rural economy" (Smithsonian Institution, 1859, p. 34), establish the limits to profitable development, and replace meteorologists' work of monitoring climate change with geographic description and comparison.

From the time that Blodget wrote until the mid-20th century, "climatology" continuously positioned inquiry *against* concerns about climate change. Thus in 1889, meteorologist Cleveland Abbe argued in an article, titled "Is our climate changing?" "It will be seen that a *rational climatology* gives no basis for talked-of influence upon the climate of a country." He asserted, "The true problem for the climatologist to settle during the present century is not whether the climate has lately changed, but what our present climate *is*, what its well-defined features are, and how they can be most clearly expressed in numbers" (Abbe, 1889). On the one hand, climatologists rejected

climate change because they could represent large-scale visions of time and space that had not been available to previous generations of meteorologists (see Figure 1).

On the other hand, the vision among climatologists to “fix,” in a statistical sense, the parameters of climate across space and time cannot be reduced to a scientific logic. Rather, it articulated with the situation of meteorological science that, if taken hold of, could inform broader political and economic interests.

Establishing climatology across the United States was beset by prior views of climate change but also by material and administrative challenges that affected climatologists' capacity to secure standardized meteorological data. The Civil War destroyed critical elements of the Smithsonian and Army Medical Department networks of stations, instruments, observers and the social, telegraphic, and mail systems that meteorologists relied upon to formulate climate knowledge. Moreover, the Civil War led to profound changes in the regional political economy of the United States, including industrial development in the North, continental expansion (especially via the railroads) in the West, and Reconstruction in the South. It was under the conditions of rapid societal change that meteorologists and their allies successfully institutionalized the vision of “positive climatology” within government.

5 | SECTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS: DEFINING REGIONAL CLIMATES AS COMPETITIVE ECONOMIC ZONES

How to restructure the post-Civil War economy became a central concern for those already aiming to designate climatic areas with reference to agricultural production and trade. To take one example, the oceanographer

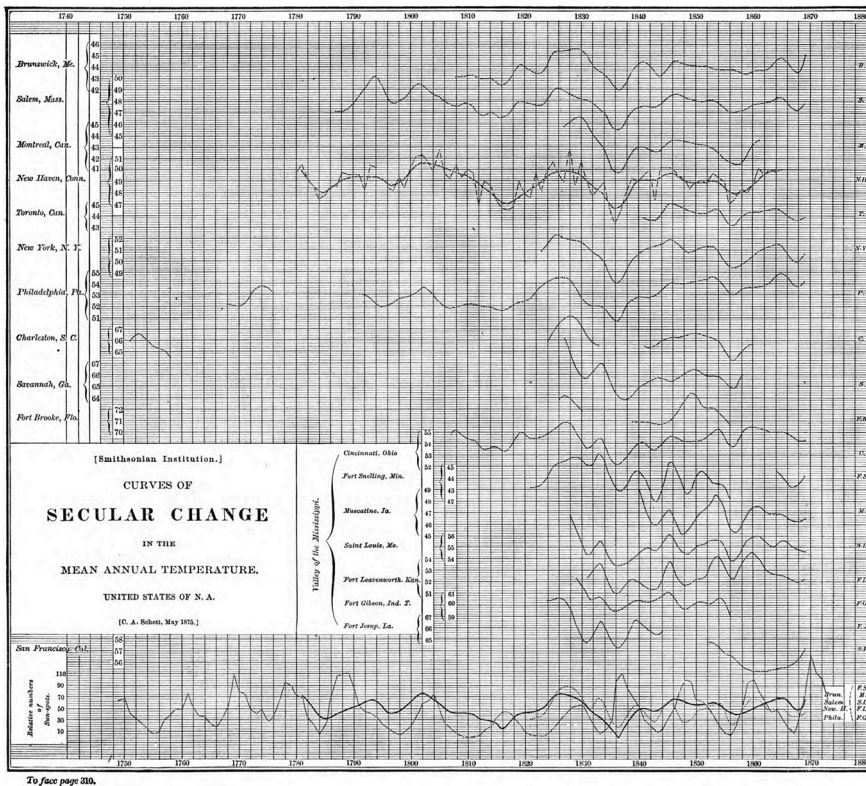


FIGURE 1 Statistician Charles Schott's (1876, p. 311) graph, representing “Curves of Secular Change in the Mean Annual Temperature of the United States,” from 1740 to 1870

Matthew Fontaine Maury, famous for identifying Atlantic shipping lanes and a system of maritime meteorology, sought to rebuild his native Virginia after the Civil War. In his antebellum work, Maury had asserted that meteorology provided a way to economically manage the atmosphere as “a grand machine—perfect in all its parts, wonderful in its offices, sublime in its operations” (Maury, 1856, reproduced in Corbin, 1888, p. 76). The atmospheric “economy,” he argued, showed that “Supply and demand are in as rigid proportions here as elsewhere” (Maury, 1846). The task of meteorology, in this view, involved harnessing the “economy” of nature to the economy of human affairs. The post-war situation renewed his interest in meteorological economy by emphasizing competitive advantage. Specifically, he sought to reimagine climatically tailored means of economic reconstruction: Thus, “Considering the circumstances under which recent events have placed the people of Virginia,” he performed “an economic study of the geographical position of the State,” with the goal “to develop the physical resources of the State and to point out the great commercial advantages which naturally arise from its situation...to the end that industry may be stimulated” (Maury, 1869, pp. 3, 6). With a decimated slave-based plantation economy, labor shortage, and a competitive Western agrarian marketization, agricultural market development was especially significant for regional growth.

Maury worried that railroad development would leave Virginia in economic ruin as other areas prospered from increased immigration and export-oriented trade relations established on more favorable terms. He advanced a detailed account of possible canal and rail-building schemes to connect the Mississippi Valley, through Virginia, to the Atlantic Ocean, which he labeled the “great highway of nations.” He concluded existing transportation routes constituted “a violation of the laws of political economy” (Maury, 1869, p. 34). He marshalled evidence from weather and insurance records to insist, “Two and a half per cent upon the value of all the commerce that has sought a passage [east] from New Orleans and Mobile since the purchase of Louisiana, surely amounts to more than \$100 million, and the use of these Virginia routes would have saved much if not all of it.” He continued by arguing that insurance and shipping industries were overly susceptible to weather and climate risk. In a context of economic competition in agricultural markets and the development of trade infrastructure, Maury constructed among the first “climatologies” of Virginia in hopes that it could spur the Reconstruction economy.

The process of performing a “climatology” for a given area of administrative-economic interest was replicated widely by other US states and in the following decades. Maury’s climatology highlights two basic ways in which climate intersected industrial capitalist developments in the post-Civil War decades. First, producers had to compete to obtain available sources of production inputs, chiefly natural resources and labor. Second, agriculturalists and manufacturers had to ensure access to markets for their products. Knowing climate became especially relevant to establishing productive and profitable regions and to evaluating the risk of financial investment in infrastructure to produce goods and transport them to distant markets.

Within this commercial context, on February 9, 1870, President Ulysses S. Grant signed the Joint Congressional Resolution that established the Division of Telegrams and Reports for the Benefit of Commerce within the War Department’s Army Signal Service. The division required the Secretary of War

to provide for taking meteorological observations at the military stations in the interior of the continent, and at other points in the States and Territories...and for giving notice on the northern lakes and on [Atlantic] seaboard, by magnetic telegraph and marine signals, of the approach and force of storms. (US Signal Service, 1873, pp. 368–369)

This resolution is widely considered the origin of national weather services in the United States.

State investment in facilitating commercial trade through providing “notice” of the “approach and force of storms” articulated with other ways of governing social and commercial engagement with climate. For commercial specialization, climate knowledge promised a metric of tailored economic development that could be integrated into other statistical analyses of crop yields, labor conditions, and market access (see Figure 2).

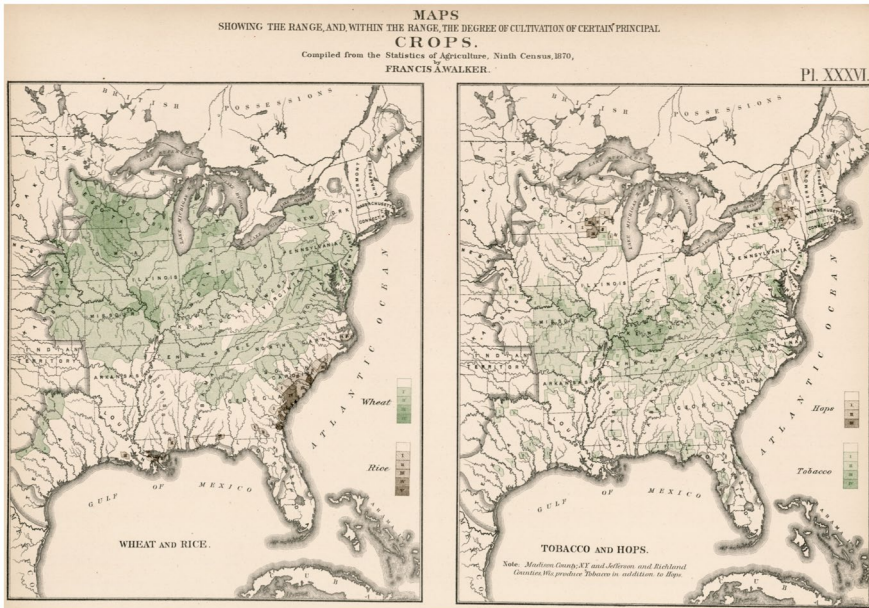


FIGURE 2 Plate 36 of the 1874 US Statistical Atlas, showing color-coded ranges of crop extent and cultivated yields [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Efforts to make legible climatic zones for the purpose of economic expansion relied upon simultaneous efforts within scientific and state institutions regarding commercial agriculture. President Lincoln had established the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) in 1862 alongside the Homestead Act. The USDA formed the Office of Experiment Stations in 1888, following a decades-long struggle over whether and how the federal government would provide services for advancing scientific agriculture. The USDA *Farmer's Bulletins*, regularly published by state experiment stations beginning in 1889, routinely included government climate data in pronouncements concerning the climatic zones suitable to growing crops profitably (Dalrymple, 2009; Rosenberg, 1997). Around the same time, US states established their own weather bureaus to supplement national data collection and dissemination. For example, an annual report of the Oregon State Weather Bureau (in US Signal Service, 1889, p. 5) justified its establishment, claiming “the climatology in the State has never been observed and recorded in three-quarters of the State, as is necessary for the best promotion of the various industries.” Facilitating climate-specific commerce became a clear governmental priority in order to mitigate economic risk: “Now [the farmer] employs implements and machinery which can be made only with large capital and the highest mechanical skill, and by men who make this manufacturing a business.” Therefore, “research—the finding out of nature's secrets,” is “costly,” meaning “the more useful it is to be, the greater must be the outlay of money, labor, and scientific skill. Here, if anywhere, wise economy calls for the best” (p. 6; see also Harrington, 1895). “Wise economy” within science and government linked the logic of climatology directly to its commercial application.

Following the logic of commercial agriculture, in 1890 President Harrison signed into law the transfer of government weather services from the War Department to the USDA, establishing the US Weather Bureau and linking climatological expertise to the task of commercial development. Climatological expertise, once established in government, helped shore up a central principle that “the crude method of tilling the soil common in these days will certainly give way to an exact economical procedure, based largely upon the result of meteorological research, increasing in precision” (Bigelow, 1900, p. 85).

In reality, expertise within government weather services often held a complex, sometimes outright antagonistic, relationship to alternative formations of climate knowledge. One example comes from optimistic boosters

of settlement on the drought-prone Great Plains. Concerning railroad—as a fixed capital investment—boosters accentuated local climatic niches accessible by rail lines. For example, one Northern Pacific Railroad (1893, pp. 13–14) guide advertised:

This great Northern Pacific system of railroads has opened to settlement, during the past few years, one of the fairest sections of the country—a region exceeded by no other...in its wealth of natural resources, and not surpassed in any of the conditions of climate or of soil which are best adapted to the well-being of the human race.

Although such pronouncements characterized climates of newly settled areas as well suited for development, railroad companies, settlers, and the US government poorly understood Western arid regions. In the space of uncertainty and boosterism, some considered climate less important to agricultural productivity, for example those adhering to dry-farming techniques (Libecap & Hansen, 2002). Hardy Webster Campbell's "Soil Culture Manual," for example, rendered climate subservient to techniques of managing soil moisture (Campbell, 1902). Such an approach to climate was also evident in his 1916 publication, titled "Progressive Agriculture: Tillage, Not Weather, Controls Yield." Yet simplifying the reality of the arid lands had by that point already been partly responsible for severe crop failures and exodus from the Great Plains during unanticipated drought (Sweezy, 2016).

Whether emanating from the Weather Bureau, commercial enterprises, or those that would challenge official constructions of climates, the meanings of climatic designations were primarily oriented to the economic productivity of specific regions. Climate change mostly did not register as significant. A stable climate did. If climate itself could not be "improved" (meaning, changed), as previous generations held, then stable climate zones could still support auxiliary efforts to improve soil, land, water, and settlement patterns. Improvement, in practice, entailed federal policy that could protect access to land and resources understood to be climatologically useful for given purposes. These processes expropriated indigenous forest and land use patterns (Warren, 2002), and as Whyte (2017) has shown, ruptured native relationships to climate. Climatology thus formed one dimension of the larger governmental project, at once rational and violent, of making legible and fixing in places the social relationship to territorialized climate zones.

6 | MAKING NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE CLIMATES

Climatologists, by bringing their science to bear on government-supported commerce, effectively related their accounts of climate "zones" with zones appropriate to administration. Making "administrative" climates could then facilitate government provision of climate information, which users had successfully argued to be of "vital necessity for the protection and advancement of commercial and agricultural interests" (US Signal Service, 1878, p. 36). Willis Moore, Chief of the Weather Bureau thus prefaced Henry's (1906, p. 5) major publication, *Climatology of the United States*, stating that the text provided important "comparative climatic statistics for the different portions of the United States." As Henry explained, the Bureau of Plant Industry (like the Weather Bureau, within the USDA) was introducing newly researched seed and plant varieties, meaning that the Department must map climates so that "the new plant or seed be placed in a climate closely resembling that of its original habitat." Plans to promote agriculture across the Department led Henry to conclude that "The ideal census of climatology, so to speak, is one that shall give the essential features for every county in each political division," to facilitate the USDA task of distributing seeds and managing programs based on administrative and climatological units.

The task of representing climates as "essential" characteristics of administrative units proceeded beyond the issue of seed technology. At the state level, the USDA Experimental Stations, State Weather Services, and Boards of Trade regularly communicated with the federal-level Weather Bureau. State-level installations undertook the

task of linking administrative governance to suitable observations or representations of local conditions, with the explicit aim of defining state-level climate.

How was climate represented in such a context? Ward (1915) discussed how Weather Bureau officials developed 21 “climatic subdivisions” representing “all groupings of districts and stations for convenience of administration, of forecasting, of the collection of data, or of reference.” Over the first decades of the 20th century, the division of climatological areas changed because of “practicality rather than on homogenous climate considerations” (Guttman & Quayle, 1996, p. 294; US Weather Bureau, 1912; Ward, 1915).

Nevertheless, representations of climatological zones firmly shaped common understandings of climate beyond administrative convenience. They formed the basis for Weather Bureau studies, reports, and narratives that could structure popular discourse and regional economic strategies. Synopses printed in the Bureau's *Crop Bulletins* and in the Annual Yearbook of the USDA (e.g., US Department of Agriculture, 1906, pp. 473–491), for example, drew upon “normal” statistical averages to narrate “departures from the normal by districts.” Seeing climate “like a state” (cf. Scott, 1998) meant that the administrative form supplanted prior understandings of the more open times and spaces that “climate” represented.

The invention of climate zones naturalized categorical differences (e.g., Figure 3; see also US Weather Bureau, 1912). Bourdieu (2014) aptly labels this process “state magic,” that is, recording reality while, at the same time, consecrating its existence. Like how climatologists in other contexts had to confront the “real” versus “invented” nature of their purportedly empirical representations of climates (see Coen, 2018), Ward reflected on the arbitrary nature of “official” US climatic designations:

There is no limit to the number of possible classifications, for these depend on any author's special interest or view-point, which may be climatic, or botanical, or physiographic, or one of administrative convenience. Even from the single view-point of climate alone, an almost infinite number of classifications might be proposed. (Ward, 1915, p. 675)

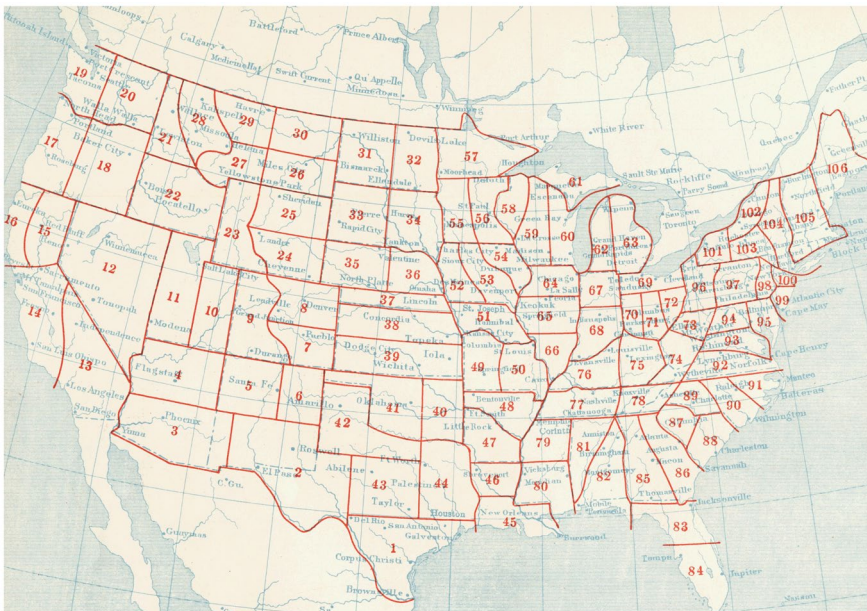


FIGURE 3 “106 Climatological Sections in the United States” (Source: Monthly Weather Review, 1911, Supplemental Charts 2, p. 670) [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

If such divisions of climate and their relatively stable features appear to make sense, either to Weather Bureau officials or to later generations, it is through the internalization of an administrative logic of territorial government—represented by a superimposed map of the United States—not through the inherent stability or geography of climate alone. The “positive climatology” proposed by Blodget (1857) had come to bear on geographic representations of the climates of the United States. As stable units became linked to administrative units, “climate” became legible to government actors. The state, because of the legibility of climates, could then act upon them—improve them, value them, and otherwise facilitate their integration into capitalist society.

7 | PLAUSIBLE ALTERNATIVES? MEDICAL CLIMATOLOGY AS A PATH LESS TAKEN

Could actors in this historical context plausibly have defined climate a radically different way? To avoid assuming the historical trajectories of climate knowledge to be self-propelled, let us consider one example of how things could have turned out differently, using the case of medical climatology.

At a time when scientists were only beginning to effectively capture the domain of climatology, some of those who identified with “climatology” were invested in alternative professional possibilities. In 1891, a group of scientists founded the American Climatological Association. The stated focus of their journal, *The Climatologist*, was “All matters relating to Climatology, Mineral Springs, Diet, Preventive Medicine, Race, Occupation, Life Insurance, and Sanitary Science.” Their mission was to “become eventually an authority upon all subjects which are included in its title” (meaning *climatology*), especially by attempting to synthesize medical geography with bacteriology (American Climatological Association, 1892, p. 1). The Association’s formulation of climatology did not subscribe to a view of stable climates, but rather built upon the previously dominant medical-topographic tradition. While rejecting a narrow view of climate, they also sought to retain an otherwise weakening paradigm of medicine. As one contributor, Dr Isaac Platt, put forth in an article on acclimatization:

Nearly all the physical influences surrounding a human being...are those which go to make up what we know as climate. The air he breathes ...the emanations from the soil; the water he drinks; the food he eats; ...the climate to which he is subjected is practically co-extensive with his environment. (Platt, 1886, p. 104)

The holistic “environmental” approach to climatology that would maintain a connection to medical, human, and environmental sciences, failed to define the field.

To be sure, policies regarding “sanitary meteorology” and “climatic physiology” did persist even into the 20th century, if in a subordinate position (Edson, 1921; Meisinger, 1921). Greely (1888, p. 4), a former Weather Bureau Chief, had understood that industrial expansion and urban public health relied upon meteorology to evaluate “the fitness of local climates as a means either of extending the scope and extent of national industries or of alleviating human suffering and saving human life.” A Weather Bureau circular in 1895 encouraged submission of vital statistics by Bureau service members and their volunteer networks in order to evaluate how “local climatic peculiarities” impact diseases and to apprehend where invalids and other “health-seekers” might best benefit from “visitation of health resorts and change of climate” (see Michigan Weather Service, 1895, p. 4). As Valencius (2002) shows, although medicine was becoming less central to the work of professional climatology, the business of health-seeking resorts remained popular in the latter decades of the 19th century. Yet, by 1895, one physician, F.R. Campbell (cited in Mitman & Numbers, 2003, p. 398) disparagingly wrote: “etiologists have at present almost given up the investigation of atmospheric causes of disease...They insinuate that the study of medical meteorology is a subject redolent with the ignorance of the Dark Ages.” Medical education and physicians’ practice from that point forward decentered medical climatology from accounts of most diseases.

The situation of medical climatology exposes a social contradiction in the designation of “stable” climates within capitalist society. Although climatology generally served to make legible “stable” climates, profit-seeking created novel, class-based experiences of climate. Government with respect to “good” and “bad” climates reflected class society. On the one hand, mobility of the rich entailed a newfound capacity to obtain “pure” air at resorts or by residence (Mitman, 2003). Taylorist attention to labor productivity, on the other hand, meant that the novel climates of industrial factories elevated the significance of regulating what science writer Mount (1921) called “indoor meteorology” that “makes all the difference between industrial success and failure.” When Mount (1921, p. 188) outlined new air conditioning technologies that reduced the sweltering heat of textile factories, he reported, “it is possible to speed up machines and workers alike and at the same time to lessen the hardships imposed on both, simply by the use of manufactured atmosphere.” Governing the deteriorating air quality experienced by workers centered on productivity at the time when the consumption of pristine environments became a prerogative of the leisure class (Cronon, 1996). The changing, socially stratified relationship to atmospheres notwithstanding, climatologists primarily centered on climatic stability, which matched predominant economic and administrative concerns.

8 | THE ENDURING LEGACY OF CLIMATIC “STABILIZATION”: A ROLE OF HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY

In the United States from the 1850s to 1920, the relationship between “positive climatology” and agricultural capitalism dominated the “co-production” of climatology within science and government. This process not only spurred a new scientific specialty, but also established the discourse proclaiming climatic stability, forged even as it was in an era of rapid social and environmental change.

There were consequences. First, the central discourse of climatic stability supplanted concerns with climate change. In his 1924 textbook, *Climatic Laws*, climatologist Steven Visher presumed geographic distribution as the basic boundary around the project to establish “laws of climate.” Yet what about climate was law-like? Except for Visher’s first stated law, that “climate changes with the nature and effectiveness of solar radiation,” the remaining 49 laws dealt with geographic (as opposed to temporal) distributions. For Visher, along with his students and contemporaries, the fruits of Blodget’s (1857) declaration of “positive climatology” had achieved paradigmatic status. What Blodget had to make explicit, Visher could by and large take for granted. The major shift that took place within science and government led to a basic shift in the very meaning of “climate” and what it meant to govern society in relation to climate.

As an enduring consequence, the co-production of “climatic stability” in part explains why climate change became so difficult for climatologists in the United States, along with those who came to inhabit industrial-capitalist climates, to consider climate change beginning in the mid-20th century (Baker, 2017; Henderson, 2014). Scientific and government interests had, for decades prior, practically operated on the assumption of an unchanging climate, an assumption that was itself a product of historical developments rather than of a stable climate alone. Climatologist Hubert Lamb (1959, p. 299) therefore argued that by treating climate as “normal” and “static,” dominant scientists had come to denigrate climatology as “the dry-as-dust book-keeping branch of meteorology.” Once global climate change started to galvanize atmospheric sciences, university-trained researchers invested in “climate science” likewise positioned their work against what some understood to be the “moribund climatology” of the early 20th century, as meteorologist Peter Lamb (2002, p. 4) put it. As one result, Lahsen (2013) shows in the US context, conflicts in climate science in the late-1970s were structured by conservative movement capabilities to exploit “skeptical” positions amongst “traditional” climatologists. However farcical, discourse of stability persistently features in skeptical ideology: “Nature, Not Human Activity, Rules the Climate” was the title that announced the Heartland Institute-funded “Nongovernmental International Panel on Climate Change” 2008 report. Skeptics like these argue not only that humans lack the geophysical agency to change climate, but also that

climate is fundamentally stable. This ideology resonates with findings from American public opinion surveys. For instance, Leiserowitz, Smith, and Marlon (2010) find that a large majority of those who do not think global warming is happening hold a mental model, in which "Earth's climate system is very stable," as opposed to "fragile" or "gradual to change."

If on the one hand skeptics and many of their unwitting followers hold to a myth of a stable natural order (that aligns with capitalism in particular), then on the other hand, climate-change policy holds to a discourse of climate "stabilization." Since the establishment in 1992 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the dominant international policy goal has been to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and thus "stabilize" global warming and avoid "dangerous interference with the climate system" (United Nations, 1992). Boykoff, Frame, and Randalls (2010) show that "climate stabilization" has anchored climate discourse beginning with the preparatory work for that Convention. Although the object of stabilization varies discursively, a core premise is that climate change must be stopped by restoring a prior climate state or creating one that resembles it. Thus, according to Rockstrom et al. (2009) the "relative stability" of the Holocene period (the epoch since the last ice age) represents the "scientific reference point for a desirable planetary state" (see also Berger & Loutre, 2002).

In response to repeated policy failure to ensure meeting "stabilization targets" for global temperature (National Academy of Sciences, 2010), however, an increasingly important component of climate governance is to research and operationalize geoengineering to modify or "optimize" global climate (Crutzen, 2002, p. 23). Thereby climate could remain compatible with expanding fossil-based global capitalism, if only as a "Plan B" to remain within the "climatic boundary" of human society (Gunderson, Stuart, & Peterson, 2018; Rockstrom et al., 2009).

Although 'climate stabilization' is shot through with power relations and assumptions about society, historical sociology has yet to orient analysis towards these challenges. For example, the momentous volume of historical sociology, *Remaking Modernity* (Adams, Clemens, & Orloff, 2005), makes no mention of either historical climate change or the issue of global warming. Historians of science focusing on geoengineering (Fleming, 2010; Harper, 2017) have adeptly analyzed the hubris involved in efforts to technocratically master nature. Climate and social scientists have also argued that presenting climate change governance as a global stabilization effort obscures the social inequalities and political issues that mark climate-change causes, consequences, and impacts (Boykoff et al., 2010; Geden & Beck, 2014; Taylor, 2014). Yet we have little understanding of the historical roots of climatic stability and stabilization as problematics of government and knowledge.

Rather than a logical or inevitably necessary response to global warming, goals to govern global climate via climate stabilization invites further historical assessment of how scientists and others have variously viewed climate in terms of (in)stability. Historicizing global warming and climate change is a necessary but insufficient focus for ongoing research. Here, historical geography and a social science turn in the history of meteorology is instructive for sociologists who might pursue historical sociologies of climate (Mahony & Caglioti, 2017). In her analysis of climatologists of the Habsburg Empire, Coen (2018) showed that climate science is indelibly a matter of "scaling," that is, linking together various spatial scales from the bodily to the planetary. In the process of scaling, climate knowledge ties up with power-laden geographic constructions such as empire. The *spaces* of climate are thus socio-historical achievements rather than given by nature alone. In this article, I advance a similar argument regarding the *temporalities* of climate. The industrializing United States provides one illustrative case of how climate knowledge intersected with capitalism and state formation and in the process recast how social actors practically approached the basic temporality of climate, that is, as stable and unchanging.

Today, science remains a critical link between climate policy and the vision of a once again stable climate. The socio-historical dimensions of science and its relationship to government will thus remain important to how various actors garner intellectual resources to imagine alternatives to climate crisis and create the kinds of climate knowledge that can support those alternatives.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The historical data that support the findings of this study are available upon request from the corresponding author.

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“I don’t think anybody really knows”: Constructing reflexive ignorance in climate change adaptation

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Abstract

Responding to the existential threat of climate change is often seen as requiring greater reflexivity. Imbued with notions of resilience and reflection, reflexivity is assumed to contribute to pro-environmental change. However, as the need to manage climate impacts becomes more immediate, political struggles over climate adaptation have become increasingly apparent. These impacts occur most often within local communities, in the context of competing economic interests and differing interpretations of climate science. Thus while it is increasingly difficult to deny climate change, conflicting priorities can lead to ignorance. In these circumstances, how communities build and share knowledge, and negotiate responses is central. Based on a study of a vulnerable region in Australia, we identify three processes through which the local community mobilized to disrupt local climate change adaptation. These included emphasizing uncertainty about the science of climate change, encouraging fear about property prices, and repositioning property owners as victims of climate adaptation policy. We argue that this response to climate adaptation constitutes the production of *reflexive ignorance*, which reinforces skepticism around scientific authority and defends particular economic interests.

KEYWORDS

adaptation, climate change, ignorance, reflexivity, risk

1 | INTRODUCTION

Despite the scientific consensus over a worsening climate crisis and the growth of social movements for climate action, carbon emissions and the consumption of fossil fuels continue to increase (van Renssen, 2018). While the gap between awareness and prioritizing climate change has been known for some time (Whitmarsh, 2011), the lack of action is confounding considering that the risks are ever more present. This is particularly the case when it comes to adaptation. While climate adaptation has largely been seen as a technical and pragmatic challenge, for which there is ample time to respond (Biesbroek et al., 2013), not only is it becoming increasingly urgent, but it is apparent that it is also highly complex, involving competing economic, social, and political priorities (Porter et al., 2015). Developing technical solutions is not enough; rather, effective adaptation requires knowledge of the social, cultural, and political frameworks within which responses to risks are developed.

One explanation for the insufficient response to climate change has been that particular social institutions or individuals lack reflexivity (Boström et al., 2017). This failure is seen in the context of reflexive modernization, whereby the risks imposed by industrialization become increasingly evident and important features of modernization are broken down and remade (Beck, Giddens & Lash, 1994). For instance, Beck (1994) has argued that because previous assumptions about progress, science and technology have been the cause of so many environmental risks, this new era of modernization would involve a more skeptical perception of science and technology, which would then become more democratic through increased public scrutiny and participation in decision making. While the current state of climate politics suggests the former prediction to be correct, there is little doubt that the latter is but a hope for the future.

Despite the fossil fuel industry's success in obfuscating climate science and delaying policy responses (Oreskes & Conway, 2010; Wright & Nyberg, 2015), there is now growing public awareness of climate change evident in polling data (Poushter & Juang, 2019) as well as new social movements for climate action. However, even with current international climate agreements in place, tangible action in reducing the carbon emissions remains limited (Spash, 2016). These developments suggest that while climate denial might be shifting to the margins, meaningful climate action is still being ignored. Such ignorance is not, then, about a lack of information, or knowledge, but is produced within specific social practices (Ungar, 2000). In providing a framework for understanding these processes, the sociology of ignorance has the potential for understanding resistance to climate change beyond denial and explaining the lack of action as a relational process which, we argue, can be usefully termed *reflexive ignorance*.

Investigating climate change adaptation in the local government area of Lake Macquarie, Australia, our research examines how local community negotiations and debates over climate impacts produce ignorance. We trace the ways in which key stakeholders mobilize resources and create narratives to actively produce "strategic unknowns" (McGoey, 2012a) and disrupt planning for climate change adaptation. We argue that this production of ignorance is a reflexive response to the perceived economic threat of discussing climate change in relation to property values. While the response is initiated by particular actors, the broader community becomes complicit in the process as other priorities displace climate adaptation. By bringing together the concept of reflexivity with the sociology of ignorance, we seek to further develop the literature on reflexivity by showing that reflexivity has just as much potential for defending the status quo as it does in promoting social change; indeed, in our case, it can be seen as a central mechanism through which ignorance is socially constructed. These insights also have value in understanding the local production of ignorance, even in situations when communities are confronted by the serious impacts of risks such as climate change.

1.1 | Climate change and ignorance

It has been suggested that the vexed debate over climate change and decarbonization has been worsened by a political era of "alternative truths" and "fake news" (Innes, 2020; Mallard & McGoey, 2018). This debate can be

understood through the “knowledge-ignorance paradox,” in which “the exponential growth in the volume and complexity of information” has, somewhat ironically, produced ignorance (Ungar, 2000, p. 298). In this situation, rather than choosing to outright deny particular facts or knowledge regimes, ignorance can be understood as constructed in practice.

In a thorough examination of how ignorance, non-knowledge, and types of knowledge have been used over time, Gross (2007, p. 749) argues that the “term ‘ignorance’ should function as a kind of cover term that generally points to the borders and the limits of knowing, including intentional and unintentional bracketing out of unknowns.” It is this bracketing that is of interest for the sociology of ignorance—the processes by which particular choices are made, and actions or outcomes are taken, which may occur outside of the realm of knowledge. Ignorance, then, is not just a “lack of knowledge,” but “has a substance of its own, as the product of specific practices” (Mair et al., 2012, p. 3). In this sense, ignorance is relational—a dialectical process which can be studied through “the accumulated ways a group of people make sense of the world” (Souleles, 2019, p. 516). For instance, in relation to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, Ungar (2008) speaks of a “chain of ignorance” whereby multiple individuals and institutions, usually responsible for overseeing democratic processes, failed to do so. Ignorance, then, provides an explanation for why communities “don’t know” (Ungar, 2008, p. 322).

Thus, just as the study of knowledge can be focused on the ways in which certain “truths” come into existence, so the production of ignorance can be studied as social practice. As McGoe (2012a, pp. 2–3) argues:

That is, rather than seeing knowledge as a process of pitting “facts” against each other, we need to understand “the cultural reproduction and transmission of ignorance” (McGoe, 2012a, p. 4) in order to see the ways in which ignorance is productive. In this regard, recent work in the sociology of ignorance has shown that it “is every bit as socially determined and mappable as knowledge” (Souleles, 2019, p. 517).

As a means of understanding this more specifically, McGoe (2012b) has developed the notion of “strategic ignorance.” Central to this is the idea that ignorance can be deliberately developed as part of a strategy seeking particular outcomes. McGoe (2012b, p. 570) shows how organizations can deliberately preclude, obfuscate, and deflect knowledge from emerging, and that this can be productive for a more effectively functioning organization. This suggests that strategic ignorance can be purposive—that is, keeping certain aspects of knowledge away from particular actors can result in a positive outcome. Thus, rather than assuming that ignorance consists simply of a *lack* of knowledge, it is more useful to explore how ignorance is *produced*, and to what ends (Mallard & McGoe, 2018). While McGoe’s (2012a, 2012b) concept of strategic ignorance can certainly be assigned to some of the disruptions to action on climate change, we suggest that this can also be seen as a reflexive movement. This differs from previous discussions of strategic ignorance as being doxic or preconscious (as noted by McGoe, 2012) in that, rather than focussing on cognition, we are seeking to describe the mechanics of the social construction of ignorance.

1.2 | Is reflexive modernization the solution?

While there have been multiple uses of the concept of reflexivity within different disciplines, these have most commonly—with some exceptions—depicted it as a positive quality; a means of resilience, and reflection (Lynch, 2000) which can be mobilized in the face of adversity. Lash (1994, p. 115) outlines two ways in which reflexivity is made use of in the literature; one being a description of structural changes and the other as an individual quality. Thus, we can see that underlying assumptions about reflexive modernization (the former) is the notion that we are in a time of rapid social change, and reflexivity is the means by which such change is navigated (the latter). This is evident in how reflexivity is assumed to follow a logical process in response to risk—a calculation of consequence which is then acted upon “according to instrumental means-ends rationality” (Farrugia & Woodman, 2015, p. 629). As argued by Beck (1994), reflexivity entails not simply “*reflection*, but (first) *self-confrontation*” and a fundamental reorientation of our social relations (p. 5, original emphasis).

In this way, reflexive modernization is often seen as inherently ecological (see, for instance Mol, 1996; Mol & Spaargaren, 2000; and Dunlap, 2014). This has led to the argument that corporations and conservative politicians have engaged in “anti-reflexivity” in their efforts to undermine action on climate change (McCright & Dunlap, 2010; Young & Coutinho, 2013). However, the anti-reflexivity framing makes a number of processual assumptions about reflexivity. First, it orients reflexivity toward an objective version of truth and risk. That is, that the truth of climate change, once realized, will become a priority for those who have this information. Second, it follows that upon reflecting on the problem, institutions and individuals alike will respond in ways that seek to alleviate the problem.

As a personal quality, reflexivity is often used to suggest a freeing up or release from previously constricting social structures and roles of late modernity. For Giddens (1994, p. 75), reflexivity can be used to take greater control over one's identity—“we have no choice but to choose how to be and how to act.” More broadly known as the individualization thesis, this opening up of possibilities and choice is seen as inherently requiring increased reflexivity. Similarly, within Archer's (2003) typology, reflexivity is largely described as a cognitive process, an “internal conversation” through which individuals negotiate their “ultimate concerns.” Reflexivity is thus seen as “a property of the subject that allows the formation of life projects ... the way in which the subject agentially negotiates the world” (Farrugia, 2013, p. 287). As argued by Farrugia and Woodman (2015) however, such notions tend to valorize reflexivity at the expense of recognizing the influence of broader social conditions.

In contrast, Adkins (2003) argues that reflexivity may well reinforce existing traditions and norms. For instance, gendered norms such as “feminine skills” may be strategically employed as a means of negotiating and succeeding in the workplace (Adkins, 2003). These nuances between self-reflexivity and broader social processes can be explained with the notion of hermeneutic reflexivity, a recognition that reflexivity involves the embodied interpretation of experiences in time and place and stresses how subjectivity informs the orientation of reflexivity (Lash, 1994). For example, Sharp and Threadgold (2019) have shown how gendered privilege can be ignored by men seeking to assert their feminist credentials—a practice they call “reflexive complicity.” In this way, it can be argued that reflexivity needs to be understood in the shared practices of agents involved in knowledge (or ignorance) production (Adkins, 2003).

These varying uses of reflexivity suggest that it may not always involve a critical reassessment of existing practices and trajectories. Rather, reflexivity may involve embracing, re-asserting, or reinventing existing values as a means of stabilizing—or even improving—one's position. Thus, it does not necessarily follow that reflexivity in and of itself will result in pro-environmental behaviors. Rather, it can be operationalized in order to defend the status quo as easily as it might be used to engage in change. In the study that follows, we argue that the ways in which communities respond to climate adaptation is a reflexive practice of constructing ignorance, based on the perceived economic vulnerability that climate change entails.

2 | CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION IN LAKE MACQUARIE

Our qualitative research explores the dynamics of climate change adaptation in an Australian coastal community. Lake Macquarie is a regional area which has been recognized as particularly vulnerable to climate change. It has large sections of residential housing built around Australia's largest saltwater lake, which is vulnerable to flooding and coastal erosion. In 2008, the local council adopted a climate adaptation policy that incorporated future sea-level rise projections. Using various scientific inputs—specifically from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (2007) and the national science organization, the CSIRO (2007)—the council identified approximately 7,000 properties which were at increased risk of flooding associated with climate change impacts.

In late 2011, following the release of the draft flood management plan, the council contacted property owners about further developing the planning policies. Council staff ran six community workshops at different locations in the region which were attended by approximately 350 residents (Stevens et al., 2012). They also conducted a

survey and compiled a range of reports seeking input from residents. Given that a key outcome of these activities was a request for consultation with property owners, the council decided to engage in a process to further develop its policies (Stevens et al., 2012). However, in the meantime, a number of property developers, real estate agents, conservative politicians, and residents came together to oppose the council's policies.

A prominent local property developer threatened to sue the council, arguing that the changes were unnecessary because climate change was hypothetical, and the policies were impacting on property prices (Cronshaw, 2011a). A number of these meetings, at which council staff and councilors attended, were described as intensely antagonistic. As one former councilor (Noah) recalled:

The tension was confirmed by one of the residents opposed to the policies (Sarah):

They [council representatives] were actually insulted and verbally assaulted on several occasions. Yelled at. They had people in tears.

Public meetings continued through 2012, when in January, three prominent climate skeptics spoke at a public meeting which was attended by about 300 people who argued that the policy was flawed and the sea-level rise information was incorrect (Cronshaw, 2012a). In March, another public meeting which included concerns about a rate rise, was attended by 180 people, and a rally of 120 people (again including climate skeptics) held in August (Cronshaw, 2012b). The campaign was carried out through public meetings, media coverage, direct lobbying, and involvement in the council-initiated consultation process. Over a period of 10 years, there was intensive media coverage of the implications of the council's climate adaptation plans, revealing major concerns around property development restrictions, valuations, and insurance premiums (Cronshaw, 2012c).

In response, the council undertook an intensive collaborative governance program of consultation. Beginning with training 30 staff over 2 days in the processes of collaborative governance, a further 2-day workshop was held for community residents in April 2013 aimed at developing a shared definition of the "dilemma" to be solved (Stevens et al., 2013). From this workshop, a smaller group of volunteers (approximately 15) were engaged to work with council staff on developing the plan. The council staff, along with community members who had been involved in the consultation, eventually released an adaptation plan that was seen as appeasing the community's concerns. Our research shows, however, that this appeasement resulted in the diminution of climate change impacts and the plan had no additional funding attached.

3 | METHODS AND ANALYSIS

We sought to understand the movements and motivations of the various interest groups involved in the adaptation planning process. In order to gain an understanding of the background and timeline of events, as well as the key actors and issues involved, we first gathered published information on the topic which was available in the media, and government documents. This included 266 newspaper articles, and 119 reports, websites and government documents which were published between 2008 and 2017. While these gave some insight into the events in the case study, we sought to understand the debates within and between the different groups, how the different stakeholders in the process saw their own and other's participation, what their priorities in terms of outcomes were, and to what extent these were shared between those involved.

For this purpose, we interviewed 46 people from the different groups and organizations involved in the process. This included former and current council and local government employees (11), politicians (7), media and business representatives (13), experts and consultants to the council (5), and residents in community organizations involved in consultation processes and campaigns on the issue (10). Interviews were carried out between December 2017 and December 2018, and were semi-structured, covering a range of topics including interviewees' views on the adaptation measures, interactions with other groups and representatives involved with the

issue, opinions on government and the consultation process, and concern for climate change. Interviews were fully transcribed and initially openly coded according to the general interview topics. This initial round of coding revealed some key similarities and differences between the different groups, reflecting differences in priorities, views on climate change, and views about each other. Given these differences, we sought to understand the ways that the consultation process resulted in agreement between the participants over a final adaptation plan.

Our analysis shows that the production of ignorance comes about through the sharing of three narratives within the community—(i) emphasizing the uncertainty of climate change, (ii) producing fear within the community, and (iii) depicting property owners as victims (see Table 1). Each of these narratives drew on pre-existing and prominent framings of climate science, individual rights, and mistrust of government. When wielded through the alliance of business interests, residents, and the media, the use of these narratives “closed off” the ability to incorporate new information, such as the need for climate adaptation based on scientific assessments of future sea-level rise. These narratives reinforced existing power relations, shifting the focus of the community debate from the initial focus on adaptation to a defense of existing interests and a rejection of substantive change.

3.1 | Emphasizing uncertainty

The plans to implement climate adaptation measures in Lake Macquarie were developed in the context of a growing awareness of the impacts of climate change in Australia and globally. In 2007, a new Australian Labor government with an explicit policy of climate action came to power. Newly elected Prime Minister Kevin Rudd argued that climate change posed one of the greatest moral challenges facing humanity and, in one of his first initiatives, ratified the Kyoto protocol. In 2009, the New South Wales state Labor government instituted benchmarks for sea-level rise intended to guide local council planning based on projections from the IPCC. Lake Macquarie City Council's policy was set within these parameters. The pushback in the following years, however, was both organized and effective. When residents affected by the policy change were notified by the council in 2011, both the federal and state governments had since been voted out and their climate policies removed. This left the council open to skeptical critiques of their policy, and the charge that they were moving ahead of the evidence on climate change.

Opponents of the council's policies made use of the prominence of this existing climate denial rhetoric to suggest that the measures were not necessary and that the science on which the policy was based was flawed. To support their arguments, climate skeptics from across the country were engaged to speak at public meetings and featured in opinion pieces in the local newspaper. As one council employee noted:

We had a whole lot of kind of climate scepticism happening around the country. So, you know, [developer's name is] obviously reasonably well resourced and he collaborated with the coastal residents' group, ...down in the Central Coast... and brought up some of the kind of more—high profile climate sceptics. (Emily, council employee)

At these meetings, which were organized by conservative politicians and business leaders, residents were told that their property values were needlessly at risk. Opponents of the adaptation policy argued that climate science was not settled, that the council was using the wrong data, and that the council was going beyond its responsibilities in trying to manage an issue that was too complicated and distant to be understood.

The impact of this emphasis was evident in our interviews with residents when they discussed their views on climate change, as well as council employees who described the consultation process. It is important to note that most residents did not identify themselves as “sceptics”—rather, they would emphasize the limitations of climate data. Drawing on existing arguments about the level of human impact on climate change, residents emphasized the uncertainty of the science:

TABLE 1 Theme outlines

Theme	Key features	How	Examples from coding
Emphasize uncertainty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skepticism and denial of climate change Lay v. expert knowledge Council's actions are not needed Based on flawed data Climate skeptics Developers Conservative politicians Actions are not yet needed: "wait and see" approach 	<p>Question the data</p> <p>Present alternative readings of the data</p>	<p>"We had a number of our members who had projects happening in those sorts of areas...A number of them were quite concerned at what they saw as less than rigorous numbers and measurements et cetera relative to the impact back onto housing" (Mark, planning consultant)</p> <p>"it was things like insurance and property prices and a lot of them are climate sceptics, they don't believe climate change is happening. So there's no problem, why do it now? I mean one person said 'the only water I'm going to worry about is the water that floods over my gravestone because I won't be alive then' and 'I've lived here for 50 years I've never seen the Lake change.' So we had a large amount of climate sceptics." (Olivia, former council staff)</p> <p>"I went into the data about the traditional data and I said, look, of course, it is; if we say it's staying flat that's ridiculous but the whole thing is that, as far as I'm concerned, the hockey stick is a little bit of a worry when you start seeing it after you've got like a trendline." (Elizabeth, resident)</p>
Production of fear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Right to private property Imposition on freedom/rights Would not have happened if not for the actions of council Conservative politicians Real estate Neighboring residents Counter information regarding insurance and house prices 	<p>Media coverage showing inundation</p> <p>Politicians and real estate talking about falling house prices</p> <p>Residents discussing insurance costs</p>	<p>"This was seen as an issue that certain politicians could use to play to people in that area; very much a fear campaign: your property values will go down, your insurance costs will go up, this is all based on fallacy, there is no global warming, that kind of stuff." (Joseph, councillor)</p> <p>"Over the years I've attended hundreds or thousands of community meetings, where they're big ones in a club somewhere, someone up the back that's five schoolers deep will be the mouthpiece and it's easily hijacked. You can almost see the spread of fear sometimes, wash over the crowd that's there." (Noah, former councillor)</p> <p>"Not everyone wants to inform themselves because it frightens them. It frightens them I think because ... their lives are built up to having this holiday home when they retire and to have that foundation of the Australia that they knew in that baby boom time. To have that questioned kind of rocks who they are as a person." (Scott, consultant)</p>

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Theme	Key features	How	Examples from coding
Victimizing property owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mistrust in government • Limited remit of local councils • Council is power hungry • Media • Neighboring residents • Change of infrastructure priorities • Slowing of climate adaptation process 	Council being defensive	<p>"[It took] a lot of leg work, face to face engagement from staff to work with the local community to get to an outcome, and that was a defence strategy and so in the end, you know we had a local working group come here and present to our Council about the adaptation plan." (Emily, council staff)</p> <p>"...it really was ridiculous. I mean I think it was an extraordinary time in the Hunter's history. I mean the local government failed the people, the politicians failed the people." (Oliver, journalist)</p> <p>"There is actually one example when the person was made bankrupt as a consequence of the huge impact on the property that he had bought and he wanted to subdivide it and he put his life savings into it and that was going to be his super [annuation] and he got caught with the Global Financial Crisis, which had an impact on our economy for sure, but he also got with this sea-level rise issue. ... So people were really angry, and I was one of them." (Kyle, community organization)</p>
		Claims of government failure	
		Individual stories of loss	

My philosophy is sea-level rise is real. Geological—go back only 10,000 years, the sea-level was 100 metres lower, Sydney Harbour didn't exist. You could walk from New Guinea to Tasmania. Let's not deny sea-level rise, it's going on. How much is being caused by humans I think is debatable. But we can debate that forever and a day and I don't think anybody really knows the right answer quite frankly. (Christian, community organisation)

Christian's comments suggest he is aware of the broader public debates about climate skepticism; he makes a point of noting that “sea-level rise is real,” thus avoiding the label of being a skeptic, yet goes on to emphasize the uncertainty of human impact. In this way he opens up a space in which to question the council's proposals—as he says, “*I don't think anybody really knows*”—and, potentially, delay these actions.

Within this space, a range of other possibilities and arguments about the potential impact of climate change were questioned. Opponents of the adaptation policy argued that it should be based on already-existing measurements and observations of the lake. Residents who were involved in the consultation process with the council discussed coming up with their own analysis of the data of the lake level rise. One resident confidently argued that their reading of the data were preferable:

I have all the data from the three measuring stations and I did it through an averaging of the lunar instead of the solar. So I've looked at the NASA charts and the rise actually is less... There's a level in a year, an average in the year, average it, graph it all. Very easy, you just put it all on Excel. If I can do it, anyone can do it. (Elizabeth, community organisation)

Similarly, it was argued that climate science was “just a theory” (Phil, property developer), and that rather than using the projections of the climate and flooding specialists, adaptation policy should be based on changes as they occurred—that is, that the climate modeling should be abandoned in favor of more immediate measurements.

Whether this skepticism came about as a result of the campaigns of others in the community, was pre-existing to this intervention, or, indeed, was a circumstance of economic interest in preventing policies that were seen to impact on property prices, it is clear that this emphasis on uncertainty was effective. In response, council representatives described shying away from discussions about climate change during the consultation process. This eventually led to the use of “trigger points”—rather than climate modeling—as a key element of the adaptation plan. As one interviewee put it—this decision was specifically based on uncertainty, and the argument that climate change “might not happen” (Amanda, former councilor).

3.2 | Producing fear within the community

Residents described that a primary motivation for their opposition to the Council's climate adaptation policies was that their property values would be harmed both directly and indirectly. Directly, the council had issued notations on those properties deemed at risk from sea-level rise. Known as section 149 certificates, the notations informed potential buyers of restrictions on the development of these properties. Indirectly, there was overall concern that discussion of the potential impacts of sea-level rise in the area was harming the market value of properties in the area. Despite the ongoing discussions among resident groups, media and business interests about the policies' impact on property value, councilors and council employees argued they could not find evidence to support this claim.

The potential impact of discussing climate adaptation on property prices was brought into the debate early on by the local newspaper and was reported on extensively throughout the consultation process, often explicitly linking the adaptation measures with a reduction in property values. As one former councilor argued:

[journalist name] wrote articles about how houses would be essentially similar to ones in The Netherlands where they were tethered to poles and would move on tides. That really sparked a lot of fear amongst the residents that, 'what the hell's going to happen to my home?' (Noah, former councillor)

For their part, the media representatives interviewed did not shy away from describing the kind of coverage they gave to the issue and the role they played in the debate:

Look, we've done some great front pages on sea level rises, absolutely. Yeah, as media tends to do, it tends to dial a lot of this stuff up to the max and that is part of the broader debate and part of the process of informing and influencing people's opinions ...call it a beat up if you like, but our coverage was just reflecting what some of the modelling was saying ...it's pretty tempting when you get these really dramatic maps. (Bryan, journalist)

Media coverage focussing on the most dramatic impacts contributed to residents' concerns that the policies were detrimental to their property values. As one council employee argued: "I think the residents were saying, 'why us?' I think the journalist was really just feeding off that mentality. So it was generating advertising revenue, would be my guess" (Eric, council employee).

Stories about residents impacted by the decline in property values were reported in the press (Cronshaw, 2011b, 2012d) and shared between residents, business leaders, and others in the community at public meetings:

As a result of the media coverage and activities of prominent landholders and businesspeople, concerns over the economic impact of the proposed planning changes quickly spread within the community. Residents emphasized difficulties in selling properties and insurance premium hikes:

They [the insurance companies] said, 'if you want flood insurance like you've had or like you want now, your premium is now going to go from \$1,200 to \$2,000 or \$3,000 or \$4,000' and ultimately some were \$12,000. It's going to be a big hit. (Kyle, community organisation)

Through these community discussions a clear focus on property became central, to the extent that protecting property prices was seen as the priority in the community consultation process.

Participants from within the council and some councillors argued that this fear, much like the skepticism discussed earlier, was deliberately promoted by vested interests. On the one hand, they argued, it was a political opportunity for conservative politicians to compete with the existing, largely progressive, councillors on the issue. On the other hand, real estate agents may have had an interest in trying to encourage residents to sell their properties sooner than they might have otherwise:

There were politicians who were going around saying that house prices are going to fall, that kind of stuff ...I think there were some real estate agents who were looking to, perhaps, try and—manipulate is the wrong word—but cash in on, perhaps, people wanting to sell. (Joseph, councillor)

This production of fear within the community benefitted certain groups of people.

The fear over property values was effective in having an impact on the consultation process. Crucially, a primary commitment within the plan was that residents would not be required to retreat from their properties—this was a commitment that one of the council employees said would not be sustainable across the region:

I think the downside of that is that people now have an expectation that defence will be the way that we will go for all of our applications and I'm not sure that we—or anybody—can afford the infrastructure that's required to defend all of those locations. (Emily, council employee)

The adaptation plan, as negotiated by the residents, then, put property ownership—rather than climate adaptation—at its center. That residents went into the negotiation process mobilized and concerned for their properties appears to have had a significant impact on the plan, and on the broader discussions around it. There were no further restrictions placed on development, and the media focus on the impacts of the policies eased once the revised plan was released.

3.3 | Victimizing property owners

The overall success of the residents in having the council retreat from discussion about climate change and withdraw further measures which may have restricted development, suggests it was an effective intervention on their part. Indeed, the mobilization of property interests, conservative politicians, and residents wielding economic power meant that the council went into the consultation process with appeasement as a central concern. As one expert put it, an early consideration was that the council was aware that it was under threat—“I think their future flashed before their eyes” (Dominic, consultant). For their part, residents, conservative politicians, some business leaders, and the media drew on existing narratives about government bureaucracies to argue that the council was ideological, insensitive, and overstepping its authority. The opponents mobilized the community by depicting the council as being a bureaucratic and dishonest organization which was unnecessarily imposing restrictions on hard working citizens. This narrative was further complicated by the fact that the neighboring region did not have the same restrictions. As one councillor commented:

I guess the other issue is this thing of ‘Why is council telling me what to do? Why can't I just be left to my own devices? Why do I have to do this?’ ...they turn around and say, ‘well, that house down the road there, that doesn't have a 1.3 metre rule, so why are you imposing it on me?’. It's a perceived unfairness about the way rules or restrictions are applied. (Joseph, councillor)

In this perspective, the residents were law abiding, hard-working citizens whose property rights were unfairly threatened by an overzealous council; residents were viewed as victims. Indeed, one of the reporters who covered the issue at the time argued that their work was intended to frame the issue as such:

I'm proud of what I did. I gave the residents a voice. I gave the powerless some power. I gave the voiceless a voice, and I questioned them [the council], and I stood up to them. I gave it the attention it deserved because property rights are extremely important, and people's rights are important. (Josh, journalist)

Thus, the council was presented by the media and opponents as imposing climate risk on residents' properties and harming residents who were suffering unfairly for a problem beyond their control.

From the council staff's perspective, it was noted that the majority of the citizens involved in the debate and deliberation process were in positions of privilege. As one participant noted, the consultation group consisted mostly of retired ex-professionals, with high levels of education and valuable assets:

I think the people that had properties at the water levels freaked out because it becomes very individual because obviously waterfront properties normally cost a lot more. So, then you're saying these things, but that's a minority. I mean that's going to affect about nine per cent of Lake Macquarie properties. (Owen, former council employee)

To this end there was a strong argument that the characterization of victimized residents functioned as a means of increasing the power of those in the community who were already in a position of power. Through representing themselves as victims, key individuals were able to capture the policy development process for their own ends.

This proved to be an effective political strategy with the council's consultation process removing mention of climate change and focusing on measures through which waterfront residents could protect their homes and property values from flooding. This outcome highlights how the representation of residents as victims posed a threat to the council's political legitimacy, and that this had an impact on their actions. Such a move suggests that the interests of those who were concerned about climate change, those who did not own their properties but whose lives might be impacted by sea-level rise, and those who did not have the time resources to commit to consultation, were not represented by the resulting adaptation plan. In this way, the "opt-in" nature of the consultation process meant that the outcomes were heavily influenced by individuals who already had considerable power in the community. The consultation process thus became much more about trying to rebuild trust in government than about putting in place necessary measures to adapt to future climate change.

4 | DISCUSSION

Our study reveals several ways in which ignorance is produced within local debates about climate adaptation. By drawing on readily available, pre-existing discourses of climate skepticism, individual property rights, and a mistrust of government, the actions needed to adapt to climate change were effectively disrupted by the community. The reassertion of these discourses pushed climate change adaptation to the periphery of the discussion and the sharing of alternative narratives enabled the reinforcement of existing economic structures by socially constructing climate ignorance.

In terms of the implications for climate adaptation, our study highlights some of the challenges of small government and community initiatives in the absence of more ambitious, or even supportive policies (Castán Broto & Bulkeley, 2013). In this case, attempts to implement climate adaptation policies were immediately perceived by key interest groups as an economic threat, who then used climate skepticism as a key framing to oppose the measures. Skepticism of climate science thus became a central "strategic unknown" (McGoey, 2012a) around which opponents of the adaptation policy built their case. In this way, the case illustrates the risk that such initiatives will become what McGoey calls "undone science"—areas of inquiry deliberately left unfunded, ignored or sidelined because the political implications of exploring them may be dangerous" (2012a, p. 558). While similar strategies have been observed in the broader debates about climate science via the interference of corporations in climate policy (Oreskes & Conway, 2010), we show the process through which these strategies are played out at a local level as a shared response from the community. We argue that climate skepticism was reflexively mobilized within the community as a means of diverting the discussion away from climate change.

Thus, even those within the community who were concerned about climate change became active in the broader construction of ignorance through a range of reflexive mechanisms. It is this process we focus on here, by showing how and why the council abandoned the implementation of their climate adaptation policies. The council staff were maneuvered into a position of compromise by those opposing the adaptation measures. The process became as much about managing the fear in the community and restoring trust in government as it did about climate change. The resulting agreement worked to appease economic concern and shift climate change to the periphery.

Unlike knowledge, to which there are always limitations, ignorance, Davies and McGoey (2012, p. 80) argue, "has no identifiable parameters"—the inaccessibility of people's motives, the "competing practical, tacit and inarticulable factors that induce individuals to act in particular ways" gives ignorance strength. In what follows we outline our contribution to these debates by describing the processes through which ignorance is able to manifest. We suggest this constitutes a process of *reflexive ignorance*, and while noting the multitude of adjectives already put in front of the noun ignorance (Gross, 2007, p. 744), we seek to overcome the previous gaps in such terms by clearly articulating the relational aspects of knowledge, ignorance, and uncertainty, and giving a clear empirical justification for its utility.

4.1 | Reflexive ignorance

In the conceptualization of reflexive ignorance, we argue that the mechanism evident in each of the narratives described above is reflexivity. Each of the movements toward ignorance draws on pre-existing values within the neo-liberal framework—individualism, rights to property, mistrust in government and “elites” (Harvey, 2005). When confronted with the potential of climate change, rather than invoking a rethink of these assumptions (as we might expect from the more ecological view of reflexivity), residents’ responses are to “double down” on them and engage in narratives which question the need for action. In this way, those already existing and dominant values serve as an anchor point for invoking a reflexive response to the threat of both climate change itself and attempts to adapt to it. For instance, the threat to existing property values initiates an alliance between real estate companies, developers and property owners to create a sub-political movement to push back against the council’s adaptation plans.

In incorporating the notion of “ignorance,” we seek to supplement the existing literature on “anti-reflexivity” by proposing the term *reflexive ignorance*—that is, by removing the “absence” of “anti,” we can follow the development, in this case, of a reflexivity of purpose—to turn away from responding to climate change, at least in the short term. We argue that the findings show a reflexive response to climate adaptation policy embedded in the recognition that climate change means a fundamental change to these particular values. Thus, rather than resulting in a “critical reflexivity” (Adkins, 2003, p. 21), those opposing the adaptation policies engage in a hermeneutic reflexivity whereby the available tools are put to use to defend their economic interests. Key to this is the mobilization of ignorance in relation to climate science.

In our study, the lack of trust in social institutions and science were employed to reroute the discussion away from the need to engage in climate adaptation—that is, to mobilize ignorance. Residents, developers, and the media came together to push back against limitations on future development and reassert the centrality of economic value to the policy debate. In turning to those pre-existing, shared values of the importance of property values, these new alliances can be seen as reflexivity operating as a means of supporting the status quo—an example of Beck’s “sub-politics,” but not perhaps how it was envisioned. The “habit” (Adkins, 2003) used here is the assumption of individual rights to ownership and profit. Just as Adkins shows how a reworking of gender can be drawn upon within reflexive processes, here we argue a reworking of property values as nostalgic and bound to place, offers a reflexive response to the threat of climate adaptation.

A particularly interesting aspect of this debate is the re-orientation of those with relative privilege as “victims.” While social movements are more often linked to notions of justice and fairness, in this example, the movement is built on an alliance with powerful forces. Reflexivity here is used not to respond to the issues of climate change and sea-level rise, but to produce ignorance; to reorient the focus of concern, reinforce economic power relations, and to double down on the importance of individualized property ownership.

5 | CONCLUSION

We do not seek to decouple or argue against the notion that late modernity has produced a need for more reflexivity—rather, we argue that this reflexivity will be invoked by different institutions and individuals in different ways. That is, we argue that reflexivity can produce ignorance just as easily as it produces actions seeking to adapt or mitigate problems such as climate change. We argue that the construction of ignorance as observed here is a reflexive response to climate change, in that it is invoked in order to manage the challenges of late modernity. As opposed to anti-reflexivity, what we observe is the mobilization of a range of reflexive practices in order to produce ignorance—individual skills, networks, and economic resources are drawn upon to respond to the threat of climate change and defend pre-existing ideas.

Thus, we suggest that from the perspective and priorities of the particular corporations and organizations involved in climate denial, the act of embedding doubt about climate science is also reflexive, yet whether this encompasses the broader conceptualization of reflexive ignorance is perhaps a little less clear. As Adkins (2003) notes, it is the very flexibility of late modernity that can often mean a re-orientation of existing norms and values as part of the struggle for legitimacy. Nothing challenges the hegemony of fossil fuels more than climate change (Wright & Nyberg, 2015)—if the process of reflexivity involves reflection of new information, interpretation and action, then the response of using this to defend the industry is exactly the kind of reflexive activity to be expected. This view of reflexivity can also go some way to explaining the proliferation of “fake news” or “alternative facts” which has drawn such intense interest (Jasanoff & Simmet, 2017). Indeed, it may be the ultimate outcome of reflexive modernization that ignorance is mobilized in such a way as to prevent—or at least delay—the fundamental changes to social and economic structures that a meaningful response to climate change requires.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

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“If at First You don’t Succeed”: Why Žižek Failed in France but Succeeded in England

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Abstract

This article sociologically explains the initial phase of Slavoj Žižek's emergence as global public intellectual. Drawing on positioning theory, the article contributes to previous works on Žižek's performativity by focusing on his contextuality. It examines how his intellectual interventions depended on the context in which they were performed, and on the relations to other intellectuals positioned in that context. The article argues that (1) Žižek's first attempt to intervene internationally was in France; (2) this attempt was a failure; and (3) his second attempt in England was a success. It also demonstrates that vouching is paramount to intellectual positioning: while Jacques-Alain Miller positioned Žižek along practico-clinical lines in the French context, Ernesto Laclau positioned Žižek along politico-philosophical lines in the English context. Consequently, the latter positioning facilitated a public resonance that would lead to Žižek's global success.

KEYWORDS

contextuality, intellectual intervention, positioning, vouching, Žižek

1 | INTRODUCTION

Why are some intellectuals more successful than others in conveying their ideas and making them public? Within this question lies another, which is the focus of this article: can the same intellectual be successful in some places and unsuccessful in others, and if so, what determines this variance? The present article answers this question by examining “one of the world's best-known public intellectuals” (Gray, 2016)—Slavoj Žižek.

Undoubtedly, Žižek is the subject and object of much writing. From the end of the 20th century he gained significant public and academic attention. With an almost incomparable intervention rate, he covers topics ranging from popular culture to quantum physics. His interventions consist of many books and articles but also numerous films and countless new-media interviews (Baert & Booth, 2012). Žižek's diverse interventions thus created the bedrock for much writing about him. For example, some examined his political theory (Homer, 2016) while others dealt with his philosophical ideas (Johnston, 2008).

The literature that engages with Žižek focuses primarily on his intellectual *products*. Conversely, this article expands the recent interest in Žižek's performativity (Chow & Mangold, 2014) and focuses on his production *process*, demonstrating that a dynamic and pragmatic approach is needed to explain some of the variance in contemporary intellectual life. Positioning theory provides such a framework, and with it the article illustrates how the different intellectual contexts in which Žižek performed his inaugural interventions determined, to a great extent, the outcomes of these interventions and, in turn, Žižek's own intellectual positioning. The article also expands the use of context in intellectual analyses beyond the common institutional (Camic, 1992) or familial (Gross, 2002) to the public and linguistic, and thus it contributes to the sociology of intellectuals as well as to the vast "Žižek-literature".

The article explores two specific intellectual contexts: France and England.¹ The differences between these two contexts are examined along various parameters, such as space and style, and then used to explain, on the one hand, the limited effects of Žižek's intervention in France, and his much greater success in England, on the other. By examining them individually and comparatively, a particular mechanism of vouching is identified, which facilitates the intellectual's initiation and intervention into a given context.

This article has three parts. Part 1 presents the relevant approaches to the sociological study of intellectuals in general and of celebrities in particular. It shows that positioning theory, while building on other approaches, avoids some of their pitfalls. Part 2 explores Žižek's French connection and contextualizes his early career stage. It explains how the specific relation to J. A. Miller facilitated a vouching that framed Žižek's work as inadequate to the 1980s French intellectual context. This was different to the initiation Žižek received in the English context, explored in Part 3. Put in Latour's terms (2005, p. 39), while Miller was an *intermediary* that caused no transformation for Žižek, Ernesto Laclau was a *mediator* (see also Osborne, 2004): his vouching of Žižek's first English work, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989a), provided an effective positioning that eventually led to Žižek's global success.

Instead of focusing solely on how ideas are produced or consumed, the article utilizes the notion of positioning to show that conveying ideas necessarily involves both. Thus, it suggests that studying either side of the process independently is insufficient for a comprehensive understanding of intellectual but also other cultural and political phenomena.

2 | THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: POSITIONING THE CELEBRITY INTELLECTUAL

In order to examine Žižek's complex positioning from a sociological perspective, several approaches are available to the researcher. First, there is the Bourdieu-inspired approach of field theory (Bourdieu, 1969, 1993). It was evoked by Lamont (1987) in her seminal essay on Derrida. According to her account, it was Derrida's differentiated intellectual and institutional positioning between the literary and philosophical fields in the United States and France, respectively, that led to his successful reception. Similarly, Santoro (2009) has explained how Bourdieu himself was not well received in Italian sociological circles given the different contextualization in the receiving field (see also Dumont, 2017). More recently, Driessens (2013) suggested to expand Bourdieu's four forms of capital and to add a fifth kind called "celebrity capital." He argued that this capital, as accumulated media visibility and recognizability, explains how some individuals convert their success from one field to another.

This structural approach focuses on the field, be it academic or public, structured by the capital flows and accumulations that make one a celebrity, which circulates and appears better than others (Angermüller &

Hamann, 2019; Walsh & Lehmann, 2019). However, field theory suffers from two main issues that make it less appropriate to our case: first, “fields” are not distinct by clear-cut and pre-defined borders, as in Bourdieu's opposition between the economic and the cultural, which led to his methodological “disinterest in the unrestricted and undifferentiated production of mass or popular culture” (Bolin, 2012, p. 33). Given Žižek's intense engagement with popular culture, field theory may be too restrictive in this regard. Indeed, specific to this case is that, according to the dust jacket of his 2017 *Incontinence of the Void*, “if the most interesting theoretical interventions emerge today from the interspaces between fields, then the foremost interspaceman is Slavoj Žižek”. So Žižek's case, his performative mode, merits a less confining concept for analysis than that of “field.” Second, field theory ascribes a somewhat static coherence to the field, which distinguishes it from other fields, without paying sufficient attention to the shifting logics and practical interactions between them. Hence why, Lamont, for example, provided an overtly quantified account of Derrida that obfuscated the dynamic process with which the quality and intensity of the intellectual's intervention was carried out.

While the above approach presumes the existing dualism of field and agent, and then tries to mediate the tension between them, other approaches explain the very emergence of such dualisms by relying on more pragmatic theories. For example, contra-Bourdieu is Jeffery Alexander's cultural pragmatics (Alexander, 2004). His approach takes culture as an independent rather than dependent variable; that is, it explains the emergence and performance of such structural relations. Instead of overcoming the dualism of field and agent, the cultural approach traces its pragmatic articulation. Alexander (2010) proposed the perspective of totemism to better understand the current celebrity phenomenon. Arguing that modern societies are not past such notions, Alexander adopted a quasi-religious frame to explain the attachment of cultural idols and icons, performed as modern totems.

Particularly, cultural icons such as celebrities create a collective representation by enacting an iconoclastic surface/depth dichotomy: the former is the profane aesthetic signifier, and the latter is the sacred ethical signified. In Žižek's case, this split is discernible between his surface-level foolish performative signifier and the depth-level seriousness of his signified ideas. The individual's identification with such cultural icons leads, according to Alexander, to subjectification as one's own bodily appearance and behavior change in accordance with the icon, which in turn is seen through idealization and objectification.

While building on the various advantages of both structural and cultural approaches, the present article draws on positioning theory (Baert, 2012; Baert & Morgan, 2017). This theory adds to the sociology of intellectuals and ideas by shifting from position as a state-of-affairs to *positioning* as a practical process. We shall see how Žižek's interventions—whether as books, articles, blogs or videos—have positioned him within the complex intellectual contexts in which he has found himself. With the added qualitative dimension of interventions, positioning theory replaces “field” for the more dynamic notion of arena, understood as a relationally constructed space, thus allowing for interactions between intra- and extra-intellectual arenas within a given context. This integrative theory makes the structural and cultural approaches work together by retaining the former's relational logic and directing it toward the latter's performative nature of positioning.

The notion of positioning refers to the relational act of attributing certain features to oneself and to others (Baert, 2015). It highlights the various performative devices through which intellectuals such as Žižek accomplish this positioning in given contexts, sometimes with the help of others. For instance, the article demonstrates how vouching is a specific mechanism of transferring social capital from one node to another in an intellectual network, by which Ernesto Laclau's Preface to Žižek's first English book presented his work as an innovative contribution to post-Marxist social theory. Thus, the article is also sensitive to the fact that an intellectual's positioning is an on-going process as it is inevitably also the product of others' interpretations and critique (Bourdieu, 1999; Santoro, 2011).

Framed through Mill's method of difference (2011 [1843], p. 366), it shows how the different intellectual conditions in France and England, and the presence or absence of effective “vouching,” help explain Žižek's success not only in conveying ideas but also in facilitating their reception.² Following Eyal and Buchholz's (2010) plea for a sociology of interventions, positioning theory emphasizes the processual nature of intellectual interventions.

Therefore, the article illuminates the intersection between the academic and public domains and is attentive to what they call "... the interstitial space of expertise, where the borders between these domains are fuzzy" (Eyal & Buchholz, 2010, p. 120). We will see how, especially in the English context, Žižek plays on (and contributes to) the blurring of conventional social borders and knowledge hierarchies.

Methodologically, this study is based on my archive of Žižek's numerous and diverse intellectual interventions; these include 250 books, 500 videos, and 496 articles. We analysed these interventions, and also conducted three semi-structured extended interviews with Žižek and his close collaborators, philosophers Mladen Dolar and Alenka Zupančič. Each interview lasted between 2 and 3 hr. We also used historical materials to examine Žižek's inaugural interventions in France and England. These materials embed his intellectual interventions in a two-level contextualization: first, in their broader generality of global world processes, and second in their narrower local mechanisms of intellectual reception and rejection in France and England around 1989.

3 | ŽIŽEK'S FRENCH CONNECTION

From the beginning of his career, Žižek held a close relation to France, including to French Theory, thinkers, and universities. Slovenia, being "the westernmost most republic of Yugoslavia" (Dews & Osborne, 1991, p. 25), had enjoyed a relatively frequent and regular exchange (of goods, ideas, etc.) with western countries such as France and Austria. Because of this exchange, Žižek maintained over the years a close dialogue with prominent French intellectuals, such as Alain Badiou, Jacques-Alain Miller, Jacques Rancière, and Étienne Balibar. This may lead one to conclude that if anything had facilitated Žižek's emergence to the global intellectual scene—from the relatively unknown country of Slovenia—it was this French connection. However, Žižek received little attention in France, and his reception did not lead to any significant intellectual positioning. As Dolar (2017) explains:

There is a major shift in Slavoj's writing. Slavoj tried very hard to have a book published in France, but eventually he had his fall-out with [Jacques-Alain] Miller and he didn't publish it, and then [Slavoj] published it in *Éditions Lignes*. It didn't have any resonance because it was a strange series for what he did. After '89, Slavoj's focus is entirely on English publications, in the sense of production. Whatever we published here of Slavoj, in these years, was written in English originally and we had Slavoj translate for us.

Noticeably, "while Žižek currently enjoys remarkable visibility on the Anglo-American academic circuit, his presence on the French scene is relatively understated" (Oltarzewska, 2005, p. 55). Žižek's entrance to the French intellectual context was inspired by his growing interest in Structuralism and Lacan. After several visits to France beginning in 1969, in 1978 he enrolled in the Université Paris-VIII as a PhD student in the psychoanalysis department under the supervision of J.A. Miller. His PhD dissertation was titled *Philosophy between the Symptom and Fantasy*. This personal and professional relationship with Miller was extended as Žižek later became his teaching assistant and analysand (patient under psychoanalysis). When comparing his French connection with other Slovene intellectuals, Žižek (2017) explains that:

Others, if they went, they went elsewhere, to Germany, to the Anglo-Saxon world and so on. I don't think that many others went to France. No. It was our privileged link with Millerian Lacanianism, with *École de la Cause Freudienne*. But again, then, lately, already late 80s, we got into troubles. Because again, his orientation was too clinical for us. [...] But this is why we were even so attacked, because when then we established in the 80s, already late 70s, connections with French Lacanians, it didn't go too well because they didn't like our philosophical orientation. They were interested

in expanding their movement. They wanted us to return here and start practicing psychoanalysis, clinically. We didn't want to do this. We always remained philosophers.

Here we can start to see why Žižek's interventions, and by extension his position as an intellectual, were ignored or rejected by French academics. Specifically, two positions of Lacanian psychoanalysis are discernible. For Žižek, Lacan was a way of rehabilitating German Idealism in general and Hegel in particular, and "a way out" of the Marxist-Heideggerian deadlock he experienced in Slovenia. Žižek positioned Lacan as a source for philosophical thought; effectively, he took Lacan outside of the clinic and away from its intended practical use. For Miller, on the other hand, Lacan was first and foremost a father-in-law, and a theoretician of the clinical psychoanalytic practice. The oppositional positioning of Miller's psychoanalytical practice versus Žižek's psychoanalytical theory or philosophy led to a growing rift between the two. An intellectual falling-out emerged from Žižek's doctoral dissertation, resulting in material effects, beyond Žižek's first reported panic attack (Boynton, 1998):

Miller's refusal to publish the doctoral thesis that emerged from Žižek's period of study led to its eventual publication (in 1988) by *Les Éditions Érès*, an outlet for the human sciences with a strong commitment to psychoanalysis both theoretical and clinical. The book was entitled *Le plus sublime des hystériques—Hegel passe*, and published in the collection "Point Hors Ligne." It had little impact at the time and is currently out of print. (Oltarzewska, 2005, p. 55)

As Miller was a controversial figure with no prestigious academic position or status, and at odds with many other French intellectuals (Lacanian and others) who did not hold him in high esteem, having him as reluctant voucher was especially counter-effective. Moreover, having Hegel as the main intellectual reference in the title did not resonate much in France, which lacked even a single "Hegelian" and was full of German-French rivalry (Kelly, 1992, p. 5).³ In that period, the intellectual trend in Paris was of "specific intellectuals" (Foucault, 1980), such as experts, and an anti-Hegel positioning against his panlogism. As Žižek admitted, this first French book,⁴ *Le plus sublime des hystériques—Hegel passe*, "while not a total fiasco, did not leave any serious impact. So you can see here how contingent these things are. For something which explodes here can practically disappear elsewhere" (Žižek & Glyn, 2004, pp. 40–41). Nonetheless, Žižek's French intervention did leave some mark in the intellectual arena, mostly within the lower ranks of academia.

Self-framed as "working-class solidarity," Žižek's French intellectual positioning was: "the lower you got on the academic level, the more it was popular. All around I heard the same story: it was among graduate students that my stronghold existed, not among the top professors. I kind of like this" (Žižek & Glyn, 2004, p. 40). Even today, some three decades after Žižek's first publication in France, Žižek's position in French is insignificant. Only a small number of books are translated and inconsistently: each publisher, such as Fayard, Flammarion, PUF, Amsterdam, and Climats, has each published just one or two books. According to Oltarzewska (2005, p. 58), "that the French publishing industry recognizes his importance but is unsure of where to put him is borne out by the fact that he has, to date, no fewer than eight publishers." Žižek's innovative melange of German-French ideas and thinkers has yet to penetrate the French intellectual context.

Several parameters can be used to explain Žižek's continued "oppositional reception" (Hall, 1993) in France, which led to his intellectual rejection: space, time, style, and speed. First, France had a long tradition of established philosophical and psychoanalytical communities, carrying some of the biggest names worldwide such as Sartre and Lacan (Ahearne, 2010). These established communities, and potential rivals, were not only intellectual, in academia, but also public, where a culture of philosophy and psychoanalysis developed with the emergence and export of French Theory in the 1960s. Together, both intellectual (i.e., philosophical and psychoanalytical) and public (cultural and political) spaces were stratified, crowded, and codified in France, making it harder for an outsider to penetrate (Myers, 2003, p. 8; see also Jeanpierre & Mosbah-Natanson, 2009).

Spatially, there was no room for Žižek and even less so within the Parisian intellectual pantheon. This different intellectual space construction in France and England is accompanied by the question of intellectual climate

or timing. Laurent Jeanpierre (2002) indicated that following the events of May 1968, there was a growing dissatisfaction with Marx as a solution to the capitalist problem in France. This was part of a general decline of grand-narratives, a distrust of “big” philosophical systems and philosophy as a discipline (Baert & Shipman, 2012). Against the widespread emergence of the social sciences and higher education, and the blurring boundaries between laypersons and professionals, there was an aversion to authoritative intellectuals or general philosophers (Posner, 2001), especially post-structuralists (Angermuller, 2013, 2015). At times of growing popularity and mediatic attraction of the trendy *Nouveaux Philosophes*, who considered Hegel “the rational monster of the State” (Badiou, 2012, p. 24), associating a philosophised Lacan with a politicized Hegel was swimming against all currents at once (McLaughlin, 1998).

Additionally, Žižek's performative and rhetorical style made it difficult to classify and categorize his work. Without Miller's help, Žižek was only able to publish his doctoral thesis as a book with a relatively small and specialized publisher (*Les Éditions Érès*). This publisher promotes intellectuals at the crossroads of literature, art, and philosophy (such as the uncategorizable Bataille). *Le plus sublime des hystériques—Hegel passe* was published in a series, *Point Hors Ligne*, focused on psychoanalytic concepts aimed for clinical practitioners and intellectuals from the humanities and social sciences. This incoherent audience, having disparate aims, needs, and approaches, made the positioning, branding, labeling, and marketing of a new intellectual intervention quite difficult (Taylor, 2014a, 2014b). Given the strong clinical psychoanalytic affiliation and the crowded philosophical space, “[t]o this French public, Žižek's use of psychoanalysis must have seemed a touch unorthodox: whereas, in France, Lacan's theory has strong links to clinical practice, Žižek's Lacan is not only disconnected from the clinic but pressed into alliance with Marx and Hegel to yield a politicised reading of contemporary culture” (Oltarzewska, 2005, pp. 57–58). This disconnect continued for decades, with François Théron (2004) claiming in *Le Nouvel Observateur* that Žižek's “unclassifiable” style was particularly problematic.

In addition to the contextual determinations in space and time, Žižek's unique style also contributed to his French rejection, or more passive ignorance as non-reception (Jeanpierre, 2002, p. 214). Already by the 1980s, Žižek had developed his distinct rhetoric that draws from Hegel and Lacan while interspersing philosophical ideas and psychoanalytical concepts. This unique idiom and rhetorical language was not well received by French academic circles and publics, accustomed to traditional academic writing and less sympathetic to textual transgressions:

As if this mixture of Lacanised Hegel and non-clinical Lacan were not disconcerting enough [...], the context-specific logic of disciplinary boundaries, the expectation that a philosophical argument demonstrate qualities of orderliness and *sérieux*, a generalised disenchantment with politically engaged writing, a distrust of theoretical eclecticism did not augur well for Žižek's reception in France' (Oltarzewska, 2005, p. 58).

Stylistically, Žižek's hybrid language, his heterodox (materialist) reading of Hegel, uncompromising use of Lacanian formulas and cultural references not for clinical use, and the ruthless “cut-and-paste” approach to composition—can all be wearing and revolting. Therefore, specifically in the French context, “there is a genuine risk that these uncontrolled surges of affect might hystericise the reader, not in the positive sense of inducing productive curiosity, more in the sense of triggering exasperated rejection” (Oltarzewska, 2005, p. 58).

Žižek's repetitive language games, composed of neologisms and colloquialisms of words, capitalization and italicization of letters, as well as name-dropping, jokes, examples, and rhetorical questions—render palpable the performative dimension in-and-through the writing and create a hyper-textual, hysterical quality of an engaged, subjectivized reading.⁵ Moreover, in terms of speed, Žižek's speedy rate of interventions makes this performance even harder to follow, jumping from one discipline and jargon to another, visiting a myriad of cultural references and philosophical ideas all at once. Even his stated ambition—to start with communism—was intimidating amidst the “end of history.”

The trajectory of *Le plus sublime des hystériques—Hegel passe* did not end in the French context. Its subsequent reiteration in English, as *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (henceforth SOI), engendered a completely different reception in the English context for decades to come. The particularities of the French context, including its structural hierarchy and established high-profile rivals, created a mass rejection of the book and of Žižek's work more generally. This rejection endures even today in a context where Žižek has been published in roughly 20 languages, but still lacking a resonance with contemporary French intellectual circles.

4 | VOUCHING AS POSITIONING: LACLAU PREFACES ŽIŽEK

During the late 1980s, a troubling question lingered among intellectuals, philosophers, critical theorists, and neo-Marxist sociologists: who is the Subject? Particularly, who is the Subject of revolution and driver of emancipation? As the world witnessed the on-going disintegration of the USSR, this intellectual and political ambiguity intensified (Bauman, 1987), and left the subjective referent to “the proletariat” unclear.

In this context, Žižek's English reworking was timely since, given the historic collapse of “actually existing socialism,” “[t]he intellectual currents of postmodernism and post-Marxism were at their most vitriolic and triumphalist” (Homer, 2001, p. 8). This political and intellectual post-Marxist timing would play a significant (pulling factor) role in the English reception and (pushing factor) in the French rejection of SOI. Referring to Žižek's, 1990 article in the influential British *New Left Review*, Dolar recalled how Žižek became recognized as the one who could explain the (Eastern) other in the terms of the (Western) self:

Because the downfall of the Iron Curtain, everybody was waiting for a message from the East: “there is this big East which we don't know anything about”. And one day, suddenly, there emerges a guy who is extremely knowledgeable and can make more sense about Structuralism and post-Structuralism than anybody could at the time in the West. And who is, amazingly, an East which talks back. So, there was a perfect historical timing because the idea of Eastern Europe was very much an ambiguous imagination, like, “what are these people, who are they, what do they have in their minds?” And this also connects to Žižek's singularity as it were, his real talent for showmanship: to combine showmanship with serious conceptual work. (Dolar, 2017)

Few books had intervened in this intellectual and political problematic of the missing (Marxist) Subject. Badiou's *Théorie du Sujet* (1982) is one of them, and another is Laclau and Mouffe's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985). Both tried to rearticulate a post-Marxist notion of the Subject amidst the communist failures of 20th century. However, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, published in English by Verso, made the most effective global impact and positioned its authors as world renowned thinkers.

Laclau himself was recognized in several intellectual circles, and held extensive relations with neo- and post-Marxists, French and South-American Lacanian psychoanalysts, Argentinean politicians, and European social scientists (of discourse theory). His colleague and wife, Chantal Mouffe, was also a recognised scholar who, after working at Columbia University in New York, became professor in London (City University) and Paris (Collège International de Philosophie). Around the late 1980s, and given their mutual interest in Lacan, Laclau hosted Žižek in his *Ideology and Discourse Analysis* programme at the Department of Government, University of Essex, where he was Reader of Political Theory. Compared with Miller, this strong institutional affiliation meant that Laclau was well positioned within British academia.

SOI was published in 1989, as an English reiteration of previously published materials.⁶ The publication of the book was not a product of a single stroke of genius (or madness); rather, it resulted from a long and vast network of actions taken by Žižek and others. Žižek recalls the importance of this inaugural work to his eventual academic success:

In the mid-70s I met Ernesto Laclau, and he organized my first book, he organized SOI. Then I met also, at a big Lacanian congress, Joan Copjec, who organized my next book [*Looking Awry*],⁷ who [sic] was selling very well. And with that, I was on. From that point I published whatever I want. I think it's simply applying Lacan to politics and to popular culture. This, and with a leftist twist, again, because you know, there were Cultural Studies, analysing popular culture and so on, but nobody connected this with Lacan and psychoanalysis, with subjectivity. This was the new thing, to give to it this Lacanian twist. And it worked. It was incredible how quickly it worked. I was in demand, in one or two years everything changed. Because I remember that book, *Looking Awry*, it was immediately reprinted, translated. (Žižek, 2017).

In this inaugural English book, Žižek was related to the problems of the time and entered the global intellectual scene, where English was becoming the dominant form of intellectual globalization. Through this book, Žižek developed an idiosyncratic language that created a signifying identity associated with certain positions and ideas in a clustered, labeled fashion. He achieved this by uniquely weaving Hegel and Lacan into what we refer to as "Hegelacanes." This language, as a form of speech-acting and performing, became the signifier for the Žižekian brand. The hybridisation of other disciplines and positions, from psychoanalysis and philosophy to the social and individual, was crucial for the creation and circulation of Žižek's distinct language of Hegelacanes. It was this same language that was rejected in France only to be embraced in England.

SOI was published during the transitional and eventful period of 1989, by London publishing house Verso Press. Founded in 1970 as the publishing house of the *New Left Review*, Verso established itself as a leftist, internationalist, and a popular, market-savvy company, much unlike conventional university presses. Laclau already had a book series with Verso called *Phronesis* whose objective was establishing a dialogue between theoretical developments such as post-structuralism and left-wing politics. This positioning, labeled as the "sine qua non of a new vision for the Left," was used to resonate with numerous publics of the global political and intellectual context of that time. Published in Laclau's *Phronesis* series, SOI became an intellectual intervention not only in England but also the global intellectual arena. In times of "the death of the subject" (Heller, 1990), its association of social and cultural issues with the psyche and subjectivity signaled a new engaged way of thinking of the times, allowing the reader to bypass the common cynical position (Johnston, 2004) and include herself in the analysis through identification; not unlike how football or music fans are attached to their performers. This engaged writing resonated well with Verso's popular marketing orientation and appealed to its wide-ranging English readership of academic and general publics.

Imperative to Žižek's global emergence in English was not only the inclusion in Laclau's international network and his series with Verso, but also that Laclau personally prefaced SOI and effectively enabled Žižek's reception in England as a stepping-stone to the United States and the globe. The paratextual elements which accompany a text facilitate its positioning. Paratexts *do* things: they attribute certain attributes to a text for a particular audience (Silva & Viera, 2019, p. 10).⁸ This act was one of vouching as positioning, by which Laclau's already established and prestigious position (or social capital) as a global intellectual was bestowed onto Žižek. In the Preface to the book, Laclau begins a peritextual positioning by situating SOI, and by extension Žižek, along an existing, recognizable narrative of reading the present through Hegel's dialectic and Lacan's subject. Žižek's name appears for the first time only after three long paragraphs that Laclau uses to position Lacanian psychoanalysis. Labeling it "a great intellectual tradition," Laclau positions (himself and) Žižek as inheritors of this tradition.

Another merit of "a great intellectual tradition" is its ability to effectively influence diverse intellectual currents. In his Preface, Laclau positions Lacan both geographically and intellectually, arguing that in France and Latin America the Lacanian orientation was clinical and practical, whereas in "Anglo-Saxon" countries it was associated to the theoretical "literature-cinema-feminism triangle" (Laclau, 1989, p. ix). This association was made possible by an early reception of Lacan, especially in the United States, through the film journal *Screen* and partial translations in feminist studies (e.g., Jacqueline Rose's *Feminine Sexuality* from 1982). As Oltarzewska (2005,

p. 57) notes, Žižek's specific contributions to Lacan's reception were "his political credibility, his humor, light touch and pedagogical flair, his emphasis on the later (post 1960) Lacan, whose preoccupations (the drives, the act, *jouissance*, the Real) were less familiar to the Anglophone critic." For such structural and historical reasons, in France "greater degrees of demarcation and confrontation have been maintained between intellectual currents" (Laclau, 1989, p. ix) than in England, where Lacan was more closely related to "Theory" under the broad banner of Post-Structuralism. While England lacked the established community of Lacanian practitioners found in France, the English intellectual context accommodated Lacanian theory in the growing realms of film, languages, and cultural studies (Dworkin, 1997; Hall, 1980). As Liu and Bailey (2018) recall, this was predicated on the "invention" of French Theory in the United States:

Theory burst forth in the United States in 1966 with "The Structuralist Controversy", a conference at Johns Hopkins organized by Richard Macksey. Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, and Roland Barthes took Baltimore by storm. Genuine excitement about new forms of French thought spread [...] "atmosphere of danger and charisma" at the peak of enrolments in the humanities, an apex of post-war growth and expansion in the fields it encompassed.

Liu and Bailey link the rise of French Theory in the United States to the context of disciplinary expansion, where the humanities were reacting to the growing public demand for higher education. With the inexpensive airline travel that became available during the 1970s and 1980s, French Theory became "a methodology that bridged philosophy, literary criticism, linguistics, and anthropology," combining "meticulous close-reading with highly dramatic word-play, both in written and oral rhetorical performances" (Liu & Bailey, 2018; see also Angermuller, 201; Cusset, 2008; Lotringer & Cohen, 2002).

This expansion of the humanities and inclusion of Lacanian or French Theory did not go without criticism of what some considered a take-over (Morgan & Baert, 2015; Shumway, 1997). Thus, positioning Žižek with relation to French Theory depended on the differentiated Lacanian position in these French and English contexts. Unlike France (or Germany), unique to England was the absence of Theory and a growing empirical tendency (Anderson, 1992), which, in turn, opened up a space for Žižek's theoretical innovation. As was picked up by early reviewers, his book was a "tremendously energetic" guise of "the post-structuralist fascination with the sublime" (Elmer, 1990, p. 117) and offered a Lacanian approach to social issues for which "he should be read" (Lechte, 1993, p. 191; see also Elam, 1991). Moreover, although Marxism was not so widespread in England in the early 1960s, this had changed by the 1980s with influential journals such as the *New Left Review* (Blackburn, 1992), which provided a context amenable to Žižek's post-Marxism.

The *New Left Review* was important in creating "intellectual vacancies" (Baert, 2015, p. 136) within the public-intellectual arena in post-war Britain. These vacancies cried out for a non-native speaker who was immersed in foreign theories. Furthering the work done by the *New Left Review* in creating a tangible venue for performing public intellectual interventions, the London *Institute of Contemporary Arts* held successful weekly talks and symposia, especially in the 1980s, which provided a popular English platform for foreign theorists to expound upon their views. A testament to Žižek's successful English reception following his 1989 intervention was his first appearance at the ICA in 1992 (Žižek, 1992). The *London Review of Books*, established in 1979, also created a space for theoretical writing that operated in-between academia and the culture industry. A review by renowned British intellectual Terry Eagleton in November 1997 popularized Žižek further. Similarly, since its inception in 1982, *Channel4* semi-regularly screened interviews with intellectuals such as Derrida and showcased documentaries on literary theory. A possible result of Žižek's successful circulation of Hegelianism in England was a series of late-night lectures by Lacan aired in 1993 to no less than 250,000 viewers (Stoneman, 2020).

This intellectual context was hospitable for Laclau's preface of *SOI*. He traced the Lacanian genealogy so to position Žižek within it and less with regard to the (controversial) banner of French Theory (see also Chiesa, 2014). The first generation of "old-school" Lacanians (such as Octave and Maud Mannoni, Serge Leclaire, and others)

was introduced as focusing on the Symbolic, a Lacanian concept that was instrumental in the middle period of his teaching. The second, younger generation (consisting of Michel Silvestre and J.A. Miller) focused on the Real and Lacan's late teaching. In addition, Laclau mentioned two other orientations in Lacanian thought: German hermeneutic (led by Hermann Lang), and Marxist-structuralist (led by Althusser and Pêcheux). Only at this point Laclau signaled what *individuates* Žižek (and SOI) from previous positions of Lacanian psychoanalysis. He positioned Žižek and his *Ljubljana School* (est. 1982) by the Lacanian, post-Marxist, post-structuralist frame of *Phronesis*, through their unique opposition to both French (clinical) and American (literary) positions. Without an explicit clinical or literal dimension, for "Slovenian theoreticians [...] Lacanian categories have been used in a reflection which is essentially *philosophical* and *political*" (Laclau, 1989, p. x, emphasis in original). Important in this positioning is Laclau's identification of two main features that characterize this school.

The first distinctive feature is the insistent reference to classical philosophical texts/authors, and the second is the recurrent referencing to the ideological-political field. In fact, Laclau describes here the movement of intellectual intervention; he explains that Žižek links intellectuals—such as Plato, Marx, Heidegger, the Anglophone analytical tradition, and, of course, Hegel—with public current affairs from ideology and language to totalitarianism and democracy. Žižek's public intellectual intervention thus resonated with England's renewed interest in Marx. However, As Laclau (1989, p. xii) himself admitted: "this does not mean that there has been complete agreement: in our view, the Slovenian school initially drew too drastic a line of separation between Lacanian theory and post-structuralism; we also have a number of reservations about their reading of Hegel." Despite creating this distance between his project and that of the Ljubljana School, Laclau acknowledged that the latter "represents one of the most innovative and promising theoretical projects on the European intellectual scene" (Laclau, 1989, p. xii). Based on their considerable production, he noted a close link between the intellectual orientation of Slovene Lacanians and their political engagement. Laclau mentioned the weekly Slovene newspaper *Mladina* as "the most important mouthpiece of this movement," with Žižek its main political columnist. Given this constant open channel between Lacanian intellectuals and the public, Lacanian theory was "the main philosophical orientation is Slovenia" (Laclau, 1989, p. xi; see also Vežjak, 1996).

As part of the stage-directions, Laclau (1989, p. xii) provided readers with "a series of suggestions for the reading of this book." This inclusion hinted at the reason Žižek failed in France: "the reader could quite easily end up disoriented as to its literary genre" (Laclau, 1989, p. xii). Without a categorized genre, it is hard to position the author anywhere in the intellectual arena. Yet, the right kind of framing and staging, with the right directions, can indeed compensate for a troubling classification. Readers were told, almost as a warning, that what they hold "is certainly not a book in the classical sense" (Laclau, 1989, p. xii). Laclau's framing admits that SOI does not argue systematically according to a plan, nor is it a collection of essays. It is, rather, "a series of theoretical interventions which shed mutual light on each other, not in terms of the *progression* of an argument, but ... *reiteration* of the latter in different discursive contexts" (Laclau, 1989, p. xii). Laclau prepared readers for the unusual style they were about to encounter, what Barthes called a "writerly text," and framed it as an invitation for the reader to take part and "continue for him or herself the discursive proliferation in which the author has been engaged" (Laclau, 1989, p. xii). Indeed, as eloquently put by Eagleton (1997, p. 27), "'Enjoy!' is Žižek's implicit injunction to the reader."

If this was not already inviting and exciting enough, the book's basic thesis also relates itself personally to the potential reader as it is formulated around the notion of the Subject. According to Laclau's framing, "the basic thesis of the book—that the category of 'subject' cannot be reduced to the 'positions of subject' since before subjectivation the subject is the subject of lack—is formulated in the first chapter: each of the subsequent chapters which reiterate this thesis does so in a new discursive context" (Laclau, 1989, p. xii). Žižek's intervention is, thus, framed, both in content (the subject) and form (of iteration), as an innovative invitation: "This book also contains an implicit invitation to break the barrier separating theoretical languages from those of everyday life" (1989, p. xiii). Again, what is emphasized by this framing (as staging and incriminating) is the combination of high-and-low, this time of theoretical languages—considered elitist and exclusive to experts—and everyday languages commonly used by the public.

These two seemingly opposing rhetorical reference points signal that a public intellectual intervention is in progress: intellectuals may find the formal language of theory useful while the public may find the normal language more understandable and appealing. This, in fact, is the movement of intervention from the academic, intra-intellectual arena to the public, extra-intellectual arena. By situating this intervention vis-à-vis the theoretical deadlock of that time, namely the duality of structure and subject, Laclau suggested that such novel reading might provide a new way of dealing with the practical, political deadlock of liberal democracy. Also, by referring to the linguistic problem that Žižek deals with in his book (descriptivism, naming, meaning, etc.), Laclau positions Žižek as a relevant intellectual to the growing discursive, performative, and linguistic tendencies in the humanistic and social scientific academia, all the while hinting that the actual language used in the book is inclusive and inviting. At the heyday of Thatcherite individualism, and compared to the dominating yet detached English tradition of analytic philosophy, Žižek's work, and particularly his association of "ideology" and "the unconscious," provided a refreshing and engaged philosophical outlook on issues of public interest such as politics, pop-culture, and subjectivity.

Laclau's Preface performatively contextualized and positioned Žižek along specific intellectual and political axes. In fact, the readers are told, "[f]or all those interested in the elaboration of a theoretical perspective that seeks to address the problems of constructing a democratic socialist political project in a post-Marxist age, it is an essential reading" (Laclau, 1989, p. xv). Laclau's positioning of Žižek, his book, and the Ljubljana School offered a way for English readers to read Žižek and situate him along some existing lines of thought. Without this vouching and transference of symbolic capital, readers would have been less able to identify and position Žižek in the intellectual and public arenas. It was only after this link was established, that Žižek's world recognition and emergence as a global public intellectual would have been made possible.

5 | CONCLUSION

In this article we drew on positioning theory and explained Slavoj Žižek's emergence in the particular time, place, and language in which it happened. In Žižek's words, "The explosion was simply SOI, which is a miracle, even now. [...] I was lucky to publish the right book at the right place at the right moment" (2017). But what exactly was "right" in Žižek's intervention? The answer was provided in the above analysis of Žižek's initiatory contexts of intellectual interventions.

We have argued that Žižek's reception depended on the context in which it was received and positioned. His first intellectual intervention in France was shown to be a failure in terms of academic or public resonance. The multifaceted causes for this failure were identified as: (1) crowded and ordered French intellectual arena; (2) customary Lacanian psychoanalytical practice; (3) established philosophical communities; (4) anti-Hegelian/Marxist trend; (5) Žižek's unorthodox style/ uncategorizable genre; and (6) Miller's controversial status and conflicted rapport with Žižek. Therefore, although Žižek's French connection was both personal and professional, the lack in proper framing and vouching led to the marginalization of his work. As it was not clearly identified within the existing Parisian intellectual arena, the publishing industry found no success in marketing and selling his book.

However, with a different form, which allowed for a more detailed analysis of the initiation beyond the mere context, this same content found success in England. There Žižek enjoyed a proper vouching from an already esteemed intellectual, Ernesto Laclau, who: (1) positioned him as pertinent to the (theoretical) intellectual deadlock of the time—structure versus. subject; (2) framed his work as contribution to untying the (practical) political deadlock of liberal democracy; (3) staged Žižek's intervention through the growing post-Marxist critique; (4) emphasized his unique application of psychoanalysis to culture; (5) explained how Žižek's work invites a self-engagement from the reader; and (6) directed the reader as to how to read, and not to read, Žižek.

Contextually, the recognizable post-Marxist tradition, which was at that time much less despised in England than in France, facilitated Žižek's successful intellectual vouching. What qualified him as original is the psychoanalytic-cum-cultural twist, which, together with the less crowded philosophical establishment, meant more room for Žižek's experimental performative style.

Žižek's success with SOI was then translated into launching his own book series with Verso in 1994, *Wo Es War*, and another with Duke University Press in 1996, *Sic*. His "Hegelianese" traits, explicitly revealed in Laclau's Preface to SOI, would become integral to his rhetorical repertoire, found everywhere in the still-expanding Žižekian corpus.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ In this article I do not discuss Žižek's positioning in Slovenia, although some points of intersection between the Slovenian and French/English contexts will be addressed. For a focused analysis of the Slovenian transitory context in which Žižek transitioned from a public intellectual to a politician see Irwin and Motoh (2014).
- ² As such, I address more the necessary condition, namely the vouching, and leave the sufficient condition, as the series of interventions that followed from 1990 onwards particularly in the US context, for future research.
- ³ I rely here on Genette's (1997, p. 75) distinction according to which, "if the addressee of the text is indeed the reader, the addressee of the title is the public [...]. If the text is an object to be read, the title [...] is an object to be circulated—or, if you prefer, a subject of conversation." As also Thoburn (2016, p. ix) noted, "A book's title serves a dual function. It introduces readers to the text's theme ... but it also helps place the book in a market."
- ⁴ While Žižek did publish a book on Hitchcock in France the year prior (Žižek, 1988a), *Le plus sublime des hystériques—Hegel passe* is considered his first philosophy book in French.
- ⁵ Besides the famous question from SOI (1989a), *How did Marx Invent the Symptom?*, other instances where Žižek used the rhetorical question form are his articles *Why Lacan is not a "Post-Structuralist"?* (1987); *How Popular Culture Can Serve as an Introduction to Lacan?* (1989b); and *Why Should a Dialectician Learn to Count to Four?* (1991).
- ⁶ As the Acknowledgments section concedes, most the material of the book was already presented between 1987 and 1989 in a series of American Lacanian conferences or local newspapers (such as *Vestnik IMS*. See Žižek, 1988b, pp. 85–96, 1986).
- ⁷ Although I do not focus on this later book, *Looking Awry* (published in 1991) contributed to the popularisation of Žižek in England because, as the subtitle suggested, it provided *An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture*. Published by the prestigious MIT Press, the book exposed Žižek to a public audience in England through a review in the popular science magazine *New Scientist* (Cohen, 1991).
- ⁸ Paratexts include the materials that are located before and after the text. More technically, peritexts are names, covers, prefaces, etc., and epitexts are commentaries, indexes, etc. (see Genette, 1997).

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Legacies of civil wars: A 14-year study of social conflicts and well-being outcomes in farming economies

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Abstract

Community processes to address fractured social relationships and well-being remain the least examined dimensions in studies of legacies of civil wars. This article addresses these limitations by analyzing how the wartime and post-war generations have negotiated the legacies of the civil war (1976–1992) in a farming economy region in Mozambique. Based on a 14-year (2002–2015) study of community courts in Mozambique, we analyzed the types of social conflicts and the associations with gender, age, risk factors, self-described health impairments, and the timing of farming activities. We identified $n = 3,456$ participants and found that perennial sources of disputes were related to family formation and maintenance, defamation, accusations of perpetration of serious civil wartime violations, mistrust, debts, and domestic violence. Furthermore, conflict relations were associated with gender, age, risk factors, and health problems. This study concludes that civil wars have lasting multifaceted legacies, but generational tensions, availability of community institutions, and economic resources shape social relationships and well-being outcomes while averting revenge cycles among civilian war survivors.

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KEYWORDS

Agrarian economies, community courts, conflict relations, gender and age, normalization strategies, post-civil wars, risk factors, socio-health impairments, transitional justice

1 | INTRODUCTION

The question of how civilian populations in the aftermath of wars and other forms of mass political violence engage in normalization strategies and actions (Herzog, 2005, p. 107) and rebuild their lives over time has animated scholarly work for the past three decades, mainly through disciplinary pigeonholes. In particular is psychological trauma and its discontents, and transitional justice and its emerging skeptics. Critical studies of psychological trauma have challenged the applicability of such approaches in non-Western war-affected zones and in its place, it was proposed the use of sociosomatic approaches, which focuses on the intersections of political violence, sociocultural processes, and the development of specific illness experiences and normalization actions (Kleinman & Becker, 1998). Several studies analyzed these intersections, but there was a marked focus on the spectacular phenomenon of spirits and spirit possession which is typical in many contexts of post-conflict transitions and transitional justice around the world (Baines, 2010; Becker, 1998; Kwon, 2008; Mueggler, 2001; Van der Merwe et al., 2009). Yet, such analytic emphasis on supernatural beliefs as mechanisms of redress and coping has been pursued to the neglect of an analysis of how the legacies of civil wars become implicated in social structures and generational tensions related to intimacy, marriage, and divorce (see Cole & Thomas, 2009; Herzog, 2005; Igreja, 2015a).

The other dimension of the disciplinary pigeonhole is firmly focused on transitional justice processes undertaken through tribunals, reparations, and truth commissions (Hayner, 2001) to the detriment of a focus on the long-term systematic analysis of transitional justice processes rooted in non-Western cultures and practices. One assumption driving mainstream transitional justice is that the alleged perpetrators of worst abuses must face criminal accountability to defend the honor or authority of the victims so that the failure to punish may not cause their indignation and degradation (Judge Gideon Hausner, cited in Arendt, 1994, p. 287). Linked to this assumption is the notion that the lack of transitional justice is problematic as this predicament can be “transformed into irrational vengeance” (Crocker, 1998, p. 496). Yet, in some societies impacted by civil wars (e.g., Mozambique, Angola), there were no criminal accountability as part of transitional justice processes, but still such absence did not lead to acts of revenge among ordinary war survivors (Nordstrom, 1997; Ruigrok, 2007). In Gorongosa, a rural district in the center of Mozambique and the focus of this paper, the civil war (1976–1992) between the Frelimo government and the Renamo rebels severely impacted the residents’ lives since the very beginning. The war violence was intercalated by periods of deadly famine (1988–1992) which smeared further conflicts and deepened divisions among the local populations over time (Igreja, 2019). The majority of the residents lived in the Gorongosa war zones the entire civil war period, and, as in many civil wars around the world, the gendered nature of the war had young males and females compulsorily recruited as soldiers and involved in forced labor (see Katto, 2014; Wiegink, 2020). Sexual violence against young girls and women was rampant, which further disrupted socialization processes and marital relations and deepened the gender fault lines. Likewise, in the intensity of the war conflicts, the violence was significantly shaped by local social tensions and micropolitical goals, defined and operating at the community and family levels (Lubkemann, 2005). Family and community members sometimes made alliances with soldiers to survive, which led to mutual acts of betrayal, corroded social trust, and led willingly and unwillingly to numerous detentions, forced marriages, torture, and murder of kin and neighbors. Following the peace agreement (October 1992) between the government and the rebels, the national political and military leaders passed amnesty laws, and used memories as weapons and violent retribution against one another (Igreja, 2008, 2015b). In contrast, at the community level, the civilian war survivors, and their offspring—alleged perpetrators, victims, and bystanders— as well as former soldiers particularly female soldiers, had to face by themselves the challenges of transition

from war to peace, particularly to deal with the legacies of the gender divide, family disputes involving alleged spirits of the war dead, and community betrayal that had deepened during the protracted armed conflict.

This complex predicament suggests that to address the shortcomings of the above identified academic pigeonholes and add further knowledge of normalization strategies and transitional justice processes rooted in non-Western beliefs and practices, it is necessary to analyze the legacies of violent collective processes and biographical paths of certain groups in society. We considered social structures as templates for action or inaction (Cohen, 1985) and the participants as agents involved in normalization actions through various negotiation processes. However, such actions can also contradict some of the purposes of the social structures (Giddens, 1986). We broadly chart here a sociology of legacies of civil wars focused on people's own voices of the perennial legacies in their lives, mindful that what people say, "by no means exhausts what they know about why they act as they do" (Giddens, 1986, p. 536). This means that the legacies of overwhelming events—be they colonialism, wars, or famines—in society are never linear (Moore, 1993, p. 314). To properly grasp the complexities of legacies of civil wars, it is necessary to consider the everyday confluence of unstable structures, agentive acts, and consequences, and how the efforts people make to set postwar relationality are hampered by their tendency to display an unequal distribution of attention in everyday life and the ways that the local economies shape definitions of some stressors as more costly than others.

In the context of wars, the mechanisms of defense available for relieving or buffering the shock can sometimes be depleted (Devereux, 1980, p. 9). In such cases, the impacts of wars are indirect in that they disrupt the social structures that were templates for different kinds of social relations. Yet, the surviving members of the community or cultural group can still rebuild social life based on templates or remnants of disrupted social structures (De Vries, 1996, p. 408). This normalization strategy is challenging, as the existing templates or remnants of social structures might be inadequate to face the evolving realities, because after protracted wars societies hardly remain the same (André & Jean-Philippe, 1998; Herzog, 2005). Thus, using the context of the civil war (1976–1992) in Mozambique, we suggest that in communities undergoing transitions from civil wars to peace and democratization, the use of remnants of disrupted social structures can (1) fuel conflicts in families and communities, (2) transform social structures into sources of risk, which can take the form of culturally embedded and general risk factors, (3) unleash social dynamics that reproduce intractable conflicts (Blood, 1960, p. 209) with well-being implications, but without necessarily igniting revenge cycles.

1.1 | War legacies, conflict relations, risk factors, and well-being outcomes

Several studies conducted immediately after the attainment of peace settlements (Lubkemann, 2008; Menon & Rodgers, 2015) have consistently referred to a disconnection between national projects undertaken by political and bureaucratic elites and the heterogeneity of people's aspirations at community level. Such mismatches are more salient in relation to the divide between Western (bureaucratic) and non-Western (cultural) notions of social relationships, and halting cycles of persecution, violence, and injustices (Kwon, 2008; Mueggler, 2001). The disconnect also takes different forms according to the local gender and intergenerational politics in specific locations (Argenti-Pillen, 2003; Nordstrom, 1997). Additionally, it has been suggested that in contexts of social change, the new generations often create new memories that are built on or replace the memories of older generations (Schwartz, 1982, p. 375). Based on these insights, we further considered the role of intergenerational factors by comparing the social conflicts of the wartime generations and those of the postwar generations.

Most studies of legacies of civil wars have not analyzed the associations between social conflict relations and well-being outcomes. Many of such analyses was made in social psychological studies in Western societies (Rook, 1984; Shye et al., 1995). A set of such studies suggested that dysfunctional social relationships are associated with symptoms of ill health (Rook, 1984; Sneed & Cohen, 2014). For instance, marital conflicts were found to exert significant influences on the health trajectories of individuals as they age (Umberson et al., 2006). These studies emphasize the links between (1) conflict relations (involving wives and husbands, children, other family

members, and friends) and adverse health impacts, (2) the moderating roles of age and gender, and (3) several risk factors (Shye et al., 1995). However, no similar studies of the burden of conflict relations hitherto were conducted in postwar non-Western societies.

Alongside the studies of quality of relationships and well-being outcomes, a growing body of research using the social capital concept has investigated similar patterns in a more expansive set of contexts. For instance, a study conducted in post-civil war Kosovo demonstrated that war violence pared levels of social trust (Kijewski & Freitag, 2018), but it remains unclear the types of social conflicts that the diminished trust generated in this setting. In some postwar contexts, the precarity of social trust has imposed serious limits on people's ability to develop common socioeconomic projects (Colletta & Cullen, 2000), but no associations to well-being outcomes were analyzed. We built on these studies while using protracted conflict relations as proxies to poor levels of trust and analyzed the role of community courts and agricultural economy in mitigating the implications of poor trust.

1.2 | War legacies, decline of family relations, and somatic distress

Despite the recognition that social relations mediate political and economic processes, hardly any empirical studies have examined the implications of civil wars on social relations and well-being outcomes. For instance, a long-term study (1988–1993) on responses to land scarcity following the war for independence in Rwanda, and before the 1994 genocide, demonstrated that extreme land shortages, coupled with unchanging cultural rules of inheritance, activated a self-perpetuating dynamic of conflicts in the father-son dyad (André & Jean-Philippe, 1998). This study, however, did not examine the associations of land scarcity, decay of family relationships, and somatic distress among the rural Rwandese in the sample.

Using the sociosomatic approach mentioned above, several qualitative and cross-sectional studies have demonstrated that survivors of political violence consider collective moral transgressions, spiritual malevolence (Becker, 1998), and feelings of indignation and anger (Groleau & Kirmayer, 2004) to be associated with somatic distress. This study expands this stream of literature by using quantitative methods to examine the types of social conflicts and specific relationships involved and the mediation of community courts. Additionally, given that the Gorongosa dwellers practice sustenance agriculture, the study also examined the role of yearly cyclical farming activities in the incidence of reporting in community courts, social conflicts, and well-being outcomes.

1.3 | Study goals

This study had four major goals: (a) to determine the types of intractable social conflicts present in Gorongosa community courts and the social relations involved in these conflicts. We also sought to examine the connections of these conflicts and disrupted relationships to gender, age, culturally embedded and general risk factors, and the self-described health impairments of the litigants; (b) to analyze the burden of conflict relations by comparing plaintiffs and defendants in terms of types of relations and self-described health impairments; (c) to determine the association between the rates of conflict relations, self-described health impairments, and the timing of the farming activities; and (d) to determine patterns of help-seeking behavior.

1.4 | Civil war, sociocultural disruption, and postwar challenges in Gorongosa

The study included qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative methods were applied between 1997 and 1999. At the time, it was observed that until the mid-1990s in Mozambique, "although there was much concern with redrafting a legal system, almost no research was conducted on community systems of justice that

developed to mitigate the abuses of war" (Nordstrom, 1997, p. 216). Subsequent socio-legal studies of community justice in postwar Mozambique adopted cross-sectional approaches (Santos, 2006), but still there was a lack of systematic analysis of the links between conflict relations, the age and gender of the litigants, and the health outcomes. Furthermore, numerous studies have examined the resourceful nature of local healing practices in post-conflict societies (De Jong, 2002; Hobfoll, 1998), but few studies have adopted longitudinal approaches to analyzing the interventions of community courts to address postwar family and community fractures.

At the outset of this study, we conducted in-depth interviews with judges of community courts ($n = 20$), war survivors ($n = 30$), and their offspring ($n = 25$), and the focus was on pre-civil war, civil war, and postwar life experiences, social structures related to birth, marriage and divorce, and death rituals, and interpersonal conflicts. We used these data to develop a questionnaire (described below).

As stated above, the region of Gorongosa was the epicenter of the Mozambican civil war (1976–1992) that pitted the Frelimo government against the rebel movement, Renamo. The armies in conflict divided the regions into their military zones of control, which had the effect of dividing families and communities, and subjected the populations to immense suffering and many deaths. The region possesses agricultural and water resources, which were significant in sustaining the war efforts and turned Gorongosa into the focal point of violent battles for over two decades. Thus, unlike the Rwandan context of extreme land scarcity (André & Jean-Philippe, 1998), the Gorongosa communities did not lack land resources (Igreja et al., 2009). Nevertheless, during the civil war, there were periods of severe drought and famine (1988–1992) that also claimed many lives (Igreja, 2019).

Population studies in the region revealed that many individuals lived in the Gorongosa war zones for a mean number of 15.6 (S.D. 2.0) years (Igreja et al., 2004). As in many war zones (Argenti-Pillen, 2003; Lubkemann, 2008; Menon & Rodgers, 2015; Nordstrom, 1997), in the Gorongosa war zones, family and community relations and local ways of living were also under sustained attack, which created a moral atmosphere of mutual suspicion and malicious rumors, erosion of trust, and betrayal among family and community members and contributed, either accidentally or deliberately, to the killings of family and community members. The forceful removal of people from their houses to labor for the soldiers (locally termed *gandira*), led to frequent rapes and forced marriage of young girls and adult women. The familiar mechanisms of control and socialization were disrupted, turning rumors and accusations of women being complicit in illicit sex into a widespread phenomenon. The expression *ku toera mabota* (to go after the boots, to mean to go after the soldiers) circulated widely in the Gorongosa war zones to throw into doubt the notion that women were innocent victims of sexual violence while they did *gandira*. Consequently, divorce also became a widespread phenomenon. Divorce is not a new phenomenon as Portuguese travelers, at the turn of the century, observed in Gorongosa the resolution of conflicts including divorce. Yet, at the time, conflicts over the control of chieftaincy and accusations of theft and witchcraft dominated the disputes.

Several population studies conducted in the Gorongosa region using longitudinal approaches and randomized controlled trials focused on the psychological impacts of the civil war and famine at 6 and 7 years (Igreja et al., 2004) after the civil war's end showed high rates of PTSD among the participants. Despite the complaints of discomfort created by psychological symptoms, such symptoms did not often reach the threshold to influence help-seeking behaviors. Only when such symptoms were associated with local idioms of distress, particularly harmful spirit possession (known as *gamba* spirits, which involve accusations of perpetration of serious violations during the civil war) (Igreja et al., 2010), people sought local help. While the phenomenon of harmful spirit possession involves conflict relations among the people involved, these previous studies did not analyze the links between experiences of assaults by harmful spirits, decay of relationships, and the burden of disrupted social relations.

The civil war also impacted the social structures of family and social organization. One way to understand this impact is by considering the intersections of historical processes and biographical paths and interests of certain groups in society (Mills, 1959), while looking at "how cultures work under conditions of relatively normal stress" (De Vries, 1996, p. 403). Our interviews revealed that before the civil war in Gorongosa, the local mechanisms of setting and expanding relationships consisted of parents arranging the premature engagements of their offspring. Various

studies have identified modes of creating and maintaining family and social relations involving forced marriage in several non-Western societies (Bunting et al., 2016; UNICEF, 2011); nevertheless, these differ from those found in Gorongosa in several ways. In Gorongosa, the premature engagement was undertaken in parallel with *ku fewa*, which was a socialization period that the betrothed boy (the fiancé) spent with the parents-in-law, and the gifts and labor that they and their parents invested in the evolving relationship between the two families. *Ku fewa* imposes on the fiancé and his family the obligation to care for the fiancée and her parents. Following the notion of the female body as a symbol of purity, the betrothed girl (the fiancée) was socialized and protected under the moral order of premarital heterosexual chastity for several years in the homestead of her future parents-in-law. She invested her labor, but her family did not invest gifts in the relationship. Thus, *ku fewa* reflected local gender politics that entailed mutual obligations but with different fallouts when the premature marriage agreement was broken. In case of a broken *ku fewa*, it became the name of the debt that results from the failure to fulfil its various obligations. Once the affianced young man (called the *pale*) and affianced young woman (called *nhamancunda*) reached puberty, the engagement period ended with the celebration of the “real” marriage involving sexual intercourse (*ku pita nhumba*, translated as “to get inside the hut”), in tandem with various rituals. Although Gorongosa is an aggregation of multireligious groups (ancestral worshipping, Christianity, and new established Muslim groups), they all share the worldview of the female body as symbolizing purity and they practice *ku fewa*, even if they might use a different name or no name at all.

Yet, the *gandira* contributed to intensify sexual violence against young girls and adult women and evinced the powerlessness of the male relatives to protect them. In attempts to maintain some sense of continuity in social structures and relations, many parents hastily committed their preteen daughters to premature engagements, hoping that their husbands and the girls’ parents-in-law would protect the girl against the wartime forced marriages and sexual assault. In this civil war context, premature engagement became a “structure of conjuncture” (see Sahlins, 2004, p. 10) as parents attempted to maintain some sense of norms continuity in midst of the chaos. Given the durability of the civil war, though, premature engagement became a deeply ingrained coping mechanism, but no analyses were undertaken on its ramifications.

Following the peace agreement in 1992, civilian war survivors faced the task of rebuilding their social lives alone, with little government intervention. A 2007 general population census determined that the population of Gorongosa district was 117,129. Official statistics of the Mozambican government have reported that, with the aid of international donors, there has been some progress through the construction of new roads, health posts, schools, and power stations in several districts. However, various reports from the government and World Bank have also indicated that despite the postwar increase of schools and the abolition of school fees in the country, primary school dropouts did not significantly decrease. International authorities identified “premature engagements” as the culprits (World Bank/UNICEF, 2009), without nevertheless presenting a comprehensive examination of this problem. The Mozambican government, following global agendas defining proper family relations, linked these social and family relations to poverty and approved the law no. 19/2019 which prohibits premature unions.

2 | RESEARCH METHODS

2.1 | Participants, study design, and procedures

The participants in this study were local inhabitants who lived in different villages of the Gorongosa district. Their past experiences and present life circumstances were very similar and revolved around the self-sustaining farming economy. The focal point of this study was in community courts. These courts have existed since the precolonial period but have gone through changes because of colonial and postcolonial interventions (Santos, 2006). In their modus operandi, the judges follow procedural justice mechanisms in that the courts are open and accessible forums where everyone, regardless of gender and age (except for minors regarded as being younger than 7 years old) has the right to participate by presenting and defending their cases. The courts provide public hearings,

preliminary diagnoses, and referrals of somatic problems, and they judge in accordance with equity and good sense and justice.

Thus, courts are important research sites given that the judges and the people in general follow the socio-somatic approach by considering that certain experiences of illnesses and a sense of injustice are inseparable. For instance, when individuals report an intractable social conflict, it is likely they also report somatic distress. In terms of accessibility, when litigants do not have the financial means to afford the court fees, the judges still litigate. Prior to the civil war, the extended family was at the center of resolution of conflicts (see Feierman & Janzen, 1992). Following the civil war and intensification of family conflicts, community courts in Gorongosa, as in other regions of Mozambique, played key roles in the resolution of various types of conflicts including marriage problems, petty crimes, and social distress (Santos, 2006).

The quantitative data gathering unfolded in community courts over 14 years (2002–2015). Ten research assistants collected data at different stages. Although people define and narrate problems in their own terms, the narrative followed a basic structure: (a) presentation of the conflict, (b) the context of the violation, and (c) evidence regarding the litigants' roles in the conflict. Following each presentation, the judges ask questions for clarification and cross-examine the litigants to test the credibility of the charges or defense. The narrative mode of case presentation allowed us to determine two dimensions in a conflict: the manifest conflict (e.g., divorce) and the latent conflict or risk factor (e.g., "It was my parents that chose my husband when I was still young; it was not my choice to live with this person"; we called this form of latent conflict "premature engagement"). It is not the manifest conflict that brings the plaintiff to the court, as parents have the authority to undertake this type of social linkage. Yet, the latent factor as described by the litigants contributed to increasing the likelihood of the divorce conflict. Another example, *ku fewa* (cultural debt), emerges because either the prospective husband and his family, or the prospective wife and her family, did not fulfil the obligations of the *ku fewa* arrangement. The reported conflict is *ku fewa*, the underlying trigger is mistrust; this often became tangible as the litigants explained the reasons for their indignation and the need to repair the breach.

2.2 | Conflict and relation network assessment questionnaire (CRNAQ)

The principal data were gathered using a semi-structured questionnaire, which we termed "Conflict and Relation Network Assessment Questionnaire" (CRNAQ) using a categorical format ("yes" or "no"):

Background information of the plaintiff and defendant (five items): Date of the conflict presentation in the community court (day, month, and year), Age, Gender, Place of residence, and Number of people in the dispute.

Type of relationship of plaintiff and defendant (four items): Spouses; Family members; Outsiders; In-laws.

Principal conflict (eight items; yes, no): Divorce; Defamation; Domestic violence; Gamba/war-related accusations of perpetration of serious offenses; General debt; Community violence; Cultural debt; Theft.

Risk factors (seven items; yes, no): Premature engagement; Mistrust; Alcohol abuse; Aggressive behavior; Harmful spirits; Lack of family support; Infertility/sexual impotence.

Symptoms (eight items; yes, no): Fear; Wounds; Various illnesses; Illnesses led to death; Nightmares; Headaches; Bodily weakness; Harmful spirit possession.

Help-seeking Behavior (three items; yes, no): Have you been to community court before? Have you searched for family support? Have you been to other community institutions?

2.3 | Statistical analysis

The first step in the analysis involved examining the descriptive properties of the litigants (gender, age, and relationships), their cases (types of conflicts and the time in the farming cycle), and outcomes (risk factors, symptoms,

and help-seeking behaviors) over the 14-year span of the study. Due to the categorical nature of many variables in this data set, and to analyze the overall associations between variables, we first used chi-square tests of association to examine the general associations between conflicts, relationships, and well-being outcomes. Here, phi coefficients are reported as a measure of effect size for the chi-square test. For many of the categorical variables in the data set, the litigants could respond with more than one answer for each variable. Therefore, we recoded the variables into dichotomized responses within each category. For example, for the “risk factors” variable with eight possible responses and 22% of cases reporting multiple unique risk factors, we recoded yes/no variables for each individual risk factor. Then, using these dichotomized variables, phi coefficients derived from 2×2 tables and interpreted the same as correlational analyses were calculated to quantify the significance and strength of the specific categorical associations between conflicts, relationships, and well-being. When continuous and categorical variables were examined together (e.g., age and risk factors), logistic regression analyses were used to determine the level of association and odds ratios. Using tests of independent proportions, we assessed the influence of the timing of disputes within the farming cycle.

3 | FINDINGS

3.1 | Goal one: Descriptive characteristics

A total of 3,456 participants aged between 8 and 87 years were included in the analysis. The mean age of the sample population was 33.5 years. For the plaintiffs, the mean age was 33.9, while for the defendants it was 33.1 years. In this sample, 67% ($n = 2,308$) were men and 33% ($n = 1,148$) were women. Approximately 50% ($n = 1,732$) were plaintiffs, with 60% males and 40% females. In turn, defendants comprised approximately 50% ($n = 1,724$) with 74% males and 26% females. The gender differences are significant as men are two times more likely to be involved in conflicts than women. Divided by the category of litigants, men are 1.5 times more likely to be involved as plaintiffs than women, and men are 2.8 times more likely to be involved as defendants than women.

Table 1 presents the types of interpersonal conflicts and the relationship of the litigants for each case by year for the study period (2002–2015). The main conflict type during the 14 years was divorce (32.3%), followed by defamation (13.8%), supernatural phenomena (known as *gamba* spirits, which involve accusations of perpetration of serious violations during the civil war) (11.4%), general debts (11.0%), domestic violence (10.9%), community violence (9.8%), cultural debt (*ku fewa*) (7.2%), and theft (3.6%). While most conflicts varied in the annual percentages, throughout the period of study, divorce was consistently at the top of the list.

The types of relationships involved in conflicts during the study period (Table 1) were spousal relationships (39.5%), followed by relationships between family members—parents, children, brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts, cousins, nieces and nephews (25.8%), outsiders (mainly neighbors) (19.6%), and in-laws (15.0%). Table 1 also shows yearly variations in the frequencies with which different types of relationships were involved in conflicts, particularly during the years 2004, 2005, and 2007. Yet, spouse versus spouse conflicts topped the list most of the time during the study period.

3.2 | Risks associated with conflict relations

Of all participants, 59.1% ($n = 2,042$) reported at least one risk factor. Table 2 presents the percentages of risk factors for all participants and for plaintiffs and defendants. The major risk factors identified were premature engagement (30.0%), mistrust (14.5%), and alcohol abuse (17.0%).

Chi-Square tests were conducted to determine the associations between the type of conflict and whether the plaintiffs reported a risk factor (recoded as yes or no). The test showed a strong association between the type

TABLE 1 Case characteristics: Frequencies of types of cases by year 2002–2015

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	All years
<i>Type of interpersonal conflicts (n)</i>															
Divorce	12	10	29	36	46	35	57	57	43	49	51	63	23	49	560
Defamation	11	16	18	35	22	19	33	24	7	14	16	16	6	2	239
Domestic violence	2	8	17	14	17	14	14	16	23	18	13	9	8	15	188
Gamba/War-related serious offenses	12	5	11	23	18	18	21	11	16	16	19	15	4	9	198
General debt	0	13	17	21	19	28	27	20	14	6	13	13	0	0	191
Community violence	9	13	19	29	16	6	12	16	5	9	8	8	7	13	170
Cultural debt	0	0	3	3	8	6	6	4	3	6	11	17	30	27	124
Stealing	3	3	5	8	5	3	6	6	3	6	4	4	1	5	62
<i>Relationship of litigants (n)</i>															
Spouse vs. Spouse	14	19	32	46	55	31	62	61	56	73	63	71	42	57	682
Family members	13	7	34	62	33	37	56	42	31	23	41	44	6	18	447
Outsiders	15	19	24	42	24	31	34	28	17	20	17	19	24	25	339
In-laws	7	23	29	19	39	30	24	23	10	8	14	11	7	20	264
Total	49	68	119	169	151	129	176	154	114	124	135	145	79	120	1732

TABLE 2 Personal outcomes by litigants: Risk factors, symptoms, and help-seeking behavior

	All Participants (N = 3,456)	Plaintiffs (N = 1732)	Defendants (N = 1724)
<i>Risk factor (%)</i>			
Premature engagement	30.0	38.6	21.3
Mistrust	14.5	21.1	7.8
Alcohol abuse	17.0	13.9	20.2
Aggressive behavior	9.6	11.8	7.4
Harmful spirits	7.4	10.4	4.3
Lack family support	4.2	4.8	3.7
Infertility/Sexual impotence	2.6	3.9	1.4
<i>Symptoms (%)</i>			
Fear, wounds	10.5	16.4	4.5
Various illnesses, illness led to death	7.3	9.8	4.7
Nightmares, headaches, bodily weakness, harmful spirit possession	7.8	10.5	5.2
<i>Help-seeking behavior (%)</i>			
First time in court	62.2	61.7	62.7
Family counselors & healers	19.5	20.4	18.7
Other neighborhood authorities	12.4	13.6	11.2
Had been to court before	10.5	12.1	8.9
State authorities	4.5	5.6	3.4

Note: These percentages may not add up to 100% because participants were able to report more than one risk factor/symptom/help-seeking behaviour.

of conflict and the reporting of risk factors $\chi^2 = 162.50$ (7, $N = 1,732$), $p < .001$, $\phi = .306$, $p < .001$. The conflicts with the highest percentages of risk factors were *gamba*/war-related conflicts (92.9% of individuals involved in this type of conflict reported risk factors), domestic violence (82.7%), defamation (76.5%), divorce (71.4%), and community violence (68.0%).

As shown in Table 3, the phi coefficients were then calculated to measure the strength and significance of the associations between principal conflicts and each individual risk factor, as reported by plaintiffs. Due to the large number of research participants in these analyses, only the phi coefficients greater than .15 were considered. These analyses indicated that, of the plaintiffs who reported risk factors, "premature engagement" was positively associated with general debt conflicts, cultural debt conflicts, and theft conflicts. "Lack of family support" was positively associated with divorce conflicts. "Infertility/sexual impotence" was positively associated with divorce. "Belief in harmful spirits" was strongly and positively associated with *gamba*/war-related conflicts. "Aggressive behaviours" and "Alcohol abuse" were meaningfully associated with domestic and community violence. In addition, "Mistrust" was meaningfully associated with defamation conflicts.

3.3 | Conflict relations and symptoms of health impairments

Of all participants, 22.4% ($n = 773$) reported at least one symptom of ill health. When examining this data, three consistent categories emerged within the reported ailments: (1) wounds and fear, (2) various illnesses that led to death, and (3) nightmares, headaches, bodily weakness, and possession by harmful spirits. These categories were

TABLE 3 Phi coefficients (ϕ) of associations between risk factors and conflicts

Conflicts	Conflicts							
	Divorce	General Debt	Defamation	Gamba/ War-Related	Domestic Violence	Community Violence	Cultural Debt	Stealing
<i>Risk factors</i>								
Premature engagement	.03	.12***	-.03	-.15***	-.02	-.09**	.14***	.11***
Lack of family support	.07**	.01	.01	-.02	-.02	-.06	.01	-.04
Infertility/sexual impotence	.06*	-.01	-.01	.05	-.04	-.05	-.02	-.04
Belief in harmful spirits	-.15***	-.10***	-.10**	.59***	-.07*	-.09**	-.09**	-.06*
Aggressive behaviors	-.11***	-.07*	-.11***	-.02	.28***	.18***	-.10**	-.05*
Alcohol abuse	-.13***	-.09**	-.03	-.14***	.30***	.27***	-.09**	-.08**
Mistrust	.03	-.06*	.17***	-.14***	.12***	-.07*	-.09**	-.08**

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .025$; *** $p < .001$.

used for all subsequent analyses. Table 2 indicates the symptoms of ill health reported for all participants, as well as for plaintiffs and defendants. The most reported symptoms of ill health for all participants were fear and physical wounds (10.5%). When reported from the perspective of the plaintiffs, "fear and wounds" (16.4%) was the major category of presenting symptoms. Defendants presented all categories of symptoms nearly equally.

Chi-Square tests were conducted to determine the association between type of conflict and symptoms as reported by the plaintiffs, which was categorized into binary (yes or no). The tests showed a strong association between the type of conflict and whether or not plaintiffs reported symptoms $\chi^2 = 393.08$ (7, $N = 1,732$), $p < .001$, $\phi = .476$, $p < .001$. The conflicts associated with the most symptoms were "gamba/war-related offences" (78.8%) and domestic violence (55.3%). Phi coefficients were then calculated to measure the strength and significance of each specific association between individual symptoms of ill health and conflict types. As shown in Table 4, these analyses indicated that, of the plaintiffs who reported symptoms, "wound and fear" symptoms were positively associated with "domestic and community violence." Additionally, "various illness and death" was positively associated with "gamba/war-related conflicts."

3.4 | Associations between age of litigants, conflicts, and risk factors

A chi-square test of association between conflict types and six age categories indicated that there was a significant association between age and conflict type $\chi^2 = 142.60$ (35, $N = 1,732$), $p < .001$, $\Phi = .287$, $p < .001$ such that younger individuals were more likely to be involved in conflicts. As such, the age group 15–29 accounted for 40.1% of all cases and age group 30–44 accounted for 47.1% of all cases. No other age groups accounted for more than 15% of any individual conflict category. The percentage of cases within these two age groups are reported in Table 5.

Using age as a continuous variable, logistic regression analyses show that for every 1-year increase in age, individuals were 2% more likely to be involved with general debt ($\beta = .017$, $p = .002$; $\chi^2(1) = 9.0$, $p = .003$) and 3% more likely to be involved in gamba/war-related conflict ($\beta = .034$, $p < .001$; $\chi^2(1) = 38.8$, $p < .001$). On the contrary, with every 1-year increase in age, individuals were 3% less likely to be involved with divorce ($\beta = -.03$, $p < .001$; $\chi^2(1) = 50.7$, $p < .001$) and 2% less likely to be involved in domestic violence ($\beta = -.017$, $p = .008$; $\chi^2(1) = 7.4$, $p = .006$). This indicates that younger individuals were more likely to be involved in divorce and domestic violence conflicts, while older generations were more likely to be involved in gamba, which from local perspectives are directly related to the civil war fallouts and general debt.

Regarding age groups and risk factors, there was a significant association between age and type of risk factor $\chi^2 = 75.18$ (40, $N = 1,732$), $p < .001$, $\Phi = .208$, $p < .001$. As with conflict types, the highest percentages of reported risk factors were within age groups 15–29 and 30–44 and are reported in Table 5. In addition, however, age group 45–59 accounted for one-third (33.3%) of reports of alcohol abuse. No other age group accounted for more than 15% of any individual risk factor category.

Using age as a continuous variable, the logistic regression analyses show that for every 1-year increase in age, an individual was 2% more likely to report harmful spirits ($\beta = .02$, $p < .001$; $\chi^2(1) = 15.9$, $p < .001$), 4% less likely to report infertility or sexual impotence ($\beta = -.037$, $p = .002$; $\chi^2(1) = 11.5$, $p = .001$), and 3% less likely to report mistrust ($\beta = -.026$, $p < .001$; $\chi^2(1) = 30.1$, $p < .001$). This result suggests that as the age of participants increases, they tended to report more harmful spirits related to the civil war, while young people were more likely to report risk factors of mistrust, which are linked to the setting of new families, and therefore, the indirect fallouts of the civil war, and infertility/sexual impotence.

3.5 | Goal two: Associations of conflicts, relationships, and well-being

The analysis focused on determining the relationships most frequently implicated in conflicts and the associations of these conflicts with self-described health problems. First, we conducted Chi-Square tests to determine the associations between conflict relations and symptoms of ill health. The results indicated a significant association between

TABLE 4 Phi coefficients (ϕ) of associations between symptoms and conflicts

Conflicts	Divorce	General Debt	Defamation	Gamba/ War-Related	Domestic Violence	Community Violence	Cultural Debt	Stealing
<i>Symptoms</i>								
Wounds, fear	-.06	.01	.02	-.39***	.31***	.21***	.08	.06
Nightmares, headaches, bodily weakness, harmful spirit possession	-.01	-.03	-.02	.04	.07	-.11**	-.02	-.04
Various illnesses, illness led to death	-.17***	-.03	-.10*	.50***	-.18**	-.13**	-.06	-.04

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .025$; *** $p < .001$.

TABLE 5 Characteristics of age groups: Conflicts and risk factors

	Age group	
	15–29	30–44
<i>Conflict type (%)</i>		
All	40.1	37.1
Divorce	50.5	30.1
Defamation	45.0	33.2
Gamba/war-related serious offenses	21.8	47.2
General debt	28.3	44.4
Domestic violence	44.3	42.7
Community violence	29.0	42.6
Cultural debt	44.4	26.6
Theft	37.1	50.0
<i>Risk factor (%)</i>		
All	40.1	36.7
Premature engagement	40.4	33.4
Mistrust	49.7	34.7
Alcohol abuse	33.3	30.3
Aggressive behavior	41.2	38.2
Harmful spirits	22.8	46.7
Lack family support	41.7	35.4
Infertility/Sexual impotence	56.0	25.0

litigants and whether or not they reported symptoms $\chi^2 = 139.38$ (1, $N = 3,456$), $p < .001$, $\Phi = .201$, $p < .001$. The results also indicated that, over the 14-year time span, plaintiffs were 2.17 times more likely to report symptoms than defendants were. Thus, the plaintiffs complained not only because of the impact of intractable conflicts in their social relationships, but also because ongoing experiences of ill health aggravated the burden of conflict relations.

Among those who reported symptoms, there was a significant association between types of relationships and the symptoms they reported $\chi^2 = 63.30$ (9, $n = 773$), $p < .001$, $\Phi = .286$, $p < .001$. Phi coefficients measured the strength and significance of each specific association between relationships and symptoms (see Table 6). These tests indicate a positive association between spouse versus spouse cases and reported symptoms of wounds and fear. Additionally, family member cases were positively associated with symptoms of various illnesses, and with symptoms that led to the death of family members. This means that in this sample, conflict relations between spouses and family members were linked to significant burdens to the well-being of the complainants.

To examine the relationships most frequently implicated in conflicts, we conducted Chi-Square tests to determine the associations of networks of relations and conflicts. When examining family relationships versus outsiders (binary), relationships within families (spouses, family members, or in-laws) constituted the center stage of most conflicts (80.4% of all conflicts), $\chi^2 = 325.78$ (7, $N = 1,732$), $p < .001$, $\Phi = .434$, $p < .001$. When examining specific networks of relations, phi coefficients measured the strength and significance of each association between relationship types and conflicts. These analyses indicate that conflicts between spouses were positively associated with divorce and domestic violence. Conflicts between family members were related to accusations of gamba spirits/war-related serious offenses. Finally, conflicts involving outsiders were positively related to community violence and cultural debt disputes. In-laws were not significantly related to any conflict (see Table 7).

TABLE 6 Phi coefficients (ϕ) of associations between types of symptoms and relationship of litigants

Type of symptoms	Relationship of litigants		
	Wounds, fear	Various illnesses, illness led to death	Nightmares, headaches, bodily weakness, harmful spirit possession
Espouse vs. Espouse	.14***	-.19***	.03
Family members	-.22***	.21***	.01
Outsiders	.13**	-.09*	.03
In-laws	-.00	.07	-.08*

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .025$; *** $p < .001$.

TABLE 7 Phi coefficients (ϕ) of associations between relationship of litigants and conflicts

Conflicts	Relationship of litigants							
	Divorce	General Debt	Defamation	Gamba/War-Related	Domestic Violence	Community Violence	Cultural Debt	Stealing
Espouse vs. Espouse	.42***	-.23***	-.09***	-.13***	.20***	-.21***	.08**	-.15***
Family members	-.21***	.14***	.01	.22***	-.67*	.02	-.08**	.07**
Outsiders	-.27***	-.07**	.12***	-.11***	-.13***	.25***	.16***	.12***
In-laws	-.02	.07**	-.02	.03	-.05*	-.01	.03	-.02

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .025$; *** $p < .001$.

3.6 | Associations of gender, conflict status, and health impairments

When analyzing those who reported symptoms, a binomial test indicated that significantly more male plaintiffs reported symptoms of ill health (60%) than male defendants (40%; $p < .001$). A similar trend was observed for female plaintiffs (78%) and female defendants (22%), and the difference was significant, $p < .001$. These differences suggest that male and female plaintiffs reported more symptoms of ill health than the male and female defendants did. A comparison of the gender differences within the categories of plaintiffs demonstrated that significantly more female plaintiffs (55%) than male plaintiffs (45%) reported symptoms ($p < .05$). This indicates that female plaintiffs experienced more health difficulties than male plaintiffs did.

3.7 | Goal three: Association of timing of farming cycle, rates of conflicts, and well-being outcomes

Table 8 shows the rates of conflict in the four periods of the farming cycle. This is an important analysis because it explores the relations between people's labor cultures and social conflicts in everyday life. Further statistical analysis indicated that the stage in the farming cycle influenced the association between the reporting of conflicts and the presence of self-described health impairments. Tests of independent proportions indicate that, overall,

TABLE 8 Association of conflicts, time of the farming cycle, and symptoms

Period	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Participants who reported symptoms (%)
Time I: Outset of AC Sept./Oct./Nov.	427	24.7	17.0
Time II: Mid-term of AC Dec./Jan./Feb.	442	25.6	24.4
Time III: First Harvest Mar./Apr./May	391	22.6	17.7
Time IV: End of AC Jun./Jul./Aug.	472	27.1	29.2

Abbreviation: AC = farming cycle.

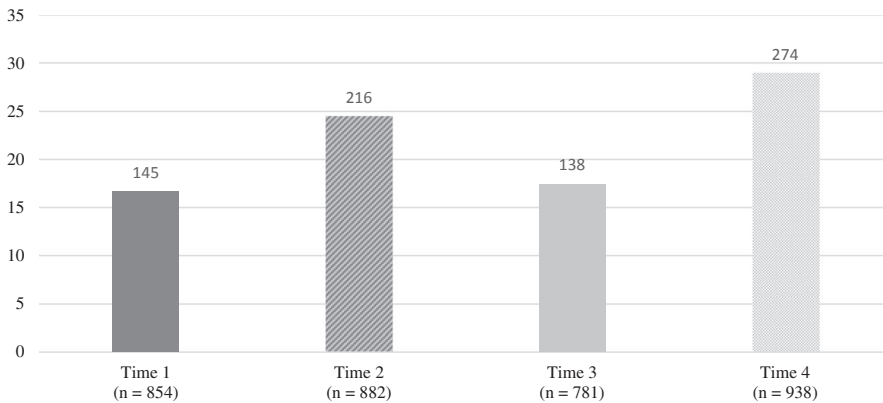


FIGURE 1 Proportion of individuals reporting symptoms in each of the four farming cycle terms. Proportions (y-axis) represent the percentage of the total research subjects within each farming cycle term to report any type of symptom(s). Figures above bars represent absolute frequency for each term. Figures below farming term labels represent total Ns for each term

there was a significantly higher percentage of cases in Time 4 than Time 3 ($\chi^2 = 10.23, p < .001$). Furthermore, litigants in Time 4 reported more symptoms than litigants in any other Time (Figure 1; all comparisons $p < .025$) and litigants in Time 2 reported more symptoms than Times 1 and 3 (Figure 1; all comparisons $p < .001$). Specifically, litigants in Time 4 reported significantly more fear and wounds and nightmares, headaches, bodily weakness, and spirit possession than at any of the other Times (Figure 2; all comparisons $p < .001$). Finally, litigants in Times 2 and 4 reported significantly more illnesses and death than those in Times 1 and 3 (Figure 2; all comparisons $p < .025$).

3.8 | Goal four: Help-seeking behavior

Most plaintiffs were in community courts for the first time (61.7%), while 12.1% had been in the courts before (Table 2). Before requesting the intervention of the courts, some had consulted family counselors and healers (20.4%); others had requested the intervention of neighborhood authorities such as village chiefs (13.6%), and still others had sought help in state institutions (5.6%). This pattern of help-seeking behavior was analogous to that of the defendants who had to appear before the community courts because of the discomfort experienced by the plaintiffs.

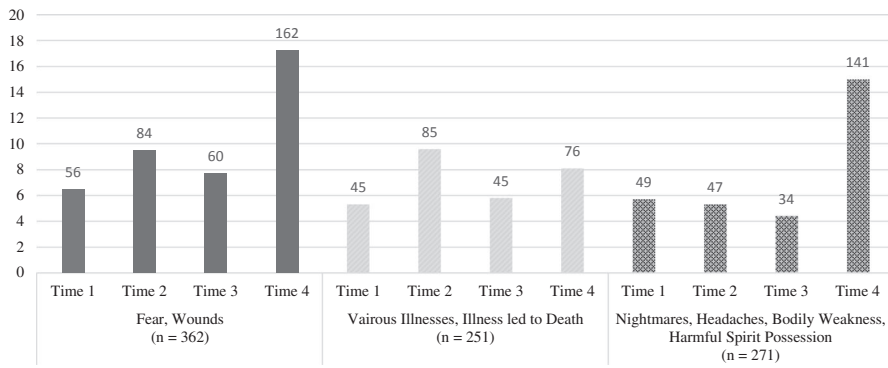


FIGURE 2 Proportion of symptom categories reported in each of the four farming cycle terms. Proportions (y-axis) represent the percentage of the total research subjects within each farming cycle term to report specific symptoms. Figures above each bar represent absolute frequency for each bar. Figures below symptom labels represent total Ns for each symptom

4 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This empirical study has shown that the legacies of civil wars endure in multifaceted ways, destabilizes social structures with implications in everyday social relations, but those mostly affected unleash diverse normalization strategies and transitional justice processes rooted in non-Western cultures and practices. The long-term focus of this study in Gorongosa on conflict relations at the family and community level, the gender and age divides and dynamics, the risk factors of “premature engagement” and “mistrust,” and the role of local economies had not been comprehensively identified in previous regional studies in Mozambique (Bertelsen, 2016; Katto, 2014; Lubkemann, 2008; Nordstrom, 1997; Santos, 2006; Sheldon, 2002; Wiegink, 2020). Nor had similar analyses been undertaken in other studies of legacies of civil wars and other types of collective violence around the world (Argenti-Pillen, 2003; Kijewski & Freitag, 2018; Kwon, 2008; Menon & Rodgers, 2015; Mueggler, 2001; Ruigrok, 2007). Thus, this study provides a meaningful contribution to understanding through people’s own perspectives the sociological dimensions of legacies of civil wars and the implications for diverse groups in society (see Moore, 1993).

The local community normalization actions were rooted on non-Western notions of relationships, social conflicts, trauma, and postwar accountability. Community courts in Gorongosa have played a meaningful role in litigating numerous social conflicts including accusations of wartime serious violations using the vernacular discourses of *gamba* spirits and spirit possession (Igreja, 2013, 2018), which takes different forms and dynamics in several African contexts of transitional justice (Baines, 2010; Shore, 2009). Yet, the interventions of community courts is further significant because the community judges in Gorongosa operate in a national political context dominated by amnesty laws and the government abandonment of the war survivors, without nevertheless such abandonment spilling over into irrational vengeance (see Crocker, 1998). The comparison between the Gorongosa’s predicament with the Rwandan study, as well as studies in non-affected war zones, demonstrates interesting parallels and contrasts. The Rwandan study identified the family niche—in particular, the father–son dyad—as central in conflict relations (André & Jean-Philippe, 1998); other studies revealed strained relations between husbands and wives (Vogli et al., 2007), and conflict relations involving partners, children, and friends (Sneed & Cohen, 2014). Our study identified conflict relations involving “husband-wife,” “family members,” “neighbours,” and “in-laws,” but spousal relationships were central in family conflicts over more than a decade.

In our analysis, we traced back the sources of the intractable conflicts around family formation and maintenance to the use of destabilized social structures in communities that have also changed. This mismatch was graspable through “premature engagement” and “mistrust,” which were the risk factors associated with perennial

social conflicts. Comparatively, these risks differed from those identified in studies of postwar low-income countries, which were poor economic performance and development as risks for conflict reversion (Collier et al., 2008) and land scarcity and cultural inheritance rules in the case of Rwanda (André & Jean-Philippe, 1998).

In this study, the sociological imagination (Mills, 1959) focused on local histories of violence, biographies and interests of certain groups, and social change provided further intelligibility for the dynamics of risk factors of premature engagement and mistrust. Prior to the civil war, premature engagement was a socialization mechanism with differential assigned expectations for parents and offspring, which were also differentiated by gender. During the civil war, it became profoundly disrupted, but in the aftermath of the war, certain groups did not reverse it back to the pre-civil war status or simply leave it behind. Instead, many parents and other adult guardians continued the civil war trend of hastily promoting premature engagements. The continuity of the wartime patterns was linked to erosion of trust in the post-civil war era. As such, the decline in relations of trust is consistent with the results of studies conducted in other post-conflict communities (Colletta & Cullen, 2000; Kijewski & Freitag, 2018) or societies undergoing rapid changes. What is specific in this study is that the decay in relations of trust varied with age and further corroded the sense of post-civil war moral crisis by further disrupting the already unstable social structures.

For example, the girls' parents suspected that their daughters might engage in intimate relations outside the *ku fewa* agreement, thus, the resolve to hastily bind their preteen daughters to premature engagements through the *ku fewa*. Thus, most of the responsibility to watch and protect the betrothed girl (the fiancée) fell on her de facto parents-in-law. The boys' parents suspected that their sons might lose the *ku fewa* if they did not exert an earlier and strict control of the fiancées' behavior. Yet, the gradual increase in boys' and girls' access to schooling, access to new media technologies, and Christian conversion which often introduce new ideas of intimacy, love, and romance (see Cole & Thomas, 2009; Sheldon, 2002; van de Kamp, 2011), turned the familiar mechanisms of control inept. Thus, the boys often involved in spreading rumors or their own heightened alert made them susceptible in responding to rumors of alleged intimate and sexual misbehavior of their fiancées. Furthermore, the associations between mistrust and the "defamation" conflict are indicative of the prevalence of suspicions and rumors around family creation and family maintenance among young people. Although when the relationship is broken the return (or payback) of the *ku fewa* (debt in cultural terms) is theoretically guaranteed, it is not easy in practice. It is understood that the returned *ku fewa* cannot replace the original *ku fewa* because as people say, "the water that was dropped cannot be recovered."

This continuity of premature engagement in the changed postwar environ turned it into a continuous generator of conflicts (see Blood, 1960). The local populations appear conscious of this predicament as reflected by a common story presented in a quiz-like genre that the young people told during our interviews: "A young man goes fishing and he catches three fishes. One he gives to his father. One to his mother and the third fish he throws away. What does it mean?" Most often outsiders answer, "We don't know." They then explain "The young man gave the third fish to his parents-in-law." The locals give an outburst of laughter which contributes to reaffirm the floundering predicament of *ku fewa*. Despite this complex predicament, the wartime generations were unable to shift their attention from the notion that hastiness decreases risks of unwitting consequences. The focus was on reinstating their interests by considering hierarchy, control, and respect as paragons of relationships. This was made possible as the ownership of land was a source of power which allowed the wartime generations to keep underscoring the belief that these types of social conflicts were still less costly than the potential loss of their investments in agriculture. Thus, once igniting premature marriage, families sold their agricultural surplus to sustain the relations of their male offspring by giving gifts (*ku fewa*) to their younger fiancées and their adult guardians. In case agricultural surplus was not available, they incurred financial debts expecting that once agricultural surpluses were attained, they could settle their debts. Yet, in numerous occasions there were delays settling the *ku fewa* debt, which also became a conflict brought to the court.

The postwar generations challenged the premature engagement, not by rejecting it upfront or loudly protesting, but by breaking in disguised ways the relationships their parents established. Young people (male and

female) broke their premature relationships by becoming involved in real or suspected premarital heterosexual intercourse to pursue the relationships and partners of their choice, and when the judges in the community courts many times confronted the litigants, they were open about it. For example, "Yes I slept with this person because this is the person of my choice." Such conflictual relationships broke the *ku fewa* agreement and triggered divorce, which had social and financial consequences. The parents of the premature fiancée had to pay back the gifts (*ku fewa*), the social reputation of the premature fiancé was tainted because it indicated his and the family group's inability to expand their social networks according to the social expectations. We observed in the community courts that often as the litigants negotiated the terms of the divorce, the young male fiancés were visibly distressed and conveying a sense of loss while the fiancées and their groups vowed to invest in agriculture and sell the surplus or acquire debts to pay back the *ku fewa*. In this context, the prevalence of divorce conflicts among the younger generations evoked a kind of disguised protest.

This type of postwar moral predicament partially resonates with the results of the historical analysis undertaken by Dagmar Herzog (2005) of the earlier normalization process in Germany following World War II. Herzog demonstrates how some sectors of the German society believed that the enforcement of family and sexual conservative practices (under the banner of re-Christianization) was the solution to the post-World War II moral crisis. The younger generations exposed to moral and sexual conservatism faced serious conundrums, which in some cases were detrimental to their well-being (Herzog, 2005). In the case of Gorongosa, the implications of the postwar relationships were that premature engagement and mistrust became a burden that affected both sides (fiancé and fiancée) in the relationship. But the young people also resisted the moral impositions by constantly uncommitting to the premature agreements their parents made on their behalf. Within this set of complex circumstances, the solution does not seem to simply outlaw premature marriages as the Mozambican government did.

4.1 | Conflict status, age and gender, symptoms of ill health, and help-seeking behaviors

The analysis also showed that most plaintiffs and defendants were young males. This result is generally consistent with global trends indicating higher prevalence of males involved in conflicts than females (WHO, 2002). Regression analysis of the associations between age increase and variations on the types of conflicts and risk factors allowed us to separate direct and indirect legacies of the civil war (see Schwartz, 1982). For instance, the direct consequences of the civil war as expressed by *gamba* spirits were more burdensome among older individuals, precisely those who had direct experiences of the civil war. In contrast, younger individuals were more likely to be involved in conflicts related to disrupted social structures instigating divorce, defamation, cultural debts, and domestic violence.

The conflict relations were associated with several self-reported health problems, which is consistent with studies that found associations between poor close relationships and different types of illnesses (Umberson et al., 2006; Vogli et al., 2007). Although the objective medical records of the research participants were not possible to obtain during the study period due to unavailability of biomedical resources in the region to undertake such a task, the obtainment of self-reported health information provided valuable insight into the health-related consequences of these conflicts. These self-reported health problems were not psychological but broad health issues such as bodily weakness, headaches, fear, wounds, nightmares, and harmful spirit possession, which were consistent with the results of the sociosomatic studies (Becker, 1998; Groleau & Kirmayer, 2004), as well as studies that examined legacies of conflicts culturally expressed through spirits and spirit possession (Kwon, 2008; Mueggler, 2001; Van Duijl et al., 2014). This study, however, added further insights by revealing the associations between the domains of conflict relations (e.g., spouse vs. spouse; family members; in-laws; and outsiders) and well-being outcomes. Our study also highlighted the centrality of manual farming in people's lives, and its moderation in the reports of social conflicts and well-being outcomes. During the period of intense agricultural activities and coordination, the rates of conflict reports and health complaints dropped, whereas in the slack times the

reports of conflicts and health problems increased. This result confirmed previous trends observed through a population survey of psychological traumas and the moderating role of the farming economy (Igreja et al., 2009). However, what emerged as a new finding was that during Time 2, the participants reported experiences of illnesses that led to death of family members. This could be related to the fact that Time 2 is the local rainy season, which triggers the spread of malaria-infected mosquitoes and diarrhea and cholera. These diseases, coupled with the lack of adequate health care, exerted a serious toll on people's health. Finally, the fact that most of the people in this sample (62%) used community courts for the first time, while 11% had visited more than once, is an indication of the linchpin position of this resource in the postwar era. This suggests the need to expand the analysis of community resources literature focused on healers (De Jong, 2002) to include the role of community courts and local economies in mediating recovering after war violence.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data available on request from the authors: The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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We were never cool: Investigating knowledge production and discourses of cool in the sociology of music

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Abstract

This article examines knowledge production in the sociology of music. Focusing on the idea of cool music, we interrogate the nature of music researchers' relationship with their object of research. While the qualification and connotation of cool is widespread in popular music, sociology has largely neglected to engage with it as an object of research. Instead, the sociological investigation of music audiences is divided between two opposed but co-constructed paradigms that ultimately do not account for how cool emerges as a qualifier and connotation, how it performs as a discourse on music, and to what effect. Using the example of aging music researchers as a departure point, we examine how the cool connotations of music function as a mode of discourse that legitimates particular knowledge, practice, and taste, demarcating insider/outsider status. We explore how music acquires social connotations such as "cool" and whether that alters music researchers' approaches to it. We argue that apart from the disclosure of inclinations, social characteristics, and relationships to the object of research (music scenes, preferences, fandom, and so on), the tradition of reflexive empirical perspectives in music sociology should incorporate further deconstruction of the *transformative* dimensions in the relations between music and researcher. Music, as a complex and dynamic object,

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thus, requires sociology to produce accounts that both encompass people's enjoyment and experience as well as its boundary-defining capacity.

KEYWORDS

aging, cool, insider, cultural sociology, knowledge production, music research, music sociology, youth

1 | INTRODUCTION

The idea of “cool” is often used to frame a generational divide—if not conflict—that is believed to define and separate the cultural aspirations and practices between younger and older audiences (Pountain & Robins, 2000; see also Liu, 2004). The realm of popular music does not escape discourses about cool (and in opposition, its uncool counterparts). Yet, researchers tend to either take it at face-value and describe its mobilization uncritically within music scenes or disregard it altogether. Instead, research on popular music¹ has been generally underpinned for a long time by two intertwined assumptions: first, that music is primarily the domain of youth (see Bennett, 2008; Frith, 1983). On that note, Middleton (1990) showed how youth as a category was prioritized in the study of popular music at the expense of understanding how older people also participate in a variety of music in different ways. Implicitly, youth² becomes the demographic *in the know*, or with the knowledge about trendy and cool music. The second assumption is that a structural homology exists between music genres and the social classes of their audiences (see Atkinson, 2011; Rimmer, 2012; Willis, 1978). Music then acquires its meaning and connotations on the basis of the audiences' social belongings. Class demographics here determine the type of music that is consumed and, by homological association, its level of cultural legitimacy. Based on these two assumptions in the field, the question is whether the discourses and connotations that are attached to certain popular music forms emerge from either the age or the social class of music culture participants.

Scholarship in music sociology has begun to destabilize these taken-for-granted assumptions; first, by exploring the significance of music for aging audiences (Bennett, 2013; Hodkinson, 2013; Taylor, 2010), and second, by highlighting how everyday music listening practices intersect a range of individual and collective meaning-making practices beyond the scope of age or class belonging (see—among others—Bennett, 1999; DeNora, 2000; Hennion, 2009). The musical object is thus opening up through such scholarship and proving to be quite complex and uncertain. Epistemologically speaking, we contend that there are two paradigms (framed here as pragmatist and structuralist) that attempt to identify the status, meaning, and value of music. Empirical research is usually deployed to answer such questions. Both paradigms co-construct one another but we note that oppositions in the conceptual approaches to music often appear futile inasmuch as both paradigms fail to address the question as to how a connotation like cool not only emerges, but also operates with particular discursive features and functions. Moreover, researchers from the sociology of music seldom reflect upon their own relationship to the field, and therefore, consider social connotations like cool, except for a brief if underdeveloped research note by Beer (2009). Cool as a concept is rather relegated to a methodological dichotomy between an insider status (that allows the researcher to be *in the know*) and an outsider status (whereby the researcher is unable to know what “cool music” is). As we further elaborate in the body of the article, we define cool as a mode of discourse within the social life of music that is empirically observable as a complex set of relations, practices, and self/other knowledge, which are contingent upon the particular context of its emergence and negotiation of its meaning. We therefore aim to address a gap by offering an epistemological and methodological discussion of how music sociologists *ought* to situate themselves toward the social connotations of music.

In this article, we interrogate knowledge production in the sociology of music by focusing on the notion of cool. As an important social connotation of music, the idea and phenomenon of cool questions both how sociologists conceptualize and negotiate the meaning and value of music (what is cool/uncool), and the way in which this is contingent upon their own empirical negotiations of the music field through their insider/outsider positioning and access. We argue that apart from the disclosure of inclinations, social characteristics, and relationships to the object of research (music scenes, preferences, fandom, and so on), the tradition of reflexive empirical perspectives in music sociology should incorporate further deconstruction of the *transformative* dimensions in the relations between music and researcher, and thus, how music changes people (researchers) and how research changes how one understands and experiences music. As such, we are not advancing a theoretical rapprochement between the entrenched positions adopted in music sociology. By examining the idea and phenomena of cool in music, we are reminded of how complex an object music is and that the critical issue for music sociologists (including ourselves) is to account for the different dynamics that constitute its meaning and status. A consideration of these trajectories and the changing object-researcher relations—framed through the insider/outsider debate in sociology—enables researchers to avoid the pitfalls associated with either a celebration of music or a critical perspective that neglects the autonomy of music. The first section explores the notion of “cool” as a social connotation of music and investigates its emergence. The second section develops and focuses on the two paradigms that often emerge in the sociology of music and critically assesses issues of knowledge production in both. Finally, the third section examines how researchers have positioned themselves in relation to “cool” and defends an argument in favor of the pursuit of a reflexive approach to popular music in sociology that includes consideration of the transformation of the researcher and their object of study.

2 | INTERROGATING COOL

The phenomenon of cool has not only shaped questions of identity, style, and consumption in popular music, but also its wider conceptual influence is relevant to how diverse cultural practices, social contexts, and fields of knowledge are framed and understood. Pountain and Robins (2000, p. 13) have argued that cool has gone far beyond being a performative style expressing hedonistic disaffection of a small minority of outsiders, suggesting it could be “... the new mode of individualism, an adaptation to life in postindustrial consumer democracies much as the Protestant work ethic that Max Weber described was a way of living the discipline of industrial societies.” Cool is a crucial new spiritual orientation to contemporary capitalism (see also Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005; Liu, 2004; McGuigan, 2009). This suggests that the capacity to identify and research “cool” music involves further critical consideration of how the music researcher is considerably more bound up within these tensions than initially thought. It hints therefore to how cool operates simultaneously as an intrinsic and instrumental register of participants' self-regard and researcher/analyst self-understanding.

There are very few *detailed* methodological accounts provided of the position of music sociologists, and particularly, the ways in which social classifications such as age, gender, or class mediate their relationship to the field, and potentially *prevent* them from accessing types of music consumption. This is the problem introduced through Beer's (2009) brief consideration of his knowledge of what is “cool,” but which he defines as synonymous to youth cultures. In this section, we briefly interrogate what “cool” is before questioning researchers' relationships to it.

2.1 | Cool as a discourse within the social life of music

Cool is a discursive tool to frame practices, styles, and knowledge *within* contemporary music scenes (or sites/spaces where music is consumed) as authentic and as having greater social value. Within cultural spaces defined through shared music taste, cool is used to uphold status and belonging and to signify a unique and expressive

sensibility. In this regard, the modern currency of cool can be traced to a complex set of racialized and gendered representations visible within the early 1940s U.S. jazz scene and characterized as a “self-conscious masking of emotion” that repudiated any “ritual acts of deference then required of Black Americans in public life” (Dinerstein, 2013, p. 109). For young African American men during this time, and notably jazz musicians such as Lester Young, being cool was to convey a “calm defiance” that distanced them from the “invasive white gaze” (Dinerstein, 2013, p. 109), and it defined a “certain sartorial elegance, smooth charm and self-possession” (George, 1992, p. 62).

The reification of this cool, “black” jazz performative style and demeanor has had an enduring and widespread impact on popular culture. It signified an authentic, rebellious outsider status that appealed to the racialized imaginations of disaffected white youth in postwar America searching for ways to express nonconformity, captured through the iconic social commentary about the “white negro” by Mailer (1957). The idea of cool overlaps with other signifiers used within the earlier 1940s jazz scene such as hip or hep which described being *in the know* about the scene and the music, and thus, having awareness and understanding of preferred styles, sounds, and practices. More than scene and style-based signifiers of legitimation of certain knowledge and practice, however, knowing what is cool or hip (or hep) was believed to convey the hipster as a figure in search of freedom in order to overcome the anxieties associated with what Broyard (1948) describes as the “lost generation.” What was defined as authentic and provided meaning through the jazz scene was believed to capture the existential moment of setting “out on that uncharted journey into the rebellious imperatives of the self” (Mailer, 1957). Cool therefore is a philosophically imbued idea, yet, it remains elusive inasmuch as it is recognition of one's lack of meaning and purpose without the music scene.

Cool was subsequently used to discursively frame the attitudes and style of an emergent counterculture from the 1950s (incorporating beatniks and hippies), which was opposed to the conservative values and attitudes associated with previous generations (McGuigan, 2009). Linked to this, cool was critically defined as the ideological expression of a type of rebellious consumerism that underpinned new approaches to advertising and markets from the 1960s. Frank (1997) argues that countercultural rebellion and nonconformity became the main driving force of consumerism, rather than status competition, and thus, being cool or hip became consumption's key ideological expression. On a more fundamental level, however, McGuigan argues that cool operates to legitimate the latest stage of capitalism, that is, neoliberal capitalism, and is believed therefore to mask disaffection by translating it into “acceptance and compliance” (2009, p. 1). We return to the wider significance of this below.

While cool defined the historically raced and gender-specific dimensions of a defiant pose and attitude through music, style, and cultural expression, it also produces other fault lines within music, operating as a strategy of class-based distinction within different music scenes as a “mode of differentiation from the mainstream that allows people to think of themselves as current or cutting edge through the display of taste” (Bookman, 2013, p. 68). Through this mechanism we see a number of repetitive divisions emanate across six decades of popular music between, for example, The Stones versus The Beatles, between punk and progressive or glam rock, between indie versus metal or hard rock, rap/hip-hop versus rock, and so on. However, a crucial area for the subcultural visibility of cool was established through studies of clubbing and dance audiences in the United Kingdom from the mid-1990s. This research emphasized the important role cool played in terms of conferring insider status on clubbers as legitimation of their “underground,” alternative music practices, knowledge, and style as authentic (Malbon, 1999; Moore, 2003; Thornton, 1995). These studies identify how discourses of cool produce an insider perspective based on alternative forms of music knowledge legitimacy that organizes and demarcates itself from the “uncool” mainstream. More recent studies of clubbing suggest that what is valued as cool and the clubber's ability to “exercise classificatory power” around inauthentic/authentic knowledge, practice, and style is conceived through a potentially varied display of “hierarchical forms of differentiation and intersections between different socio-structural variables,” not simply age and/or class (Jensen, 2006, p. 264; 259).

From this discussion, we observe that not only is cool varied and flexible, but also it takes on ideological, cultural, and economic significance as it plays a role in the reproduction of ideas about race and class and constitutes

both a critique and expression of capitalist consumer values. More specifically within the organization and experience of music, cool operates as a form of discourse that is—or should be—knowable through empirical research as a complex set of relations, practices, and self/other knowledge, which are contingent upon the particular context of its emergence and negotiation of its meaning. The next section briefly considers an example of how cool is recognized as a social connotation of music and assumed to be an inherent and ahistorical feature of youth, diminishing as one gets older. This then becomes the departure point for an examination of music as object of sociological investigation and how knowledge production of music is framed.

2.2 | Losing one's edge: Aging and cool

Pondering his diminishing capacity to do worthwhile sociological research on cool music cultures, Beer (2009, p. 1152) invokes the ideas of Mills (1959) on the conduct of sociology, and thus, how “our own life trajectories limit the parts of the social with which we might make contact” and that “different periods of our lives facilitate differing critical distances from our objects of study.” At the core of his interrogation about his ability to continue carrying out music research, there is a tension between a researcher that aims to conduct research about how music is listened to and why, but who finds himself confronted by social connotations of music that prevent him from accessing the insider perspective—understood as the only possible position from which to derive access to and understanding of music cultures. Beer suggests he had reached a point in his life where he “... had come to know very little about popular music³” and that he was “missing a sense of what was *happening* in the music cultures themselves and what was *happening* more generally in terms of music movements, scenes and trends” (2009, p. 1153; original emphasis). Although circumspect about whether age (with changing life stages and priorities) is the direct cause of “an insurmountable *critical distance*” (p. 1154; original emphasis) that had developed between him and the music he wanted to study, he suggests that “getting older and staying cool may not be compatible” (p. 1153).

For Beer, “cool” is the most critical configuration of music's social connotations and he entangles it narrowly within conceptions of youth/age—although his age is not provided—and homologies of taste. In other words, the desire to unpack the meaning of listening practices is undermined by the discrepancies between the social position of the researcher and the potential research participants. Beer's inability to access knowledge about music cultures—only realized through reflexive consideration of his age—demonstrates how challenging he believes the study of music listening can be if not conducted from an insider perspective. Age therefore had not been a factor informing his prior approach to the study of music cultures, but it becomes the very condition that shifts perceptions of his status from insider (as in knowledgeable) to outsider, and thus, as incapable of approaching music cultures. In turn, age is objectified as denoting a set of fixed sensibilities and practices, rather than having subjective meaning and significance that is context related, especially in terms of music interest where, as we discuss below, it is not fixed by age. However, Beer's acquired outsider perspective suggests that there remains “friction” between different music tastes that emerges from the social embeddedness and connotations of music content. In this respect, despite Beer's incomplete response to the question raised through pondering his age, his provocative note can be understood as tapping into what we argue here is a far more significant concern for the sociological study of music and is thus indicative of unresolved tensions in the conceptualization of the field.

A more reflexive review of existing empirical knowledge of popular music can reconfigure the theoretical conceptualization of the sociological field of popular music. First, the assumption about age and popular music consumption that positions the researcher (as older with “uncool” taste) in opposition to the potential research participants (younger with “cool” taste) has been undermined through numerous studies that demonstrate how music retains its significance for aging audiences and how individuals reflexively negotiate their approach to music and scenes that suit their sensibility and in ways that are compatible with their other work-life priorities (see Bennett, 2013; Hodkinson, 2013; Taylor, 2010). This research builds on changing conceptions of youth in recognition of what some believe to be a more “prolonged and unpredictable” transition to adulthood as commitments

to parenting, cohabiting, marriage, and longer-term careers are delayed (Hodkinson, 2013, p. 14). In turn, this suggests that music and other leisure preferences and practices are sustained for longer periods, and therefore, not because of a “refusal of adulthood” which is simply another way of reinforcing dominant associations between youth and popular music. On the contrary, those that do take on board so-called “adult” responsibilities and are negotiating middle-age, are also more widely acknowledged to have ongoing commitments to music that they also maintain. Second, the changing dynamics in *modes* of music consumption also undermine theoretical assumptions about conflicting or exclusive music preferences based on age. Not only are musical interests shaped through exchange and shared practices between young and old in what Bennett refers to as the “generational trading of music tastes and influences” (2013, p. 124), but young people are also partly responsible for the revival of old music technologies (such as vinyl) and are seeking out and valorizing earlier music styles and artists (e.g., The Clash, Black Sabbath, and the Rolling Stones) as more authentic through digital and streaming technologies (Laughy, 2007). Using cool to frame the conflict between generations around music tastes is put under further pressure as what counts as “cool” is conceivably drawn from a more eclectic and inclusive pool of music as younger music consumers are notably more appreciative and tolerant of older generations’ music experiences and tastes (Glevarec & Pinet, 2012).

Conceptually, therefore, the problematization of youth, including the changing dynamics of cultural consumption and what Bennett describes as the “new sensibilities of ageing [...] in western society” are responsible for “an increasing continuity across the generations in terms of leisure and lifestyle preferences” and are particularly evident in music (2007, p. 28). To conceptualize music consumption (as the “cool” sociological object of study) as beyond the grasp of aging researchers overlooks the empirical reality of changing forms of music consumption and listening practices. Moreover, it overlooks the possibility of producing knowledge of popular music from ethnographic studies that tend to proceed from the perspective of an “outsider,” whereby “attention to [...] the lived, embodied experience of others—of those who are not like us—is its most powerful feature” (Maxwell, 2002, p. 100). However, reasserting the methodological opportunities of ethnography and debunking myths related to age and popular music are relatively straightforward discussions, the idea of cool and how it is configured in music knowledge production is more complex and elusive requiring further examination. “Cool,” therefore, raises other important questions about the wider formation of legitimation and value within sociological studies of popular music. In light of an elaboration of “cool” as a complex discourse used as both a structuring device between audiences and as a source of meaning and value within the social life of music, we now problematize the tendency to reproduce opposing sociological perspectives of music’s value in research. Following this, we return to the question of how the researcher, who belongs (more or less strongly) to a particular music space through their tastes and interests, locates themselves in relation to their object of study.

3 | SOCIOLOGY AND THE OPPOSING PERSPECTIVES ON THE STATUS OF MUSIC

In sociology, music is generally regarded as “not just ‘good to think with’, but good for thinking through” (McCormick, 2012, p. 723). However, the discipline has mainly borrowed its conceptual frameworks from other fields (Bennett, 2008; Marshall, 2011), such as popular music studies and cultural studies, in turn creating tensions within sociology about how music *ought* to be regarded. Music sociology is populated by perspectives that delineate paradigms that are co-constructed. Prior (2013) identifies the figure of Bourdieu (1984) as central to “debates” within music sociology. We go further by suggesting that two paradigms emerge—we call one *pragmatist* and the other *structuralist*—which are co-constructed through theoretical debates and oppositions. These paradigms matter because they structure music sociology as a discipline, but they also treat music - as the cultural object - quite differently. We focus here on the most influential and conspicuous accounts from

each paradigm, with the aim of identifying how they each construct a discourse on the status of music. In doing so, we note that both fail to address the critical issue of some of its dominant social connotations such as the one of cool.

3.1 | The two paradigms in music sociology

Since the 1990s, the sociology of music has increasingly drawn on empirical accounts of everyday listening practices, as well as their meanings for individuals or groups of individuals. The ground-breaking work of DeNora (2000) analyzes how individuals use the affordances of music to cognitively assist them with their everyday activities, such as exercising, studying, commuting, or with the management of their self-identity. Her sociological account is located in critical relation with Adorno's (see DeNora, 2003). Alongside DeNora and at about the same time, we find other critical interventions in the field, by the likes of—among others—Hennion (2007) who theorizes music mediations (in opposition to Bourdieu), Bennett (1999, 2004) who thinks about collective formations around music with conceptual tools such as “neo-tribe” and “scenes,” and Born (2011) who highlights the various ways music materializes identities.

These accounts have in common a focus on individuals' responses to the diffusion of music within everyday spaces. Although they differ in their conceptual implications, they share a positive perspective on music, highlighting the possible personal enjoyment of experiences with music. Some of these arguments are rooted within a perceived democratization of the access to recorded music content (as defended by Hennion et al. (2000) with the CD), or within the increased privacy of listening practices (as with Bull, 2007 and the iPod). These arguments further justify the relative autonomy of music as a cultural object and the emphasis on what music *does* to individuals.

In opposition, a second paradigm emerges with influences from the sociology of Bourdieu (Prior, 2013). To scholars from this paradigm, a pragmatist approach to music potentially provides an “... overly optimistic understanding of music” (Hesmondhalgh, 2008, p. 330) by focusing on everyday life as synonymous with the mundane, subjective, and reflexive, in opposition to the “... systemic, structural processes, which are implicitly understood as unknowable, unanalysable, unthinkable” (Hesmondhalgh, 2002, p. 120). Hesmondhalgh (2008, 2013, p. 50) further deconstructs the pragmatist paradigm by arguing that “empirical sociology” runs the risk of disregarding the social makeup of audiences: “... middle-class people are able to present themselves to interviewers as rounded, musically sensitive individuals,” In opposition, “It is difficult to imagine working-class people telling stories of self-realization through music in [the same] way” (2013, p. 52). Instead, music ought to be considered within social relationships.

A key tenet in the structuralist paradigm concerns the social variables that mediate the interactions with music. These variables condition *which* individuals interact with *what* content and *how*. Social class is the main culprit. For authors such as Atkinson (2011) or Rimmer (2012), music is embedded within a “structural homology”: the consumption practices of individuals from different social classes replicate the social structure of a society. The content that individuals listen to is, therefore, defined by social connotations because it is classified on a spectrum of cultural legitimacy, ranging from the music that is socially depreciated and devalued to the music that is legitimate and only accessible to the social (and cultural) elite. The status of music is understood through the lens of an overarching structure of tastes.

Our division of the scholarship into two paradigms would certainly require more nuance if we had space to do so. Also, we do not wish to suggest that pragmatist theorists deny that music is (also) a social object, nor that structuralists suggest that music cannot be an enjoyable individual resource. Instead, we want to point out how different emphases are placed on the status of music, because this in turn determines knowledge production about music. The question that underpins a music sociology approach to audiences is as follows: is music first and foremost a positive resource for individuals, or is it primarily embedded within social relations that attribute social connotations to it?

The pragmatist perspective conceptualizes *internally* by accounting for the effects it has on those that listen to it. Audiences are constructed as reflexive and competent individuals (DeNora, 2000; Hennion, 2009). The status of music is constructed from a cultural perspective, which is the one held by audiences that listen to the music, because sociologists do not “arbitrate the validity of claims” made by interviewees (Martin, 1995, p. 12). In the structuralist paradigm, however, the status of music is constructed through an imposition by either a structural homology (as in Atkinson, 2011; Rimmer, 2012) or through social relationships (as in Hesmondhalgh, 2002, 2008, 2013). Music is understood *externally*, through the range of connotations (e.g., the idea of cool) that are imposed upon it by either an entire structure of cultural legitimacy or by social groups. The discourse on music here results from its embeddedness within a social structure. Music becomes a metaphor to analyze the social (see Whelan, 2014).

Both paradigms circle around similar issues, construct one another by opposition, but never seem to find common ground on the discourse on music. The pragmatists consider that “... the proper role of sociological analysis is neither to attack nor to defend any particular style of musical expression” (Martin, 1995, p. 12). There is a sense of trust in the words of research participants about the role they inscribe to music and enjoyment they experience with it. In opposition to what some see as a “dominant conception of music” (Hesmondhalgh, 2008, p. 330), the structuralists respond that participants have reasons to “... compete over who is having more fun” (Hesmondhalgh, 2008, p. 338), and therefore, a vested interest in presenting music through stories of personal enjoyment, which justifies researchers' skepticism regarding the empirical perspective. In Bourdieusian accounts (see Atkinson, 2011), there is even distrust for the words of participants because they are seen as trying to display a music taste as legitimate, which disregards the social imposition on musical meanings.

The two opposing paradigms approach the status of music as resulting either from its capacity to affect its audiences or from connotations imposed by social relationships and outside of the individual interaction with it. On the one hand, a pragmatist perspective neglects all types of connotations of music (such as cool), which orient individuals toward a type of content and/or produce what is commonly referred to as “guilty pleasures” (uncool music from which audiences do not want to admit feeling of pleasures). On the other hand, the structuralists present music as a “problem,” a signifier of social and political issues, and the resulting critical discourse morally validates or invalidates certain things (see Whelan, 2014). This perspective runs the risk of deploying a “miserabilist” approach (Grignon & Passeron, 1989) toward working class audiences (or, the dominated masses) who listen to music that is deemed illegitimate. From the limitations of both paradigms, we ask in the following section how researchers (with their class, gender, age, and ethnicity) position themselves (their knowledge and taste) in relation to their object of study (music), its audiences and its social connotations.

4 | HOW COOL IS REPRODUCED IN MUSIC RESEARCH

So far, the question about the extent to which sociologists can recognize music's social connotations within their research on music audiences without reproducing incomplete/reductionist portrayals of music's meaning and value has been used as illustrative of the tensions between paradigms. This helps frame assumptions about cool as a dominant social connotation relating to music taste and also for legitimating knowledge and authentic styles *within* music scenes. We argue that the more critical set of issues pertain to how researchers negotiate the tensions that arise from the embeddedness of music (or other meaning-making cultural practices) within wider social dynamics, including the extent to which they can conduct music research without reproducing or imposing value and taste hierarchies. As a way to destabilize the dichotomy between the two paradigms in the sociology of music, which was entrenched in the 2000s, we turn to the writing of Lewis (1992) and his account of music taste as constituted by the dimensions of demographics (class, age, gender, and ethnicity), politics and esthetics. Lewis advocates that in empirical approaches to music, the connections between “social and cultural structures” is (or should be) “a question, not a given” and when studying music we should be viewing these relations as “contingent, problematic, variable and—to a higher degree than we might imagine—subjectively determined” (1992, p. 141). In

other words, the relationship of audiences with music is not simply composed by individual motives and social variables, but it is one that evolves over time and which deserves to be considered as such, as Beer's (2009) own relationship with music suggests. In fact, the increase in academic interest in the experience of aging music audiences and fans for instance can be regarded as a direct consequence of music academics getting older.

4.1 | Cool and knowledge production in music

The academic study of popular music was initially tied to the changing sensibilities and values of "baby-boomer" scholars⁴ who were critically compelled to disrupt taste hierarchies enfolded within academic definitions of music in order to inscribe popular music as a "legitimate" object of study. As the study of popular music evolved it also reproduced hierarchies of taste, such as "cool" music, while ignoring "illegitimate" music (Tagg, 2000). On the one hand, researchers tacitly investigate music they are familiar with, thus, tending to develop a more positive perspective on it and to neglect the social connotations it may have for other audiences. On the other hand, adopting a critical perspective on music that researchers are outsider to runs the risk of (re)producing taste hierarchies that audiences never situate themselves in or against.

However, it is not only within the study of popular music that questions of taste and inclusion/exclusion apply. The sociology of music itself is embedded within other formations of value within a hierarchy of "cool"/"uncool" subjects where music may convey connotations of cool in opposition to other "uncool" subjects of sociological research (or vice versa). Indeed, scholars—regardless of discipline—are all embedded within value systems as they research and write about preferred topics—justified on scientific, political, or moral grounds—at the exclusion of other issues considered futile. In this sense, they reproduce values of some kind (see Weber 1904 [1949]) or overlook or exclude other routes to knowledge production. With the pressures placed on researchers in contemporary neoliberal academia (see Burrows, 2012), the tendency to research "known" objects with a "real world impact" certainly increases and with it, the tendency to conduct insider research.

The significance of this can be further understood by looking at the wider implications and meaning of cool. According to McGuigan (2009), as we noted above, cool is not only a marginal or rebellious trend, but also it is an engine of mainstream culture. Tracing its genealogical meaning and echoing the work of Boltanski and Chiapello (2005), McGuigan (2009, p. 1) argues that cool is the new spirit of capitalism and identifies a number of antecedents (narcissism, ironic detachment, and hedonism) that explain its contemporary salience including how it coalesces around ideas of individualization and self-reflexivity. Cool therefore refers to the conditions and experiences of social and professional life today (including within neoliberal academia). Within the context of music sociology, cool is not only an important social connotation of music that needs to be negotiated, but it also works concurrently as an inherent and instrumental chronicle of participant self-worth and analyst awareness—that is, it is not just about a sense of belonging to or exclusion from a music culture, but also it is a judgment of value and self-understanding more broadly. Indeed, the latter reflects traces of meaning from earlier commentary by Broyard (1948) and Mailer (1957) whereby being cool (or hip) was viewed as a mode of nonconformity for young people searching for authenticity and meaning in the postwar period of the twentieth century. From what we can infer from Beer's own musings, the selection of sites of music consumption to study is entangled within wider hierarchies of value and cultural sensibility. We argue that the social connotations of music further complicate insider/outsider knowledge within the sociological study of popular music.

4.2 | Insiderism/outsiderism in music research

The insider/outsider debate is a longstanding concern within sociological research. There have been numerous conceptual and empirical accounts of how sociologists should reflexively negotiate their relationship to the object

of study (Berger, 2015; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). The negotiation of any object of sociological investigation requires consideration of the potential implications of having or developing insider status and the type of understanding and insights that it produces. It should be an analytical question that shapes knowledge production as the study evolves, rather than an immutable and fixed barrier to knowledge at the outset. Insider perspectives are clearly important for music sociologists to gain access to and be able to research music and style-based scenes (see Bennett, 2002, p. 452; Nowak & Haynes, 2018). Beyond the disclosure of affiliations with scenes and questions about the relevance of shared social characteristics, the implications of this for the contours of music knowledge production are seldom critically reflected upon in any depth (besides Bennett, 2002; Hesmondhalgh, 2005; Hodkinson, 2005; Maxwell, 2002). There are however several critically reflexive accounts primarily from feminist scholars negotiating their gendered identities and questions of insiderism/outsiderism given the propensity for many music scenes to be male-dominated (e.g., Cohen, 1993; Downes, 2012; Hill, 2016; Leonard, 2007).

The acknowledgment of the worthiness of music often infers a celebratory account of the diffusion of music within the social (Hesmondhalgh, 2008). Celebratory accounts of music largely result from a form of methodological bias that is sometimes not fully acknowledged whereby the shift from being an “insider” to becoming an “insider researcher” (Hodkinson, 2005, p. 136) is not reflected upon. In contrast, outsider perspectives on music tend to use it to convey criticisms of the social and political order (Whelan, 2014). However, there are exceptions that negotiate credible “outsider” insights into the meaning, role and value of music without privileging or problematizing participants’ understanding at the outset. Despite not explicitly defining what a hip-hop “insider” is or should be—“I was a complete outsider when it came to hip-hop” (2002, p. 104)—Maxwell explores “how the relationship to the object of our investigations affect the kinds of knowledges we generate” (2002, p. 103). Drawing on Born’s (1995) critical reflections of knowledge produced from her ethnographic approach to the field as an outsider, Maxwell (2002, p. 111, emphasis in original) suggests such an approach provides “a means of discerning between a conscious discourse *about* a field and a less conscious discourse *within* a field.” For Born, being an outsider means moving “beyond,” “behind,” and “across” the discourse of music participants in order to both “trace its embeddedness in certain historical and contemporary social and cultural formations” and to clarify the meaning of “its gaps and contradictions” thereby providing analysis of “forces that are not readily perceivable by those subjects” (1995, p. 10). In other words, an ethnographic approach that assumes an “outsider” perspective produces knowledge as explanation, and thus, beyond what is lived and experienced within the music culture. We would advocate that a similar framing of knowledge production should apply regardless of whether the researcher positions themselves initially as “outsider” or “insider” in relation to the musical object of investigation, noting that such relations are often difficult to classify as “inside” or “outside.”

Age remains a rather curiously underexplored insider/outsider tension for music researchers given the enduring assumptions about popular music and its association with youth. Beer’s (2009) critique of the ways to overcome the problems of access to and knowledge of “cool” music (outsiderism) because of his age, however, further demonstrates the ambiguous status of insider knowledge in music research. Proposing that aging researchers employ younger researchers (as “insiders”) to identify what is “cool,” and therefore, research-worthy (as Beer, 2009 argues) not only valorizes an insider perspective, but it also reproduces a false dichotomy of insider/outsider relations that does not reflect the complex nexus of experiences and positionings of researchers and the researched. Another research option considered by Beer (2009, p. 1156) is to embrace that which is uncool. However, this simply accentuates the epistemological and methodological problem at the heart of this paper concerning the reproduction of boundaries.

Insider/outsider positions are never fixed in research, nor are objects of research. Existing forms of social and cultural embeddedness alongside configurations of sameness/difference of researcher/researched and shifting levels of intimacy generate the power dynamics that invariably shape the research process and production of knowledge (Nowak & Haynes, 2018). Aging may influence insider/outsider relations, but not independently of other social and cultural characteristics, nor of the constant evolution of the musical object. The process of reflexivity requires consideration of the ways in which both music as sociological object and our relations to it are

transformed within and by the research process. Thus, in addition to disclosing one's musical preferences, scene membership or social identity, researchers should recognize insider/outsider boundaries as complex, blurred, and dynamic. In his questioning, Beer (2009) therefore makes a step in the right direction, however, music and its "cool" social connotations remain narrowly conceived and fixed. Because cool is contextually produced and mobilized as a discourse around music and within the social life of music, it is knowable through observation and analysis, not the other way around. Positing cool/uncool as a priori objects of study (in the way Beer does) reproduces the same ambiguities that are present in other music research because the transformative elements of the research process—the object-researcher relations—are not explicitly accounted for in theoretical analysis.

4.3 | Disclosing one's position in the field

The value in recognizing and implementing the fundamental methodological principles we have outlined above is what doing "worthwhile social research" is all about according to Silverman, who highlights "issues of principle that cut across both methodological and theoretical issues" (2013, p. xiv). The existing tension that emerges in the sociology of music would be diffused if differences in empirical approaches to audiences are considered. The insider/outsider perspective should not determine whether or not researchers engage with said cultures (be they "cool" or "uncool"), nor what they conclude about them. Surely, the critical distance is an imperative for the discipline that goes beyond different empirical methods. In light of this tension that characterizes the field, we would advocate for researchers to continue to engage in reflexive accounts as to *where* they speak from (in a similar fashion to Beer, 2009), but with more detailed and theoretical grounding that acknowledges the evolving trajectories of researchers, participants, and their object (music). This would provide greater methodological and theoretical transparency about the specific transformations of both music as the object of their investigation and themselves. Instead of preemptively considering music as cool or uncool and disclosing who they are, including their preferences, music sociologists ought to better deconstruct the wider entanglement and transformation of their relations in the field in order to reflect upon how it mediates their access to music cultures and approach to different music content. One instance of how this can be done is the research conducted on male musicians' mistreatments of women (Strong & Rush, 2018, p. 577) that ends with the authors' recommendation that future scholarship should "... always include an acknowledgement of what artists have done, although this does not preclude a positive assessment of their work in other ways."

We are in alignment with Hesmondhalgh as he writes that:

Many intellectuals who are rightly critical of existing social relations enjoy and gain enrichment from artistic and cultural experience in their own lives. [...] But they seem unable or unwilling in what they write and say to provide an account of how art, culture, entertainment, and knowledge might enhance people's lives more generally, and why these domains might need defending from the kind of denigration and lack of public support ... (2013, p. 4)

Music and culture is something that researchers participate in (and sometimes contribute to) as they conduct their research. In this sense, researchers are already embedded within the tension between culture as autonomous and as social processes. In that regard, we contend that it is not so much about the "status" of culture as much as it is about how "we" as sociologists frame, approach, access, treat, contemplate, and derive understanding from it. As we note above, empirical research is a process and it is one that is transformative for both the researcher (knowledge production as well as the potential for personal/moral reflexivity) and their object of study (its meaning). Research interventions have transformed popular music as mere theoretical abstraction to something that is more complexly situated within an emergent connotation of social worlds. However, unless our abstractions about music are sensitive to experience in everyday life, and thus, understand "how people are embedded within the social milieu that they

inhabit” and “how they shape and are influenced by actions,” the risk is that we produce “a ‘third version’ of events that is explicable neither in terms of the subjectivity of the analyst, nor that of the subject herself” (May & Perry, 2011, p. 30).

The account of the status and role of music in people's lives we are advocating, therefore, is not about offering a specific theoretical rapprochement between the opposing perspectives we discussed earlier.⁵ Instead, we want to encourage further consideration of the fundamental dimensions of reflexivity and how researchers conceptualize and negotiate the intertwining of music and the social, given how the dominant approaches to music discussed above are unable to comprehensively account for how cool emerges and the role it plays without considering the opposing perspective.⁶ As such, May and Perry (2011, p. 35) offer a useful reminder about the social aspects of knowledge and how

the efforts involved in mediating between constitutive and contextual values can so easily be lost, leaving not the work of understanding, but instead those who shout across chasms informed by a positioning and process that has long since ceased to be an object of investigation taken forward into practice.

We want to conclude by highlighting how music is an object of research that presents sources of individual enjoyment as well as delineating spheres of value. A critical issue for music sociologists consists of accounting for the *internal* and *external* dynamics that all contribute to consolidate the meaning of music, and without falling into the trap of reductionism, either through a discourse on individual affects or through a reading by class.

5 | CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have questioned how music sociologists develop a conceptual and empirical relationship with their object of research. We note that knowledge production in the discipline tends to reproduce particular boundaries, for instance, around the notion of “cool” associated with certain music. We have also reviewed how some of the most prominent theorists in music sociology such as Bennett, DeNora, Hennion, and Hesmondhalgh have attempted to critically consider—to a greater or lesser extent—the social connotations of music and sought to illuminate not only where the different conceptualizations stand, but also where there is space for different appreciations for music's value—be it social, cultural, or use. This paper has aimed to destabilize some established, if taken for granted, ideas about music and its social and cultural associations by music sociologists, specifically, that cool enacts a separation between audiences and researchers that are “in” and those that are “out,” when in fact we argue that cool itself should be the object of sociological investigation. By interrogating “cool” as an important dynamic within methodological questions about the relations between the object of investigation (music) and the researcher's own subjectivity—beyond age—we extend the critical appraisal of the development of knowledge production in popular music and its inadvertent alignment with the reproduction of certain music as “cool.” We argue that regardless of whether one perceives themselves as a “cool” insider or not with respect to music scenes, the pursuit of knowledge should extend beyond explanations of what is directly lived and experienced within the scene and without reducing its meaning and significance to social variables.

The co-construction of two paradigms in the sociology of music—which we have named pragmatist and structuralist—results largely in the entrenchment of strong positions regarding the status attributed to music: does it emanate from individuals' enjoyment with it or from the imposition of social connotations onto it? In order to understand the beliefs, meanings, and interactions that “real” people have regarding music within a range of contexts, researchers should continue to be critically reflexive about how they empirically approach music as an object of study, as well as its audiences, but with greater critical emphasis on deconstructing the transformation of their own relations to, and complex entanglement within, the music field. In this regard, researchers constitute

the missing link within disciplinary discussions regarding the tension between culture as autonomous and culture as a social process.

Furthermore, we have acknowledged the importance of both the meaning-focused and structural/social elements in approaches to music. Indeed, as we have shown, there is no elaboration of the phenomenon of cool, nor satisfactory sociological analysis of it, without incorporating both elements. We also maintain the importance of adopting a multidimensional approach to music and culture more broadly. In this regard, we stress that sociologists need to extend their reflexive consideration of their music tastes along both those inherent (our preferences given who we are) and external (our part in endorsing some people/cultures opposed to others) dimensions. Finally, Beer's musings provided an opportunity to clarify the relationship between "cool" and the aging researcher. We conclude that the potentially diminished capacity to identify and access "cool," research-worthy music because of the changing social dynamics of aging, misrepresents the discursive role that the notion of cool plays in the social life of popular music. Thus, as (young or old) sociologists, *we were never cool* because, as we have argued, age is not the arbiter of cool and youth is not the only category of people with a stake in music and our role as researchers is not to be part of such musical connotations. Rather "cool" music and "being cool" are inextricably tangled up within the social connotations and values produced through music and research on music as an object (and more widely), about which researchers must remain critical.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ In this paper, "music" and "popular music" are analytically distinct categories, although when discussing the sociology of music this includes popular music as a subcategory within the wider field. The main analytical distinction between them derives from how the term "music" functions as a more neutral and inclusive term compared to the often ideologically loaded term "popular," which is known to have a number of differing interpretations all of which accept that modernism and capitalism have key roles in its formation.
- ² The specific meaning of being "young" or "old" within the context of popular music research is seldom articulated in an objective sense although Bennett (2006) recruits and describes "older" punk fans in his research as between 35 and 53 years old. Within our discussion, the concepts of "young" and "old" are understood as relational, intersubjective terms that are empirically observed to frame perceived generational differences within and around music participation and taste.
- ³ It is not clear what is meant by popular music here. Insisting that it is harder to know and study popular music as he grows older may suggest a narrow understanding as chart music or music associated with alternative scenes, rather than a wider definition incorporating jazz, blues, and country for instance.
- ⁴ These scholars include Phillip Tagg, Franco Fabbri, Simon Frith, David Horn, and Richard Middleton.
- ⁵ See how Darmon (2015, p. 20) draws on Weber to "account for art from a social perspective without neutralizing it."
- ⁶ Moreover, discussions about reflexivity are often restricted to methodological textbooks, rather than elaborated fully in accounts of research praxis.

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Street Citizens. Protest Politics and Social Movement Activism in the Age of Globalization.

Giugni Marco and | Maria T. Grasso

Cambridge University Press, 2019. 241 pp, 75.00 £ (hardback) & 28.99 £ (paperback).

Street Citizens offers an extensive study of protesters who participated in 71 demonstrations across 7 countries during the years 2009–2013. Marco Giugni and Maria T. Grasso focus on the micro-level determinants of protest and examine how different theoretical perspectives account for participation in a diverse set of demonstrations taking place in European countries. The book examines the who, why, and how of protest: who are the citizens who take to the streets, what are their motives and the resources at their disposal to take part in demonstrations, what forms does their protest participation take, and how is it associated with institutional politics and engagement in civil society organizations?

The aim of the book is to examine to what extent citizens contribute to political and social change in times of globalization using protest politics. The authors argue that globalization and the economic crisis of the early 2000s triggered grievances and new opportunities for political mobilization in the streets. They test the idea of *protest normalization* on a broad range of countries during a period of anti-globalization and anti-austerity mobilizations. This thesis states that, in the last decades, a more diverse set of citizens is taking to the streets (Norris et al., 2005, Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2001). However, Giugni and Grasso show that protest remains, in most cases, a middle class phenomenon. In addition, they examine the macro-level determinants of protest, the meso-level factors, and the micro-level dynamics that support participation.

The authors study 15,000 protesters who marched in the streets in 71 demonstrations that took place during the 2000s in 7 European countries: Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. The authors' unique dataset results from the work of seven teams of researchers who collected data during these demonstrations, which covered a broad range of left-wing issues such as environmental issues, anti-austerity, as well as LGBTQI*, women, and workers' rights. These teams applied a method that allowed them to survey demonstrators as they marched on the streets and to build representative samples of protesters (Walgrave & Verhulst, 2011). They gathered data on political attitudes, political behaviors, associational membership, motivation to participate, emotions, as well as sociodemographic information.

In order to exploit the potential of this unique dataset, the book builds an encompassing theoretical framework that considers the mobilizing context (protest potential in the seven countries), microstructural dynamics (social class, institutional politics, and networks), and social psychological dynamics (attitudes, emotions, and motivations). Each chapter deals with one of these theoretical building blocks. The authors offer rich discussions of key theoretical insights in social movement research, through a diverse set of theoretical lenses, ranging from structural theories to social psychology. Then, for each dimension of their theoretical model, they assess their empirical evidence. In doing so, they offer three key empirical findings: (a) the precariat is not yet a strong force supporting

social change, (b) protest is another means to engage in politics, and (c) identification with other protesters and protest organizations matter.

First and most importantly, *Street Citizens* provides empirical evidence that the precariat is not yet forming a collective political actor that defends and promotes the rights of precarious workers on the streets. Socio-cultural professionals and highly educated citizens remain the core constituents of left-leaning demonstrations. Unfortunately, the dataset used does not cover demonstrations from the right, hence the book does not allow for drawing conclusions with regard to the overall participation of the working class and less educated citizens on the streets of European cities. Although research shows that the right tends to privilege other modes of action (Hutter, 2014), it would be interesting to expand the dataset to cover right-leaning demonstrations (addressing issues such as nationalism, anti-gay marriage, anti-immigration, etc.) and to understand whether these protesters display similar socioeconomic and political profiles. It is likely that right-wing demonstrations, in contrast to the evidence presented in this book for the left, mobilize larger segments of the working class.

Second, the book provides evidence that protest is not an alternative to or replacement of institutional politics, as some have argued. Instead, *Street Citizens* shows that citizens' combine institutional and protest politics. Those who take to the streets use a variety of means of action to express their political voices ranging from voting to signing petitions to engaging in political consumerism. The authors warn that dissatisfied citizens who withdraw from institutional politics are most likely apathetic citizens—they are not filling the ranks of street demonstrators. Instead, they do not participate at all in politics. This idea is important for the study not only of protesters but more generally for the field of political participation.

Third, the book examines in detail the role of networks as a pull factor that encourages different types of protesters to join specific demonstrations. It offers compelling evidence that associational membership in different types of civil society organizations (trade unions, political parties, and associations) plays an important role in bringing together citizens on the streets. These organizations also matter because they contribute to the creation of collective identities, citizens who identify with a movement and its goals are more likely to take to the streets and call for social change.

Street citizens analyzes citizens' action repertoires—that is, the means available to specific social groups in a given period of time and context to set claims (Tilly, 2008). In doing so, it shows notable differences across countries. For instance, in Sweden and Switzerland, citizens are more prone to engage in political consumerism than in southern European countries, in Belgium, or in the Netherlands. The book highlights these differences building on empirical evidence drawn from the European Social Survey and their unique dataset. However, throughout the different chapters, the reader is sometimes a bit lost in these differences. At the beginning of the book, the authors propose a typology of countries but the empirical analyses do not map neatly on this typology. The authors conclude that context matters and this broad conclusion should invite future research that more systematically accounts for and tests country differences.

One example helps to illustrate the difficult task of comparing seven countries across a broad range of theoretical dimensions. In the set-up of the book, the authors distinguish four sets of countries. The first block is composed of the two southern European countries, Italy and Spain, considered as representing the *more contentious countries in terms of left-wing mobilization on the streets*, with important mobilizations related to class or redistributive issues. Second, the Netherlands and Switzerland form a group of "*consociational countries where the labor movement has been largely integrated in neo-corporatist procedures*" (p. 12, my emphasis). Third, although the authors note that Belgium also has some neo-corporatist procedures, in this country, unions play a distinct role in the welfare state. They manage the unemployment system which corresponds to the Ghent system. This is also true of Sweden. Belgium and Sweden constitute the third set of countries for the comparison, while the U.K. stand out as *a case of its own with a fragmented and pluralist union system*. In the empirical part, the authors find that the precariat could become a new base for protest in Italy, Sweden, and Switzerland, cutting across three of the four sets of countries (p. 76). Unfortunately, the authors do not link this empirical finding to the comparative set-up that they proposed. Hence, it is difficult to understand to what extent contextual differences are idiosyncratic or

related to specific predictors of protest that vary cross-nationally. More generally, southern European countries (Italy and Spain) tend to confirm the comparative expectations and to form a more homogeneous set of countries, but regarding the other countries it is not clear in what respects they are the same or different. Future research might need to focus on the comparison of fewer countries to be able to identify more systematic variations.

Overall, the book offers a broad and accessibly written overview of key theoretical ideas used to analyze the determinants of protest. The book is important reading for all social movement scholars. It offers unique empirical evidence to support or refute some of these theoretical ideas. In doing so, it opens many promising avenues for the study of protesters across European countries.

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