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"If no one grieves, no one will remember": Cultural palimpsests and the creation of social ties through rituals

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Abstract

Classic sociological theories hold that rituals offer opportunities for community integration and cohesion. Rituals allow people to come together across many differences and experience similar thoughts and feelings. Death rituals raise existential questions about the purpose of society and generally foster preexisting social ties. This paper examines the efforts of a US community of volunteers who gather to bury unclaimed, or "abandoned," babies. Drawing on ethnographic research over a two-year period, we advance the concept of cultural palimpsest to capture the process by which a gathering of strangers turns a potentially divisive political issue in to a community forming event. We find that in their efforts to mourn babies to whom they have no connection, these volunteers temporarily foster new social bonds that allow them to work through unresolved grief. Similar processes of ritualistically inverting social meanings occur whenever people gather to turn potentially negative into group forming events.

KEYWORDS
death/dying, funeral, infant mortality, religion, ritual

1 | INTRODUCTION

Sociologists have long recognized that rituals constitute a key opportunity for community integration and cohesion (Collins, 2005; Douglas, 1966; Durkheim, 1912; Hertz, 1960; Turner, 1969). Durkheim (1912), for instance, argued that we gain reason, a sense of self, and our most basic ability to relate to one another through ritualized moments of shared purpose and collective effervescence. Rituals around death are particularly important because they address existential questions about who we are as a society, what ties us together, and what our collective purpose is. In most funerals, this fostering of community ties rests on a personal relationship with the deceased or their relatives (Bailey & Walter, 2016; Woodthorpe, 2017b). Burying a stranger, therefore, poses profound challenges for the funeral to integrate a community of mourners. In this article, we use the case of a community of volunteers who buries unclaimed babies to theorize the power of rituals to unite when division seems more imminent. More generally, our analysis speaks to how community members marshal rituals to turn a situation that threatens to tear apart the social fabric into an event that strengthens community ties.

Dominant social-psychological perspectives suggest the purpose of the modern funeral is for loved ones to process their loss and to grieve in such a way that life can go on (Davies, 2017; Walter, 2005; White et al., 2017). Funeral attendants enact a rite of passage that remembers and memorializes the deceased while at the same time acknowledging that the deceased is now in a different realm, with religion often filling in the spiritual dimensions of the transition. This double movement of the rite of passage—*holding on* through remembrance of what has been lost and *letting go* by disposing of the bodily remains—is facilitated by the prior connections the attendants have to the deceased, usually as family or friends. Close family ties not only allow for specifying the loss and anticipating a future for both the community and the deceased, but also exert an obligation to organize a funeral (Woodthorpe & Rumble, 2016). Alternatively, deaths of heads of state or celebrities allow a personal, if indirect, connection to the deceased because the public life of these figures generates familiarity. While relatively few people may have known Princess Diana, millions felt they knew her life as a member of the British royal family and personified her loss.

By contrast, deaths that do not attract the involvement of close relatives or high-profile people often take place without public ritual. Unclaimed deceased tend to be whisked away to private, isolated funerals, or hidden in unmarked graves (Klinenberg, 2002). They constitute a growing phenomenon in the US (Quinet et al., 2016; Sohn et al., 2020), the UK (Woodthorpe, 2017a), France (Keller, 2013), India (Steinberg, 2015), and Japan (Allison, 2015). Special categories of unclaimed deaths, however, have gathered interest from volunteers organizing funerals. Among those are the deaths of abandoned infants. Infant deaths are one of the "most painful and least tolerable deaths" in Western societies (Zelizer, 1994). Pregnancy losses, stillbirths, and infant deaths due to disease and abuse often remain unspeakable and stigmatized, their taboos isolating the silenced mourners and causing prolonged and complicated bereavement (Layne, 2006). Amid this silence, mourners may face difficult existential and religious questions, wondering, for example, why a good God would take away an infant at such a young age and what evil might have caused such loss (Anderson et al., 2005).

In light of contemporary moves to restrict mourning to the close circle of relatives and the heavy burden of burying infants, we examine how funerals in the US work as communal rites when strangers without prior ties to the deceased come together to bury babies declared abandoned. Rather than fostering existing social bonds, we observe how burying a stranger offers new ways of theorizing the power of rituals to *create* social bonds. Drawing on interaction ritual chains theory, we argue that in order for funerals of unclaimed babies to provide community cohesion, extra work needs to be performed to integrate the baby in the community of strangers, give religious meaning to the unexpected loss, and let go of the deceased baby. The risk of burying abandoned infants, especially in the US political context, is that the event will be hijacked for an anti-abortion protest, or be deployed to vilify "bad parenting," which is a coded way of hierarchically marking class and race differences (Heimer & Staffen, 1998). The ritual then needs to erase the past of how the baby died and was abandoned in a hospital or

public space for mourners to project their own individual and collective needs (often unresolved grief) that bring them to the funeral and integrate them as a community.

We argue that the integrative potential of stranger funerals depends on how the mourners are able to turn these events into *cultural palimpsests*, blank slates on which they can project their own collective and individual needs. A palimpsest is a piece of writing material on which the original writing is effaced to make room for later writing but of which traces of the original remain and impress the new writing. A *cultural* palimpsest refers to the removal of past interpretive framings and the emergence of new cultural interpretations by which the original meanings shape the emergence of new collective schemes. We show that in the case of abandoned babies cultural palimpsests rest on avoiding contested politicization of the circumstances of death, on a personalization of the deceased as a potential community member, and by reliance on familiar religious rituals during the funeral to create a space for new meanings to emerge. As in the partially rubbed out initial palimpsest's writing, the original tragedy of the babies' premature deaths circumscribes the range of cultural and community integration work that is achievable. Removing traces of a tragic past seeps into the process of novel meaning making.

At a general level, the concept of cultural palimpsest draws attention to a social process through which potentially deeply divisive social issues are ritualistically converted into community forming events. This process can be found across social situations where the aim is to put a positive spin on negative events and where rituals are the means to redefine the social situation. Rather than searching for a silver lining in a bad event, however, the creation of a cultural palimpsest erases collective trauma to allow for re-inscription of new cultural schemes. As such, we can find this process of cultural redefinition not only within religious volunteer groups but also within social movements and professions aimed at addressing past wrongs. However, cultural palimpsests have their limits for social change: if the ritualistic transformation rests on individualistic appropriation, the result will be a missed opportunity to address structural factors that produce the socially divisive issues.

2 | RITUALS AND COMMUNITY

Classic sociological and anthropological approaches posit that rituals are the means by which society come to exist, bringing people together and allowing them to experience similar thoughts and feelings. Durkheim argued that assembly is how we achieve the very idea of a social. Through the intensity of emotion that people experience, which unites members of a society across their many social differences, society in turn can make and remake itself (Durkheim, 1912). Turner (1969) similarly argues that rituals are where a society (re)affirms its values, norms, and knowledge of itself.

To capture how rituals may generate a sense of group membership from a micro-sociological perspective, Randall Collins (2005) advanced *interaction ritual chain theory*. He distinguished four conditions for the power of rituals to generate group cohesion: an assembly of two or more people, with boundaries for outsiders so that participants know who participates and who does not, a shared focus, and a common emotional response to the event (or collective effervescence according to Durkheim). Rituals vary in intensity depending on how they are put together and enacted with the strongest cohesion coming from being fully and bodily absorbed in synchronized social interaction. Rituals may result in creating a sense of group solidarity, enhancing emotional energy, rallying around symbols that represent the group, and producing a sense of moral rightness in adhering to the group and willingness to defend it against transgressors. In Collins' conception, individuals gain collective sensibilities and identities through participating in ritualistic interactional sequences and seeking emotive "highs" of belonging and identification. Collins offers a flexible, elementary framework for the study of rituals that can be developed to understand how a negative (in our case an unknown baby's death) can be turned into an integrative occasion for the ritual's participants.

While Collins' theory uses an extensive definition of ritual (including everyday interactions), some rituals have greater social salience than others. Anthropologist Arnold van Gennep (1960) took stock of how societies

prepared for important changes of status such as birth, death, adulthood, and marriage. He proposed that transition rituals constitute processes with three distinct components: a passage out of a previous social status; an ambiguous time betwixt and between statuses where the community articulates its values; and the incorporation into a new position. Funeral rites tend to focus on the transition from life to death and the eventual incorporation of the deceased in a spiritual-religious world.

Rituals affect members of a society not just through the emotive power they exert on individuals but, by participating together, members step out of the realm of the everyday to pay special attention to their roles in forming the collective (Olaveson, 2001). "If we are all angry, or sad together, we nevertheless feel better and *stronger*" (Collins, 2014). Death rituals become socially salient when they provide "comfort and ontological security" (Long & Buehring, 2014). A funeral allows those left behind to make sense of its lost part, thereby offering a means to reaffirm commitment to the group as a whole (Durkheim, 1912). Life can go on because death has been ritualistically, if temporarily, conquered (Bailey & Walter, 2016). Or, as Halloway et al. (2013) put it: "a *physical procedure*—disposal of the body—is encapsulated in a ritual *social process*—the funeral—which demands a *philosophical response* on the part of the individual concerning the relationship between life and death."

More often than not, the funeral is seen as a "family affair" (Bailey & Walter, 2016), actively and reflexively (re) affirming and rejecting familial relationships (Woodthorpe, 2017b). In Van Gennep's (1960) conception of funeral rites, mourning rituals were based entirely on kinship, with the degree of kinship between decedent and survivor determinant of the length and expected intensity of mourning. This idea that mourning requires intimacy with the deceased persists today. Walter (1996) argues contemporary grief involves constructing a "durable biography" that integrates the memory of the dead into survivors' lives, a process achieved by telling personal stories and reminiscing with others who knew the deceased (Bailey & Walter, 2016). A funeral is deemed successful in contemporary individualistic societies like the US and UK when it provides an honest and authentic expression of the dead's biography in public form (Walter, 1996).

People who die young complicate dominant models of grief, especially infants not alive long enough to have earned individual names. They are among what Van Gennep (1960) called the "most dangerous dead," existing indefinitely in a liminal state, not yet incorporated into the world of the dead and not yet established as worthy of mourning by the living. Perinatal death, or fetal death beyond 20 weeks gestation, and infant death, are among the most difficult kinds of loss to grieve (but see Scheper-Hughes, 1992). According to Bennett et al. (2005), "When an adult dies, a piece of the past is lost; however, when an infant dies, a piece of the future is lost." Children are perceived as emotionally "priceless" (Zelizer, 1994) and "possessors of innocence" (Pomfret, 2015). Yet, there exists a strong cultural unease in talking about infant death, especially miscarriage and stillbirth (Bennett et al., 2005). The lack of cultural scripts available to bereaved parents can cause them to feel alone and may lead to traumatic, unresolved, or disenfranchised grief (Doka, 2002). Compounding the sense of forced silence around infant death is the way modern society has sequestered death to private life (Mellor & Shilling, 1993). The political divisiveness of abortion politics in the U.S. adds yet another layer of complication to people's efforts to mourn infant loss in public, especially when the death involves a fetus. In addition, the abandonment of infants, alive or dead, signifies bad parenting that is racially coded (Heimer & Staffen, 1998). Altogether, the death of a baby places a mourner in an emotionally laden, culturally fraught domain.

The literature on death has little to say on how people participate in death rituals for decedents they never met or for whom no biography exists. While research on public mourning for celebrity deaths offers some clues as to how strangers mourn, such as when millions around the world paused to collectively grieve the passing of Princess Diana or Michael Jackson (Brown et al., 2003; Schwartz, 2015), with the famous there is still some sense of prior connection, however imagined, and a biography, however fabricated, to draw upon. When scholars give attention to people gathering to mourn total strangers, it typically involves extreme or dramatic events, such as when unidentified migrants wash ashore a foreign land (Mirto et al., 2019). But "if a funeral is to work as a social rite against death, it must work for all, not just for the closely bereaved" (Bailey & Walter, 2016). Attention to how

people come together to mourn the loss of someone they never met and have no prior knowledge offers new ways of theorizing the power of rituals to *create* social bonds, as compared to strengthening existing ones.

The number of Americans dying with no next-of-kin able or willing to bury them has risen since the 1970s (Sohn et al., 2020). When this happens, it falls to local counties to handle disposition. While no national figures exist, based on original data for the County of Los Angeles, we calculate that 230 bodies under the age of one went unclaimed over a two-year period (2012–2014). In California, by law any fetus that reaches 20 weeks of gestation must be cremated or buried, with a fetal death certificate and fetal burial permit required. While the County of Los Angeles cremates all of its unclaimed infants, surrounding counties, including Orange County, Ventura, and San Diego, outsource burials of unclaimed babies to a volunteer organization, one of a limited number of non-profit organizations with the sole mission to bury babies declared "abandoned."[1] Most commonly, these babies have died in hospitals during stillbirths, miscarriages, or soon after birth as a result of complications. Less frequently are babies who have died as the result of neglect or homicide.

We examine how members of volunteer organizations participate in a ceremonial ritual to mourn babies that are not their own. Burying unclaimed babies faces three community-forming challenges for volunteers: (1) Because these babies are strangers to the attendants, there are no connections, no shared memories to draw upon and establish the continuity between a life lost and the community left behind. (2) The short lifespan of the infants provokes profound religious questions about the meaning of life and God's plans for these infants. (3) Due to the stigma of pregnancy losses and stillbirths and, at the same time, the politicization of abortion, funerals of fetal remains and infants can easily lead to divisiveness rather than integration.

Yet, we show that by consciously appropriating the ritualistic aspects of funerals by creating a mutual focus of attention and a shared mood, the community of volunteers report that the funeral of unclaimed babies brings them closer together as a collective. We find that the volunteers do so by constructing meaningful but intentionally depoliticized rituals to transition babies to heaven. This restores the group's sense of shared moral purpose and connects them to God. Organizers avoid any discussion of biography, instead constructing a new identity for the baby. In seeking to answer the question of why volunteers take on the burden of mourning strangers, we find that many participants suffer from unresolved or disenfranchised grief from their own perinatal losses. Their efforts to mourn unknown babies allows them an outlet to safely process personal loss in public, experiencing an intensive collective effervescence that extends classic understandings of death rituals. We elaborate on Collins' interaction ritual chains theory to specify a social mechanism of ritualistically turning a potentially divisive event into a cohesive event and examine the potential of this appropriation for addressing structural factors that produce culturally divisive issues.

3 | METHODS & SETTING

This study is part of a larger project on the unclaimed dead, defined as people who die without next-of-kin willing or able to handle disposition. Since October 2015, we have conducted fieldwork in a number of government agencies who arrange cremation and burials for unclaimed decedents. Through the course of this fieldwork we also uncovered communities of volunteers who come together to bury certain subpopulations of the unclaimed, including a 501(c)3 organization based in Southern California that buries abandoned babies. Founded in 1998, the Garden of Innocence (GOI) holds funerals on an ad hoc basis in ten counties in California and Oregon. Like other 501(c)3 religious or charitable organizations, GOI is exempt from paying federal taxes and constitutes a tax-deductible contribution for donors. The organization's mission is to provide dignified burials for abandoned children, with the motto: "If no one grieves, no one will remember." This research received Institutional Review Board approval.

We attended ceremonies in three California locations, including San Diego, Fresno, and Ventura, always spending time before and after the ceremonies talking with members. We recorded by audio or video each ceremony, and we took detailed fieldnotes. In total we attended 12 funerals during 2017–2021, gathering dozens of in situ

interviews. We also conducted in-depth recorded interviews with participants and organizers between August 2016 and September 2021. Questions focused on understanding participants' motivations to attend the funerals of babies they did not know, as well as the meanings they derived from participation. Consistent with an abductive analytical approach (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014), we started with open coding to identify obvious patterns (e.g., ritual steps, participant roles, demographics). We moved between our data and existing literatures as we refined our axial codes (e.g., perinatal loss, disenfranchised grief, God's purpose). Through this iterative process we sought out both the most common patterns and the most surprising.

4 | ANALYSIS

4.1 | Ritualizing an unknown baby's death

4.1.1 | Separation: The circle of love

In a grassy cemetery corner, thirty women and men of mixed ages and ethnicities gather under a canopy of trees as they watch a row of sixteen men dressed in regalia march through the grass. The Knights of Columbus, a global Catholic fraternal service order, wear plumed chapeaux and capes in red, white, or purple; black tuxedos with white shirt and black bow tie; baldrics; and white gloves. They carry swords at their sides as they escort a small wooden casket from the cemetery's administrative building to the tucked away corner. Marina,[2] a retired naval officer and today's officiant, leans into a portable microphone and thanks the audience for helping to "send home baby Tessa." She adds, "As with each child that comes to the Garden of Innocence, we form a *chain of love* and pass that child from one person to another so that we can say that we have touched this child and this child has touched our hearts."

People stand and move toward the centre of the garden, circling the narrow graves. The Knights of Columbus form an honorary dual row with swords at their sides as the Assembly Commander carries the casket through to the northernmost edge of the circle. The casket is made of pine wood and has a small maple-stained carving of a baby on the top and each side. The commander hands it to the person next to him, and slowly the casket moves through the circle from person to person. People seem to brace for the weight of the casket as they ready for their turn, but the casket is surprisingly light, a reminder of the short life in remembrance today. A woman makes the sign of the cross prior to receiving the casket. Another wipes her eyes after releasing the casket. Some take time to whisper what could be a small prayer. When the casket has circled through everyone's arms, the Knights raise their swords while the commander places the casket by the side of an open small grave.

From a sociology of rituals perspective, the active participation of the attendants, strangers to each other, is highly significant. Standing up from their seats to form a circle and then passing the casket from person to person not only increases the participation level from passive audience members watching a ceremony to people pulled into the event (Collins, 2005), and thus increasing collective solidarity and identity, but it also helps synchronize a shared focus and solemn emotional mood. This collective dimension is further accentuated by the public nature of the sign of the cross, recognizable as religiously meaningful, when passing the coffin. The chain of love then demonstrates buy-into a common mission and communicates a common religious identity to those assembled.

In a review of 57 ethnographies of non-Western societies, White et al. (2017) found that most kin engaged in mortuary rituals that included "close and often prolonged contact with the contaminating corpse."[3] Questioning why such practices would be so prevalent around the world when there does not appear to be "obvious payoff," the study's authors conclude that moderately intimate exposure to a deceased loved one aids the grieving process by facilitating "reclassification of the loved one" (ibid, p. 163). The circle of love constitutes a ritual involving a degree of contact that is not prolonged but neither the low level of intimacy accorded by "paying respects," such as briefly touching a corpse at a wake. Lily, a long-time volunteer, explains: "The circle of love or the chain of love

is really the most moving part to me where we all can give a blessing to our babies." Notice her exact words—*our* babies. But the babies are unknown to participants in the Garden—the mourners do not actually know the person they are burying. So, they construct an intimate and moving ceremony in which they informally adopt the deceased children as their family. Participants hear from organizers that for some of the babies the circle of love is the one and only time they will have been held.

Van Gennep (1960) said death rituals, like all rites of passage, have a three-part structure of *separation*, *liminality*, and *reincorporation*. In the first, the spirits of the dead must be separated from their social roles as members of the living. Burying babies of which very little is known except that they are young and unclaimed requires that the attendants at the funeral first acquaint themselves with the baby. The chain of love in the Garden helps babies become "complete" members of this community (ibid, p. 101). Richard, at the time a volunteer and later the San Diego chapter's director, says, "When that child gets passed from one person to another, I know for me and I know for many others, that child becomes part of our life." Yet, passing the baby is a simultaneous ritualistic move of relating and separating: by touching and holding the casket the baby comes into a community and at the same time is separated from its birth parents, about whom *nothing* is said in the ceremonies.

Rebirth into this community of strangers is further marked with a *new first name*. A name is a crucial rite that individualizes and incorporates (Heimer & Staffen, 1998). It marks one's entry into human, not biological, life, as well as one's end (Laqueur, 2015). It individualizes a person and prolongs membership from one situation to the next (Collins, 2005). If there is no name, the death of the individual is socially incomplete. Garden founder Adele Patters argues that a name "is a dignity every human being deserves ... instead of Doe, or a morgue tag." For babies left at hospitals, such as after a stillbirth, there may be a family name, but Patters does not use it.[4] She explains, "We wouldn't want someone to be embarrassed by someone in the future saying, 'Well, you abandoned your baby.' We kind of incognito put them here in the garden." By renaming the child, the Garden community works to erase the dehumanization associated with abandonment and marks a rehumanization of the baby in their own community. The names are chosen by long-time volunteers, often memorializing a personal loss, further personalizing the ties between the living who attend the ceremony and the deceased. This again distances the babies from the circumstances of their short life.

The ritualistic passing of the casket from person to person during the chain of love and renaming allow the attendants to appoint themselves the baby's *surrogate family*, a collective identity shared only by those who took the time to attend the ceremony. They mark this explicitly by referring to the baby being buried throughout the ceremony as *theirs*. The first moments of the ceremony then render the deceased baby a community member and at the same time separates the infant from the painful circumstances of death that led to abandonment. The deceased baby is presented in a historically decontextualized way without any mention of what caused its passing. The past has been deliberately wiped in order to rewrite the event with the attendants' own interpretations. At the same time, audience participation quickly and effectively turns a group of strangers into a collective with a shared focus and emotional timbre.

4.1.2 | Liminality: The homily

At the moment of passing through the circle of love, Tessa and the other renamed babies are no longer abandoned but neither are they at peace in the eyes of Garden participants. The babies are at a threshold, captured in a liminal moment, betwixt and between, neither here on earth nor there in heaven. This is a vulnerable time for the babies' ceremony because the attendants need to justify why they are spending their Saturday morning to bury a baby they did not know. By putting themselves in the role of surrogate family for an abandoned infant, they take on a taxing role as people expected to mourn a lost child. In American culture, losing a child is "an intolerable social loss" (Zelizer, 1994) and one of the most difficult experiences a person can undergo. Participants need to understand how a fundamentally disturbed order can be restored.

For the articulation of a new order in which the death of babies makes sense, the Garden family turns to religion, marshaling God's love for personal and collective healing. Why should people in the Garden burden themselves to mourn a child they did not know if not for a higher purpose? Despite this being a funeral, there is no eulogy that narrates the deceased's life (Bailey & Walter, 2016). There cannot be, since nothing is known (or at least shared) about the babies. Rather, the Garden ceremony offers attendees a homily that addresses a common theological concern: the purpose of suffering. Father Bien-Aimé, a children's hospital chaplain, officiating at a ceremony of five babies in Fresno contrasts the chaos of a prematurely ended life with joy that a new birth should entail, saying in his homily:

> When we think of a child coming into this world we always think of joy, of a joyful occasion, preparations of all kind of happy things that occur when a child is about to come into this world. But I'm not naive. I'm not suggesting that there is no evil in this world.

Then he sets up a critical intervention in the cultural script, arguing "this is the job of the divine":

> The fact that God knows all about these children may baffle somebody. But for me it means that in the grand scheme of things God can and will bring something beautiful out of His gates. These innocent souls who through no fault of their own have met the unfortunate existence of this world will be luminaries in God's kingdom.

Rather than pitied souls, the babies become "luminaries," playing a special role in heaven. Their deaths are sacralised in this moment and they themselves are now ready to be saved.

But what *exactly* is God's mission for the babies? Many of the pastors see a specific task that the babies perform in the here and now for the attendants. "When we lose a child," Pastor Anna, another volunteer clergyperson, says, "it's widespread, it's not only touching the parents but it can involve people as far as grandparents, siblings, co-workers, neighbours. It touches the heart of everybody when we're dealing with a child." Her words echo the sentiments of classic theories on death, that the loss of an individual affects the society as a whole (Hertz, 1960). In a service for Baby "Stewart," Reverend Marcus says: "It comforts me to know that Stewart, as well as all the babies here in the Garden were children that were set on a course of destiny … they were sent here for a reason." The reason: *to help people heal*. Rev. Marcus continues:

> Some of you are struggling with things and in this uncertain world you feel a little unrested but … Stewart is on assignment and we need to give glory to God because He knew that when He brought the family together, Stewart would let us know it's OK. You see, what God asks us to take in our understanding is that there's a legion of angels sitting for each and every one of you, and all they are doing is sitting and waiting for your beck and call.

The ceremony at this point makes a transition from *them*, the babies, to *us*, their new kin in the Garden. As Reverend Marcus's words suggest, the purpose of the babies, from the perspective of people in the Garden—is to help attendees heal by witnessing God's love. The question is no longer, why did this baby die, but, as Reverend Marcus articulated next in the homily, in a critical gestalt switch, "*Why did God bring this baby in my life today*?"

The homily takes the people in the Garden from the darkness of the death of a baby to the light of God's love, redefining the deaths of the babies as a religious event and showing that the children are safely in heaven. In a dual move, the ceremony turns to the audience of mourners, nudging them to grieve the baby as a way to heal from personal loss and sending them on a mission to spread God's message. Marcus closes with this call to action: "Some of you may be the only Bible that people ever read, so if you take love away from here, share love throughout the rest of this day and

the rest of your life." He says that this kind of sharing "will show what Tessa meant to all of us," adding that "we are now her family, and she is love."

Note how officials channel familiar religious rites to prime the audience for a particular interpretation of the event as a deeply personal quest: dealing with one's own traumas. The collective dimension is the assumption that all attendants are hurting and could benefit from reflection and that they are united through a common religious experience—in this case, a religious framing of loss through shared participation in a funeral. Yet, while the healing process is shared, the reasons people need to heal remain deeply individual. At this point in the ceremony what also is striking is what the ritual *lacks*: political mobilization. In the homilies, there is no problematization of the structural factors that may lead babies to become abandoned at death. Instead, the focus is on what the death of these babies could personally mean for those attending the funeral.

Next, the Knights pull out their swords and raise them into salute. Marcus hands the casket to a cemetery worker, who is inside the narrow but deep grave. The worker places the casket inside a large Styrofoam box, which will be covered with rose petals scattered by attendees—a blanket of red, white, and pink. This is another of several collaborative acts that bring the community together by directing a shared focus and generating a shared mood (Collins, 2005). Some bodily actions can bridge cultural backgrounds: throwing the petals into the grave erases difference for a moment and brings mourners in the garden in rhythmic motion together (Warner, 1997). While lowering the casket into a grave is often felt as a moment of irrevocable sorrow, in the Garden of Innocence the long line of people waiting to toss rose petals breaks up the emotional intensity of the ceremony and prepares the mourners for letting go of the baby.

4.1.3 | Reincorporation: The doves

The final stage of the transition ritual—reincorporation into a new status—is about to begin. Tessa has received her new name and ties to her old life have been severed. She's become part of the Garden family, and the participants have learned to find personal meaning in their relationship to Tessa, their grieving an act of lived religion (Edgell, 2012). In the final part of the ceremony, it is time to let go of the baby the group of strangers just incorporated as a new family member. Lily announces, "As we are gathered here today for Tessa, we encircle her with our love. We give dignity to her birth, yet we know we must say goodbye." Saying goodbye is done symbolically, through the release of a dove by yet another volunteer. The dove flying away reflects Tessa's spirit being set free. Three more volunteers each then release a dove, explained during the ceremony "as symbols of the Heavenly Father, the son or messenger, as your religion believes, and the Holy Spirit that dwells within all of us to escort the spirit of Tessa to her Heavenly home."

The doves are followed by yet one more ritualistic layer to help the babies join the world of the dead: volunteers recite the names of all the babies that have come before Tessa, 300 and counting. Because participants take turns selecting names for the babies, every time they attend and hear their baby's name recited, they feel personally connected again to the Garden. John White, one of Knights of Columbus for the Fresno garden, says the name "becomes a part of you" and it brings people back to visit the cemetery even when there are no ceremonies. White explains, "There's people that come here all the time, even if they're not involved. They just come here because they want to go visit their son or daughter."

The ceremony closes with a prayer that acknowledges God's love: "Now, Tessa is in your care, God, and will forever be. May you watch over her, and bless her forever more." With that, Tessa's mission is finished. The Garden family has guided her to heaven and turned her care over to a higher power. At the same time, Tessa showed God's presence among the attendants, offering an opportunity to find collectivity amidst pain and sorrow. The carefully calibrated rituals are designed to purify the babies, to make them innocent after the cultural stain of abandonment by their biological parents.

Altogether, the ceremony for unclaimed babies in the Garden of Innocence demonstrates a ritualistic way to appropriate an extreme version of a "bad death" for the cultural benefit of the living and bringing those living together in a community of personal healing. For people in the Garden, a chance exists to right this wrong, drawing on familiar religious rituals to bring a permanent sense of meaning to the babies' lives. Because they have to work together to turn the baby's death into an opportunity for individual growth, the ritual binds members (Collins, 2014), both during and after the hourlong ceremony.

5 | CONSTRUCTING RELIGIOUS MEANING AROUND PERSONAL LOSS

The ceremony includes scripted and unscripted references to healing, but it is in the moments after the ceremony, as people join in informal conversation, that the needs to heal become clearer. A theme of unresolved grief emerges through the stories and reflections that attendees tell. This is why the ceremony in the Garden is intended to be religiously generic (e.g., "the son or messenger, *as your religion believes*"), in order for participants to fill in symbolic gaps for the diverse collective of attendees, who include a range of ages, ethnicities, and class backgrounds, and who may be suffering from different kinds of losses. Across this variation though, the stories that people reveal convey themes of unresolved grief and shame, often originating in the lack of cultural scripts around mourning of miscarried and stillborn children.[5]

After a ceremony in Fresno for five babies, in which Garden founder Adele Patters announced our presence as researchers, a man came up to us and said, "I named one of the infants this year, and I've been coming here since the start of this." Asking us to keep his name out of anything we wrote, the man then explained: "In 2010, my wife and I lost … [pause] She had a miscarriage, and we didn't know anything about any of this. In 2012, this [the Garden] came up, and I've been doing it ever since." For the man, attending and participating in funerals for unclaimed babies gave him a way to honor his lost child—a loss for which he felt shame—as well as to mourn other infants gone too soon. He was not alone. After a ceremony for baby "Conrad" in San Diego, Reverend Marcus introduced a young man who said, "I lost my daughter when I was on deployment. My wife had to deal with that by herself." It had been five years but the husband remained in pain, adding, "This is helping with everything."

While research on pregnancy loss has tended to focus on women's experiences, research also finds that men can experience "lasting grief" after miscarriage (McCreight, 2004). Men tend to find their experiences marginalized and their emotional needs unrecognized (ibid). But in the Garden of Innocence, the veteran was able to tell his story of loss in a matter-of-fact way to a group of strangers. The Garden has a way of priming people's stories that in other settings would pause conversation because of the demands such stories put on listeners. How do you respond when someone whom you have never met tells you they lost a baby? After the Garden funeral, there's no need to respond. People nod, maybe offer a hug, and generally accept that whatever an attendee needs to heal from and however they need to process is perfectly acceptable because the ritual opened the emotional door to expressing such deeply personal hurts.

We also heard from women who attended the ceremonies as a way to heal, and their stories reveal similar themes of unresolved grief, including Tracy's account of her stillborn baby:

> I had a little girl who was a stillborn, 20 … next year will be 30 years. It's really hard to handle that. So I had heard about the Garden of Innocence, and I was like, "Oh, maybe that will help me feel" … I didn't hold my baby, because I said, "Why should I hold her if you're gonna bury her?" I couldn't handle that, and I was only 20 at the time. But this God showed me, "It's okay. You should've held her, but it's okay. Now you can hold these babies and love them."

Tracy emphasized that the rituals of holding the casket during the chain of love and attending a funeral allowed her to do for other babies what she could not do for her own.

Tracy's story reinforces the lack of cultural scripts available to people who have suffered a perinatal loss. A stillborn baby feels to many parents an "invisible death" (Cacciatore et al., 2008), a loss that is both ambiguous and haunting. In a society where bereavement has been individualized and death processing seen as a primarily psychological event, the Garden gives attendees a framework to make sense of their personal loss in a safe public setting. Of the many pains bereaved parents face after a stillbirth, not being able to hold, or choosing not to hold, the infant can become their biggest regret (Cacciatore & Flint, 2012). The circle of love helps right this sense of wrong and leads to the second reason Tracy's story is so important. It reveals how Garden organizers are adept at finding ways to include people in the ceremony as part of their healing and generate not only a shared emotional mood but also a religious rationale. The first time that Tracy attended, she helped read the names of the babies already buried in the Garden, explaining, "I was like, 'How'd that happen?', but in a good way … It makes you feel better." For Tracy, this unplanned inclusion in the ceremony was a sign that God wanted her to participate.

Organizers assume that people in the Garden are suffering, and they construct the ceremony to collectively process private grief. Adele explains: "When they do have a problem and they haven't gotten over it, we ask them 'Would you like to name a baby after your loved one that you lost?' and then that brings them closer to the Garden and then they get closure." The babies, exactly because their personhood is reduced to the innocence of infancy brought to a premature end, are turned into cultural palimpsests, ready to receive whatever personal burdens and messages the mourner brings to the garden.

For this interpretative flexibility to work, Garden organizers strive to keep contentious politics out of the ceremony, even though the act of burying a "baby" may mean burying a fetus. Attendees may push back, or stop attending, when the event becomes infused with something political. We can see the importance of depoliticization when the ceremonial mood is breached by rare, unscripted insertions of politics, such as references to "bad mothering" or abortion. At a ceremony for five babies in Fresno, CA, Adele Patters broke with the standard program and in so doing broke the spell for some attendees. During an impromptu speech coming right after the homily, Patters said:

Today, marks our 386th child buried in the Garden of Innocence … We were hoping we would build this special place and it would never be filled. But it continues to grow, sadly, and babies are found all the time. We have a baby coming soon to Bakersfield that was found in a river. I've already buried a baby that was found in a river. I didn't need to do it twice but it's important.

The speech, which lasted several minutes, created a cultural rupture, because it revealed truths about the ways that some babies die. After the ceremony, a woman named Mariette came up to us to express her displeasure. "That bothered me today to hear that. It made me feel like that was emotional blackmail and wants to get people more involved to make it feel like almost like there's this horrific thing happening in the world." Mariette, who said she has been attending GOI ceremonies for some time, continued:

I don't want people to think that there are that many people that are just abandoning their babies like trash in places. That's not the case. It's not. There's more the cases that in our own communities we're not making sure that we're opening our eyes to people that are in trouble before they're at that place.

She did not want to engage with the political implications of Adele's framing of abandoned babies, which suggests that mothers could do horrible things to their babies. Instead, Mariette wanted to see the Garden as a salve on a social wound, whereby *we* collectively fail to care for young mothers in trouble. She added, "I think I keep hoping I'm going to find somebody in this community that's going to feel the way I do that we need to pay attention to these young moms before they have their babies. Maybe before they even get pregnant." Mariette's desire to shift blame from the individual to the society echoes the struggles of child advocates in the 19th century who saw a child's death as a sign of collective failure toward living children (Zelizer, 1994). While it is true that the majority of babies buried in the Garden come from hospitals, where they were classified as miscarriages or stillbirths, there have been a number of cases where a baby has died a brutal death. As organizer, Adele knows

the backstory of each baby, but she generally avoids sharing details, because stories about bad parenting or un-wanted pregnancies jolt the careful erasure needed for the attendants to inscribe their own needs on the event and achieve a depoliticized collective effervescence.

6 | CONCLUSION

The death of unclaimed babies presents a threefold existential challenge for communities because by definition they die prematurely, without connection to the deceased, and their deaths can easily be politicized in the con-temporary US. In most communities, such babies are disposed quietly in pauper graves. By deliberately appropri-ating the three stages of rites of passage in ways that privilege their own individual and collective needs and by fostering a sense of collective effervescence with a shared focus and synchronized emotional ambiance, a group of volunteers manage to turn the potentially divisive death of unclaimed babies and fetuses into an integrative event, highlighting the transformative power of ritual to unite (Collins, 2005; Douglas, 1966; Durkheim, 1912; Hertz, 1960; Turner, 1969). The Garden of Innocence volunteers adopt the deceased infant as one of their own by renaming the child and physically embracing its casket. They then explore why God brought the infant in their lives at this moment, focusing not on a premature death but on their own existential suffering and grieving. They signify the letting go of the infant not only by collectively covering the casket with rose petals but also by releas-ing a dove (a recognizable icon of purity and peace in Christianity). Throughout, the community members use the death of a stranger to work through their own issues and rely on religion to turn an otherwise secular occurrence into a sacred event. Rather than depraved humanity, an abandoned baby symbolizes the long lingering pain of unresolved grief.

To outsiders, the actions of Garden attendees may seem odd, ethically dubious, and even offensive. Who are these strangers to appropriate someone else's tragedy for their own purposes? How can they pass a casket around, anoint themselves surrogate relatives, and impose God's will on this tragedy? Yet, such is the transforma-tive power of the ritual for attendees that it feels morally right to give abandoned babies an individualized funeral rather than dumping them in a mass grave or at sea.

The appropriation of an infant's death for the personal grief of strangers contrasts sharply with the private fam-ily affair that makes up most contemporary funerals in the US. However, put in deep time (Laqueur, 2015), funerals in the Garden evoke an early 20th century way of thinking about child death as a collective event (Pomfret, 2015). The volunteer mourners' actions un-sequester death from the private realm (Mellor & Shilling, 1993), recapturing the effervescent ideals of Durkheim (1912) and Turner (1969). Mourners connect to each other in these moments as well as to the sense that every life—even the shortest—deserves social recognition.

This meaning transformation does not occur in an interpretative vacuum but dovetails on the longstanding historical place of religion in people's rite of passage from life to death (Garces-Foley, 2014; Walter, 2012). Even in postmodern funerals that eschew religious tradition (Walter, 1996), clergy often lead burial services. Hospitals regularly employ chaplains to attend to the dying, the performance of rituals just prior to and after death consid-ered a source of solace for patients and their loved ones (Cadge, 2012). In this and many other ways, religion and death are intimately linked, so much so that Malinowski (2018 [1925]) posited that death—and specifically our fear of it—is *the* reason religion exists. In the case of unclaimed infants, religious practices and beliefs channel the strong emotions these deaths generate out of the profane world of the everyday and into a sacred space where life can be reaffirmed. Religious funeral practices offer a familiar set of membership symbols that guide and pro-long the meaning-making process beyond the ceremony (Collins, 2005).

The potential for social action of cultural palimpsests, however, is limited if the collective redefinition turns participants inward to address their personal needs rather than exploring the structural causes of the original trauma. By explicitly avoiding the circumstances and causes of death and renaming the deceased infant, the com-munity members not only depoliticize the death but also forego an opportunity to question and witness the

structural reasons of why infants die and go unclaimed. Instead, this particular rite of passage focuses the attendants on their personal faith and individual struggles. The depoliticization of the deaths is striking in light of abortion politics and "safe surrender" legislation (laws which allow mothers legal immunity to give up newborns in designated Safe Havens). The deaths of Garden babies could have been a call to action—as, for instance, immigrant deaths in Europe and the US have become a rallying point for political movements (De León, 2015). Instead, at a time of increased secularization (Voas & Chaves, 2016), the rite of passage becomes a different collective manifestation of the enduring relevance of religion in times of grief and loss.

More generally, the notion of a cultural palimpsest captures the transformation of a potentially divisive and horribly tragic event into a cohesive and integrative occasion by ritualistic means. Latour (1999) argued that science is a process of inscribing empirical phenomena through technological devices and in the process transforming the natural world for calculation and claims-making. Cultural sociologists have similarly highlighted that cultural schema become inscribed on bodies with normative consequences separating deviance from conformity (Beisel & Kay, 2004). As a collective practice, a cultural palimpsest uses the familiarity of rituals to bring people together in a sequence of separation, liminality, and reintegration. The result is that a situation threatening the collective is reinterpreted to strengthen social ties and to allow individuals to project their individual and collective needs on the situation. While the *cultural* dimension of cultural palimpsest refers to the collective meaning making, the *palimpsest* part highlights that the past is never fully erased and constrains the range of possible interpretations. The new interpretations become meaningful, exactly in contrast to the traumatic situations they aim to convert.

We can find attempts at creating cultural palimpsests whenever groups collectively aim to redefine a traumatic situation, such as when people create collective memories and commemorate dark historical events (Halbwachs, 2005; Skillington, 2013), process cultural traumas into collective identities (Alexander, 2004), and even produce collective discourses of hope and renewal (Bauman, 2017). We can find it among mental health professionals, including psychologists and therapists, who rely on rituals and transitional objects to re-signify traumatic events such as divorce or abandonment at birth (Rose, 1999; Sas et al., 2016). A ritualistic response and cultural appropriation to such potentially disintegrative events not only offers a safe hideout to deflect group ruptures (Giddens, 1994), but also allows the generation of novel social ties and bonds between strangers. However, as our research shows, it is important to recognize both the constructive potential of this social coping mechanism and its conservative status-quo preserving effects. Cultural palimpsests bring people together but do not necessarily foment social change.

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ENDNOTES

[1] Pursuant to California Health and Safety Code Section 7104.1, after thirty (30) days have lapsed from the time of attempt to notify the person(s) responsible for the interment or inurnment of remains (i.e., next-of-kin), a body (including fetal remains past 20-weeks gestation) are deemed abandoned and placed under the jurisdiction of the Medical Examiner.

2 All names of individuals have been changed.

3 White et al. (2017, p. 150) identify three levels of intimate contact in handling of corpses: low, which includes "paying respect" by briefly touching the body during a wake or funeral service; moderate, which includes more prolonged or extensive actions such as kissing, embracing, washing, and dressing the body; and high, which includes "inner body contact (i.e., penetration of natural orifices, cutting through the flesh, dismantling the corpse, etc.) and/or consumption of the remains."

4 Patters maintains a database with legal names of each child the Garden has buried, but she keeps the information private to protect birth parents.

5 Stillbirth refers to the death of a fetus at or after the 20th week of pregnancy. The key distinguishing factor between stillbirth and miscarriage is gestational period and as such the losses exist on a similar continuum.

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WILEY

Respectability and boundary making on a superdiverse housing estate: The cross-racial deployment of intra-ethnic stereotypes

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Abstract

This article examines how white British residents of a superdiverse London housing estate learn about—and subsequently deploy—the intra-ethnic stereotypes used by their British Pakistani and British Bangladeshi neighbours/flatmates. Building on recent attempts to bring together conviviality and boundary making, along with insights into intra-ethnic othering, we show how, for white British residents, these stereotypes offered the chance to add detail and authenticity to judgements about the "unrespectable" behaviour of British Asian residents and/or visitors. Ultimately, however, white British residents' inappropriate and/or imprecise deployment of these stereotypes in relation to British Bangladeshis and British Pakistanis led to the misidentification of low-status people and the unfair extension of discrimination faced by low-status individuals and families. Furthermore, the combination of clumsy application and the positioning of "respectable" British Bangladeshis and British Pakistanis as purveyors of "insider knowledge" about intra-ethnic stereotypes led to the reinscribing of boundaries between racial groups. We conclude that studying the cross-racial use of intra-ethnic stereotypes allows for a subtler appreciation of the complex dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in superdiverse areas.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Judgments regarding respectability are often used to draw and maintain symbolic boundaries between groups (Elias & Scotson, 1994; Skeggs, 1997). In superdiverse urban settings these judgments correspond with various categories including "race," ethnicity, a more general "foreignness," together with "established-outsider" and "established-newcomer" distinctions (Albeda et al., 2018; Wessendorf, 2020).

In many ways boundary-making dynamics underline the ability of conviviality or *convivencia* (Gilroy, 2004) to capture both the inclusionary and exclusionary realities of urban life, especially where instances of convivial practice are foregrounded (Wise & Noble, 2016). In the case of judgments about respectability, processes of othering and attempts to cross the boundaries created and reproduced by these processes involve convivial practices that vary in their duration and intensity. These range from relatively thin and effortless interactions, or easy conviviality (Wessendorf, 2020), to more strenuous, concerted attempts to negotiate concrete differences between ethnic groups, or convivial labor (Wise, 2016).

A focus on both inclusion and exclusion ensures that judgments are set in the context of structures of power and inequality with, for example, socio-economic disadvantage playing a significant role in determining the contours of symbolic boundaries (Wessendorf, 2020). More broadly, this focus reflects a critical stance in relation to the realities of superdiversity, avoiding the pitfalls of an unreflective and celebratory diversity narrative (Alexander & Nayak, 2016; Back, 2015; Rosbrook-Thompson, 2018) by remaining attentive to what Back (2009) has called the "metropolitan paradox"—that is, the co-existence of racism *and* conviviality within everyday urban settings. This paradox has also been explored in a suburban location, where notions of whiteness and everyday constructions of home shape the dynamic between inclusion and exclusion (Tyler, 2015, 2017, 2020).

Though superdiversity concerns the proliferation and accentuation of intra-ethnic differences (Vertovec, 2007), little is known about the processes of othering and boundary making which occur within ethnic groups in superdiverse areas. Where intra-ethnic boundaries upheld by judgments around respectability have been explored, such as in Charsley and Bolognani's (2017) study of the "freshie" stereotype applied to Pakistani newcomers by British Pakistanis, the focus is solely on intra-ethnic interactions and dynamics. Indeed, we know almost nothing about how such intra-ethnic boundary making (and maintenance) is drawn upon in engagement across racial lines and the convivial labor this may entail.

In what follows we use the literature on superdiversity, conviviality and symbolic boundaries to examine how intra-ethnic distinctions feature in the inter-racial exchanges which take place on a superdiverse London housing estate.[1] The focus is on white British residents of the estate who did not grow up in the area and their exchanges with neighbors and flatmates who were from British Asian backgrounds. More specifically, we explore how white British residents use knowledge of intra-ethnic boundaries gleaned from inter-racial exchanges to formulate judgments about (un)respectable behavior. Ostensibly these judgments resulted from well-intentioned attempts to understand the conduct of British Bangladeshi and British Pakistani residents and visitors in ways that were more granular and culturally aware, through inter-racial exchanges that were entered into proudly and reflected a stated commitment to perform the convivial labor necessary to live on a superdiverse estate. For example: Why were the British Bangladeshi family upstairs routinely eating so late (and noisily) at night? And how could the issue be addressed in a way that avoided racist stereotyping by showing some understanding of "authentic" intra-ethnic boundaries?

The paper supplements our knowledge of intra-ethnic boundaries by showing how these boundaries are deployed in the context of cross-racial judgments about respectability. In analyzing such judgments and the inter-racial exchanges through which they are formulated, we arrive at a subtler appreciation of how convivial labor is

implicated in the dynamics of inclusion *and* exclusion in superdiverse settings. The paper also sheds light on how everyday constructions of home—in an immediate, material sense (as residence) and more widely as a superdiverse locale—feature in urban conviviality's play of inclusion and exclusion.

In the following section we discuss existing research on superdiversity, symbolic boundaries, conviviality and convivial labor. We then describe the context of the ethnographic research together with the mechanics of the fieldwork itself. In presenting the findings of the research we detail two respective intra-ethnic boundaries that were evident on the estate, then explore how the deployment of these boundaries by white British residents involved processes of inclusion and exclusion.

2 | SUPERDIVERSITY, CONVIVIALITY, AND BOUNDARY MAKING

Back (2009) has noted the propensity of conviviality and racism to co-exist within everyday multicultural settings— what he calls the "metropolitan paradox." The paradox is poignantly conveyed in Back and Sinha's (2018) ethnography conducted collaboratively with 30 migrants in London, where convivial inter-ethnic exchanges are woven together with recollections of racism and xenophobia. Identifying superdiversity and/or conviviality with only the frictionless elements of urban life represents an unreflective "celebratory diversity narrative" (Back, 2015) which overlooks the realities of racism (Alexander & Nayak, 2016) and corresponds with a failure to interrogate how ostensibly positive, progressive attitudes to diversity may lack substance (Ahmed, 2010). Indeed, in outlining the concept of conviviality Gilroy (2004) pointed to its "negative dialectics," while Wise and Noble (2016) underline the capacity of conviviality—and, more specifically, the Spanish notion of *convivencia*—to encompass "happy togetherness" *and* negotiation, friction and occasional conflict.

Researchers have responded by charting complex patterns of inter-racial and inter-ethnic engagement in urban space and foregrounding the situated practices through which differences are identified and negotiated. In Hackney, East London, Wessendorf (2014a, 2014b) describes varying levels of engagement with the area's "multiplex differences" across public, private, and parochial spheres. Whereas in the public realm there is a "civility towards diversity" or "easy conviviality," the parochial realm (which includes places such as schools and sports clubs) demands more concrete acknowledgment of, and interaction across, categorical differences, or as Noble (2009, p. 53) described it, "the labour of intercultural community." In a similar vein, Wise (2009) has written of the "convivial labour" involved in the framing of humor in multi-ethnic workplaces. One of the forms this labor takes is "frame negotiation," which Wise (2009, p. 482) defines as "the enacted, negotiated, practiced and cumulative labour that goes into provisionally successful situations of lived difference."

This relationship between judgments of acceptability and the framing of humor in the multi-ethnic workplace is akin to the way that judgments about respectability are used to draw symbolic boundaries in diverse urban settings. For Skeggs (1997), respectability has been central to the creation and maintenance of class hierarchies and continues to exert an influence on how people behave, speak, and make decisions regarding the individuals and groups they associate with. Skeggs' work is especially relevant given its focus on how middle-class anxieties about social order are expressed through judgments relating to housing and domesticity. More specifically, Skeggs describes how judgments on the organization of the home, childcare practices, and control of family members have been used to identify unrespectable women and modes of femininity (1997, p. 11), while also stressing that access to the mechanisms used to generate and display respectability is mediated by articulations of class, race, gender, and sexuality.

In the context of superdiverse urban neighborhoods, questions of respectability are often posed in the context of debates about community, belonging and togetherness (Elias & Scotson, 1994). In investigating these scenarios researchers have employed the concept of symbolic boundaries, that is, "conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space" (Lamont & Molnár, 2002, p. 168). As Wessendorf (2020) and Wimmer (2013) have shown, this conceptual framing—which includes a sensitivity to

shifting boundaries—allows us to focus on the dynamics of exclusion *and* inclusion. This makes the approach amenable both to convivial settings, and their showcasing of "happy togetherness" and friction, and superdiversity, and its combination of inter- and intra-ethnic differences and interactions.

In Newham, East London, Wessendorf (2020) uses ethnographic fieldwork to highlight the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion drawn between established ethnic minority residents and newcomers from Eastern Europe, while noting the importance of convivial practices and matrices of power. Long-standing migrant communities claimed that new arrivals from Eastern Europe showed no willingness to "blend in," violated codes of civility and order by drinking alcohol and begging in public, and—in the context of widespread socio-economic precarity— capitalized on their whiteness by taking a disproportionate number of service-sector jobs. However, these long-standing residents also expressed empathy with newcomers based on their own parents' struggle to be accepted and an acknowledgment of the extra challenges posed by the febrile anti-immigrant politics of the Brexit referendum and its aftermath. Indeed, a small number of social programs created forums where the established-newcomer boundary was crossed via forms of convivial labor. For example, a program which ran at a local school offered cooking classes where parents from different ethnic backgrounds could break from their everyday patterns and create new forms of conviviality. Ultimately, though, this individual boundary crossing did not lead to any movement of symbolic boundaries, with socio-economic precarity and structural racism continuing to foreground differences between established and newcomer groups.

Wessendorf's (2020) focus is on how established ethnic minority groups apply their own paradigms of respectability to the behavior of newcomers from Eastern Europe, rather than the distinctions drawn within Eastern European migrant groups along the lines of respectability and any cross-racial engagement with these distinctions. Indeed, the literature on conviviality and superdiversity tells us little about the distinctions drawn within an ethnic group on its own terms. This is despite Vertovec's (2007) "diversifying of diversity" being bound up with emerging patterns of inequality, segregation, cultural mixing, and mobility which can be experienced differentially *within* ethnic groups. Charsley and Bolognani (2017) describe how the use of a particular stereotype—the "freshie"— among British Pakistanis reflects and reinscribes intra-ethnic distinctions based on notions of difference, similarity and disgust. Through an analysis of internet comedy videos and their own qualitative data, they shed light on the way that cultural and social capital, and corresponding notions of sexuality, circulate within transnational social fields in marking the "freshie," typically a recent Pakistani migrant, as a figure of abjection and disgust. More specifically, the "freshie" is "mocked for lack of cultural capital, suspect in terms of immigration status, ridiculous in their efforts towards social acceptance, and exhibiting dubious sexuality and disgusting bodily practices" (2017, p. 57). That said, these views were not held and applied uniformly. Education and social class allowed some migrants to transcend the boundaries associated with cultural capital, while a number of British Pakistani contributors to internet fora objected to new migrants being negatively stereotyped. Furthermore, the clarity of this stereotype contrasted with a blurring of the "us-them" boundary in the British Pakistani community caused by trends like British Pakistanis spending periods of their childhood or young adulthood in Pakistan.

Unsurprisingly, then, intra-ethnic boundary making is also implicated in power dynamics and situated practices. However, because Charsley and Bolognani (2017) focus on uses of the "fresh" stereotype within one ethnic group, they do not explore how these dynamics and practices may play out in cross-racial deployments of the stereotype. Also, with the authors primarily tracking articulations of the stereotype across internet platforms, we do not get a clear impression of how it may be used in private and semi-public space.

As noted by Tyler (2017, 2020), most studies of convivial, superdiverse urban settings analyze interactions and exchanges which take place in public and semi-public spaces, paying little attention to the role of everyday constructions of home in the paradoxical dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, conviviality and racism. Through a number of papers which examine the dynamic of inter-ethnic and inter-racial relationships in a suburban town within commuting distance of London, Tyler (2015, 2017, 2020) shows how white working-class residents (from English, Scottish and Anglo-Italian backgrounds) exhibit attitudes to their British Asian neighbors which encompass (and entangle) racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia together with "routine and respectable expressions of interethnic conviviality" (2017,

p. 1904). Here, various of dimensions of home and home space—including the material, ethereal and symbolic—are articulated with the white self in both including and excluding racial, ethnic, and national *others*. For example, white residents could cite the good "neighbourliness" of British Pakistanis evidenced through their participation in the day-to-day civilities and reciprocities associated with historically white neighborhoods (for example, in helping to carry shopping bags), while also endorsing stereotypical ideas about South Asian collectivism and insularity (indicated by an alleged lack of integration into the predominantly white neighborhood and nation) (2020, p. 233).

In this article we describe how white British residents of a superdiverse housing estate use inter-racial exchanges to learn about the intra-ethnic distinctions drawn by "respectable" British Asian neighbors and flatmates, then attempt to apply these to judgments about the "unrespectable" behavior of other British Asian residents and visitors. As well as documenting the forms of convivial labor involved, we ask how these exchanges reflect the metropolitan paradox together with notions of whiteness and invocations of home.

The convivial labor we describe below reflected a desire articulated by white British residents to avoid making inaccurate and possibly racist statements about their British Asian neighbors and visitors to the estate. As a result, they sought to learn more about the distinctions used *within* British Bangladeshi and British Pakistani communities through inter-racial engagement. However, despite being motivated by an anti-racist stance and an apparent desire to distance themselves from forms of extreme whiteness (Lawler, 2012), white British residents failed to appreciate key details and nuances of the intra-ethnic stereotypes they had learned about. This led to elements of each stereotype and the labels associated with them being inaccurately applied, extending the wider discrimination faced by certain British Bangladeshi and British Pakistani residents and visitors. The use of intra-ethnic stereotypes by white British residents also reinforced the boundaries *between* racial groups, as the people that white residents sought out for knowledge of intra-ethnic distinctions felt uncomfortable at being identified as purveyors of "insider knowledge," particularly where white residents went on to deploy this knowledge in an imprecise and/or inappropriate way.

3 | SETTING AND METHODS

The paper is based on four-years of ethnographic fieldwork conducted on an inner-London housing estate, Lashall Green (LG).[2] (The fieldwork was part of wide-ranging study encompassing a range of issues such as housing biographies and informality.) LG is located in Northtown, one of the most diverse areas in the UK in terms of ethnicity. According to the 2011 census, 34% of Northtown residents were from Black, Asian, or minority ethnic groups. People from Bangladeshi backgrounds represented the largest minority ethnic group in Northtown (5.67%), followed by those from Black African backgrounds (4.90%). A further 22% were non-British white residents including those from Irish and various European backgrounds.

The estate comprised 148 units ranging from studio-flats to large two-bedroom maisonettes. Of the 178 adult residents who responded to a survey, 40 (22%) identified as white British, 25 (14%) as Black African, 25 (14%) as white Irish, 22 (12%) as Bangladeshi, 13 (7%) as Kosovar, 11 (6%) as mixed white-Black, 9 (5%) as Greek-Cypriot, 7 (4%) as Pakistani, 7 (4%) as Afghan, 4 (2%) as Black-Caribbean, 4 (2%) as Arab, 2 (1%) as mixed white-Asian, 2 (1%) as white French, 2 (1%) as white Spanish, 2 (1%) as Chinese, 1 (1%) as white Italian, 1 (1%) as white Brazilian, 1 (1%) as Jewish. In line with the "diversifying of diversity" identified and explored by Vertovec (2007), there were also significant intra-ethnic differences between residents. As a result of Margaret Thatcher's Right to Buy policy (introduced in 1980), around a third of the units had been bought by tenants (a significant proportion of which—in line with wider trends—had subsequently been sold to private landlords). The majority of private renters on the estate were either students or young professionals. This range of occupancies—social housing, private renters and owner-occupiers—complicated the already diverse ethnic landscape of the estate. For example, differences along the lines of social class, generation, region, and religious observance separated residents belonging to the same ethnic group.

Throughout the course of the study, both authors were immersed in the social life of the estate and its environs. The first author, who is from a mixed-race (white-Asian) background, lived on LG for four years while working as a coach and mentor at a local school and youth club. The second author, who is from a white British background, worked for twenty years as the area's youth worker. This meant that the study's sample was skewed slightly in the direction of young people, plus residents living in the same block as the first author.

Of the 84 semi-structured interviews carried out during the project, 23 pertained to disorder, respectability, and notions of ethnic and racial difference. However, given the specific focus of this paper, we used the findings from 15 interviews as the basis of our analysis. We do not claim that the interviewees who feature here are representative of residents of all superdiverse housing estates in urban areas and do not wish to homogenize any of the groups they belong to. It is very possible that the intra-ethnic boundaries explored here are not reproduced in other superdiverse areas, and that there are white British people in superdiverse areas—those who grew up in these areas, for example—who engage with intra-ethnic boundaries differently. We follow a strategy adopted in other studies of conviviality and the metropolitan paradox (Back & Sinha, 2018; Tyler, 2020) in using a handful of cases to develop a detailed analysis of how granular intra-ethnic distinctions figure in the complex dynamics of inclusion and exclusion.

The interviews lasted between 30 and 75 min and were recorded using a digital dictation device. While the majority of the interviews took place on the estate, in interviewees' flats, shared gardens and semi-covered communal areas, others were conducted in a local youth club. Interviews were transcribed, with transcriptions and field notes coded using NVivo to identify patterns and key themes. A series of shorter, unplanned conversations was also written up and checked with discussants for fairness and accuracy. All interviewees and discussants provided full written consent for their participation in the study.

4 | INTRA-ETHNIC BOUNDARY MAKING ON LASHALL GREEN: "FRESHIES" AND "TEPIS"

"Fresh off the boat," or "freshie" in its contracted form, is a stereotype used in a number of migration contexts and transnational social fields (Charsley & Bolognani, 2017). On LG, the stereotype was used to mark intra-ethnic boundaries, with slightly different connotations and variations across ethnic groups and among clusters of "proximate" ethnic groups (especially British Pakistanis and British Bangladeshis). However, perhaps unsurprisingly given the area's history of migration-related superdiversity, the term was also used in a more general, cross-racial sense, especially among young people. This usage was reminiscent of how judgments about respectability and corresponding "us-them" or "insider-outsider" boundaries have been applied across racial groups in other neighborhood settings (Wallman, 1982; Wimmer, 2004), though, as we will see, it could also accommodate notions of intra-ethnic particularity. In this section we detail various applications of the term, while in the following section we describe how the stereotype, and a cognate term, "tepi," were deployed by white British residents during (and resulting from) inter-racial exchanges with their British Bangladeshi and British Pakistani neighbors and flatmates.

Nik, a twenty-eight-old whose Greek-Cypriot grandparents had moved to Northtown in the 1960s, lived in a ground-floor studio flat. He described how the fresh stereotype was used to mark boundaries within his peer group.

Nik: ... at school there was kids coming from all over. Nobody's really from here, right? ... we had new kids from Kosovo, Africa, added to classes where it's Bengali, Somali, Greek, Irish ... some were fresh ... But so were we!

We asked him to elaborate on what "fresh" meant in this context.

Nik: ... it was about fighting. Boys that were nervous ... jumpy ... Some of these kids came straight from war zones, man. And they could flip. From nothing to fists, weapons ... uncles! But then some of us were fresh, too. And we had been here from day (one).

Here being "fresh" is portrayed as a mindset associated with young male migrants who, because of an insecurity born of their newcomer status, would react violently if they felt challenged by other young people. Indeed, Nik's words highlight how a "civility towards diversity" (Wessendorf, 2014), conditioned by the reality that everyone was ultimately from somewhere else, could be fragile. In failing to observe rules around the acceptable bounds of conduct, young men whose families had moved from "war zones" in Africa and Eastern Europe were identified as having a distinctive potential for violence. But Nik emphasized that only some new arrivals would possess this mindset, and that other young men who had been born in Northtown could remain "fresh" in their attitudes and behaviors. His account demonstrates how the fresh stereotype had been sharpened and elaborated through convivial practices which take place in public and parochial urban settings (Wessendorf, 2014a; Wise & Noble, 2016), while supporting the assertion that, in superdiverse settings, perceptions of new migrants are shaped by individual histories of settlement and exclusion (Wessendorf, 2020).

Other young residents confirmed that while the label tended to be applied to newcomers, it could also refer to young people who had been born and raised in the area but still exhibited a "fresh" mentality. Eighteen-year-old Hiba, whose Somalian parents had settled on LG in the 1990s, explained her understanding of the stereotype.

Hiba: … it was mostly (applied to) boys, but not always. 'Cos girls could be violent too … mainly new kids but again not all the time. But (it) was not always the same. So another thing would be, not being aggy (aggressive), but being kind of naive and lagging behind, and this was the thing with some of the Bengali kids who have been here for (a long) time.[3]

So aside from violent potential, social and cultural capital were used to define "fresh" among young people, with British Bangladeshi youngsters (and, by extension, their families) being associated with this deficit. This sliding from general "fresh" criteria to more specific ethnic traits, hinted at by Nik and elaborated by Hiba, played out in the everyday social dynamics of the estate. If a young person known to be "fresh" in the sense of possessing violent potential passed through the estate, young residents tended to avoid engaging with them, beyond exchanging nods or glances. Conversely, a minority of young British Bangladeshi residents labeled fresh in the sense of being naïve and unknowing were treated with benevolence, though occasionally subjected to teasing and mild derision (sometimes from other British Bangladeshi youngsters). Other specific applications of the term came through in discussions about residents and their behavior, with one British Bangladeshi family being positioned outside the bounds of respectability.

The Osmans, who lived in a first-floor maisonette, were often criticized for their noisy, disorderly behavior, with their "fresh" characteristics being used in the drawing of symbolic boundaries. Jhanvi, a twenty-six-year-old British Bangladeshi teacher who lived in the same block, made reference to these characteristics.

Jhanvi: They make so much noise. Dad having loud phone calls in the middle of the night—obviously to family back home. Having dinner really late, too, obviously when he finishes work, with the kids running around. Bad English … not bothering to speak to people, Mum hardly leaves that place. It's classic fresh Bengalis, really!

Her comments reflect the way that notions of respectability center on the organization of the home, family life and childcare (Skeggs, 1997). And though the whole family is criticized here, the biggest share of responsibility is apportioned to "Dad," minicab-driver Abdi. While his patriarchal control of the family was itself seen as a problematic "fresh" characteristic, the fact he used this influence to orchestrate and reproduce "fresh" behavior in his wife and children compounded the problem.

The rhythm of family life was oriented around his patterns of work and a mixing of time zones. In this way, his navigation of transnational social fields was considered both unsuccessful and disruptive, while his patriarchal dominance was seen as doubly problematic given it was exercised by a man who had been born in Britain (Ahmad, 2008). Indeed, as with British Pakistani invocations of Pakistan as "backwards" in relation to Britain

(Bolognani, 2014; Charsley & Bolognani, 2017), Abdi's conduct (especially with regard to family life and ongoing ties with Bangladesh) signaled a lack of social development and excessive traditionalism.

Abdi defended his behavior: "I don't think it's fair … I go to drive, I come home … I do everything I can (to limit noise). But I have just reached (returned) after work all day. So I'm tired and just want to eat." He also commented on the decision to build close-knit family relationships: "I come out on Saturday morning with my kids to wash the car. Otherwise I don't need to come out. We don't have so many racist(s) like we did a long time ago. But we stick together still."

He explained the reluctance to venture out of the flat with his family by alluding to experiences of racism in the past. Indeed, the "ethnic capital" (Borjas, 1992) he amassed by "sticking together" came at the expense of "dominant" forms of social and cultural capital—which might have value in the mainstream labor market—as well "non-dominant" types of capital (Carter, 2003)—the kind of tastes and preferences synonymous with cultural status among young British Bangladeshis. The strategy he deployed should therefore be understood in the context of exclusion from the mainstream labor market and marginalization in relation to British Bangladeshis who possess more in the way of "non-dominant" cultural capital. In Skeggs' (1997) terms, Abdi recognized that a combination of racism and class prejudice gave him limited access to the mechanisms used to generate and display respectability.

It was difficult to identify a stereotype with one ethnic group on the estate. However, there was a term which was used almost exclusively by British Pakistani residents, though its field of application was wider than just this ethnic group. This was "tepi," a term which had similar connotations to "freshie" but elaborated on some key vectors of intra-ethnic distinction and connected them with uncivil, disorderly behaviors. We first encountered the term during a conversation with flatmates Sheri and Sheena, British Pakistanis who had moved to central London from Manchester and Southall, respectively, to study at a local university. They lived with fellow undergraduate, Amy, whose (white) Scottish parents had settled in the midlands, in a two-bedroom maisonette where the living room served as a third bedroom.

Sheri: I'm tired of ignorant people at uni(versity) or on nights out asking me about Muslims and Pakistanis. All this stuff about Pakistanis being backward, being terrorist nutters and grooming young girls in Bradford or whatever. If that stuff's even true, these are people from the total backwaters of Pakistan, different rules (apply) there. They're tepis, man. Low caste, illiterate—probably not even here legally—just don't have a clue … There's a load of these boys at the uni down the road. We literally couldn't be more different.

We asked Sheri and Sheena about the origin of "tepi" and to elaborate on its meaning.

Sheri: I don't know for sure. But you hear these boys when they're round here for house parties. They're so loud and sloppy, and the way they speak. Can't shake that accent even though they're born here … I said caste (before) but I use that (word) when I'm explaining these things to other people. It's more like families and where they're from in Pakistan … plus where they live here.

Sheena: There's the religion thing, too.

Sheri: Oh yeah. These boys claim to be religious but they will go out with white or Black (non-Muslim) girls right up until their parents sort them out (via an arranged marriage). We're not about anything being arranged.

Sheena: Yeah, totally. As we said before, we'll drink and smoke the odd zoot (joint), but that's discreet. Plus we're not claiming to be strict hijabis.

Like the "freshie" stereotype unpacked by Charsley and Bolognani (2017), "tepi" seemed to have connotations relating to language, gender, sexuality, as well as human and cultural capital, within transnational social fields. "Tepis" were identified by subtle linguistic markers, including the pronunciation of particular words and plosive sounds. These were connected with the regions and districts in which they had settled; supposedly places where British Pakistanis

from "low-status" families originating in "backward" regions of Pakistan and with dubious citizenship status stuck together and lived insular lives. The term was used exclusively in relation to men who, despite claiming to stick to religious (Islamic) codes of behavior, had relatively promiscuous sex lives before surrendering to their parents' choice of life partner. Their suspect religiosity was also reflected in their loud, brash, and "sloppy" behavior. Additionally, they possessed either no educational credentials or the "wrong" ones (despite these being awarded in the UK) (Charsley & Bolognani, 2017; Qureshi et al., 2012). As with the "fresh" stereotype applied to the Osmans, then, the "tepi" label was used to criticize someone's positioning vis-à-vis transnational social fields. The tepi's navigation of, and attempts to move beyond, his transnational social field were deemed inappropriate, inadequate, contradictory, disruptive and ultimately unsuccessful. His actions were marked indelibly by his low-status background (defined geographically in both the UK and Pakistan) and its correlates in the areas of citizenship, speech, religion and educational credentials, which scuppered his attempts at integration. This was consummated by marriage to a young woman selected by his parents and his subsequent retreat into insular, parochial, and patriarchal communal life.

5 | WHITE BRITISH RESIDENTS' USE OF INTRA-ETHNIC BOUNDARIES

In this section we explain how two white residents learned about and deployed the symbolic boundaries bound up with the "fresh" stereotype, before doing the same for the "tepi" stereotype in the case of a white undergraduate student whose two flatmates were British Pakistani.

Ann and Terry, both in their mid-to-late twenties, worked as teachers at local schools. The couple had lived in a studio flat beneath Abdi and his family for a number of years since moving to Northtown from suburban locations in the south of England. They described becoming aware of the "fresh" stereotype and learning more about the characteristics attached to it through conversations at work and on the estate.

Ann: We've had issues with the Bangladeshi family upstairs. Noise … eating very late, very late phone calls.

Terry: We're not from here so didn't know much about Bangladeshi culture … But from speaking to other teachers plus other colleagues, you could learn.

Ann: … the kids will say "fresh". We would never have used that (word) … it's helpful, because, otherwise we might have said "problem family" or, I don't know, "nuisance family". But that's too strong anyway and just not accurate really. And the last thing we want to do is start talking about, you know, race. This way just works better all round.

Terry: Plus it's nice to feel like you're settling in and learning about the place. I mean, Jhan(vi) has helped us a lot. Not just in explaining why what's happening upstairs might be happening, but in talking with Abdi for us.

Here inter-racial engagement is prompted by concerns over conduct that is perceived to be disorderly and unrespectable. Aware that their own attempts to capture the behavior of their British Bangladeshi neighbors—the "problem" or "nuisance" family—were inadequate, and wary of falling back on racial stereotyping, they used convivial labor to learn about a supposed intra-ethnic distinction. Their resulting judgment was more detailed in that it alluded to intersections between ethnicity, class, and regional differences. Also, having learned about the distinction from a British Bangladeshi, in their eyes the subsequent judgment was more authentic. It was also interesting that their judgment was formulated in the context of everyday constructions of home, in both a material sense—the practical issues of sharing a boundary with other people—and a wider, more symbolic sense—where "settling" into the locale involved learning about their new, superdiverse surroundings. As in the suburban location explored by Tyler (2015, 2017, 2020), it was possible to identify connections between these notions of home and constructions of whiteness, with Ann and Terry's conscious attempts at "settling in" seemingly motivated by a desire to distance themselves from the "hyper-whiteness" (Tyler, 2015) and "extreme whiteness" (Lawler, 2012) which the media and politicians have used to position working-class white people (Lawler, 2012; Tyler, 2015).

That said, there were important implications resulting from Terry and Ann's deployment of the stereotype. Jhanvi explained her discussions with Terry, Ann and Abdi.

Jhanvi: Yeah I've gone down and talked with Abdi. I feel (for) them as they're right below all that. So I try to be all diplomatic and explain why the family are a little fresh. But ... I'm in that weird in-out situation. And I do feel a bit uncomfortable about them (Terry and Ann) throwing the term around ... it probably helps them make sense of things, but I'm not sure they fully get it. Like, it can be awkward when they assume that because the parents are fresh the kids will be fresh in the way that the kids at school say it. I mean, those kids may miss the odd day (at school), but they aren't trouble at all.

Here Jhanvi alluded to a situation in which Terry and Ann had wrongly assumed that, as the Osman family had been labeled "fresh," the children in the family would be prone to misbehave and even act aggressively at home and at school. This was another assertion that connected practical concerns about home life (including complaints about noisy neighbors) with navigation of public and semi-public space, plus ongoing attempts to adapt to the wider superdiverse locale (Tyler, 2020). However, Terry and Ann's use of the term had not accounted for the different ways that the stereotype was deployed locally. Recall Hiba's statement above, where she described how "fresh" could be applied, on one hand, to aggressive and/or violent young people and, on the other, to those who lacked any aggression but were perceived as naïve and slow to adapt to their surroundings. For Jhanvi, Ann and Terry failed to appreciate these differences in usage. Their own deployment of the stereotype was inappropriate, likely to cause offence and could unfairly extend the discrimination faced by an already marginalized family.

Jhanvi was also uncomfortable about her ambiguous "in-out" position within these exchanges. That is, in being asked by Ann and Terry to explain what "fresh" means in the context of respectability among British Asians—and, more narrowly, among the British Bangladeshi community—Jhanvi detected a presumption on her neighbors' part regarding the underlying sameness of all members of that group. As she put it: "It's really, like, 'Tell me why that person isn't like you'. But, like, you're only asking because of where I'm from." So while the discussion between Ann, Terry and Jhanvi centered on intra-ethnic boundaries—with these boundaries ostensibly excluding a low-status, "fresh" British Bangladeshi family from the bounds of respectability—more subtly it also served to foreground the racial boundary between Jhanvi and her white British neighbors.

The way that Amy, a white British undergraduate student in her early twenties, engaged with the notion of "tepis" teased out certain characteristics of the stereotype while underlining power differentials and again reinforcing the symbolic boundaries that existed both within and between groups. She commented on getting to grips with this stereotype with the help of her British Pakistani flatmates, Sheena and Sheri.

Amy: I grew up around Birmingham so I get the "fresh" thing. But this was next level. The talking thing, I'm not sure I can even hear it now. It's pretty subtle. They get frustrated with me and try to spell it out: "Ts from the tongue, not from the teeth". But when you meet these boys it makes sense and it's like "I totally get it" ... we would say "wide boy" but that's not it. These girls have it down!

As well as underlining the subtlety of the linguistic markers attached to it, Amy's comment pointed to the granularity and assumed authenticity of the "tepi" stereotype (as opposed to an inadequate and inauthentic alternative, the "wide boy"[4]). Amy also stresses her metropolitan credentials and an ongoing willingness to perform convivial labor; like Ann and Terry above, she seems eager to construct a non-extreme, unobtrusive form of whiteness which is amenable to the superdiversity of her surroundings. However, as with Ann and Terry's use of the "fresh" stereotype, Amy's deployment of "tepi" as an intra-ethnic distinction could make her flatmates uncomfortable. Sheri described her reasons for explaining the stereotype to Amy.

Sheri: She didn't get it. But, why would she? Like, we're all Muslim but not strict. Like, no pork but anything else, fine. But we're honest about that. And don't judge. Our parents know that really but we just never talk about it. And never put it on social media. But these boys, they will do all these things but swear to their parents they aren't doing them, and then criticise us for doing the same thing. Same as they have fun with Black girls, white girls then want a "pure" hijabi bride at the end of it. And all the while their parents think they're little angels. This is why we explain it. Plus, if you saw our houses, they're the same, almost. My parents won't borrow money so there, like with Islam, the differences aren't that obvious.

Here Sheri reiterated the key vectors of difference which underpinned the use of "tepi" as an intra-ethnic stereotype. But she also elaborated on intersections between gender, religion, and class which mapped onto the differences in speech, region, and legal status outlined earlier in the paper. Tepis, so the stereotype seemed to run, were raised in families that were strictly religious and, being male, were granted an elevated status by their parents. Their straying from religious codes as young men was deemed dishonest, not only because their parents would not (knowingly) tolerate such behavior, but because they would criticize any young Muslim woman who did not conform strictly to the codes of Islam (and, by extension, with their ideal image of a prospective bride). This perceived dishonestly, hypocrisy and chauvinism made pointing out the corresponding vectors of intra-ethnic difference important. For Sheri, the absence of material differences to signal her family's higher status (because of Islamic codes which discourage moneylending at interest) made this a particularly urgent task, with intra-ethnic boundaries policed more vigilantly and "tepi" characteristics tied to intra-ethnic vectors of difference in a more specific and strident way.

Amy's application of the stereotype did not always take account of these subtleties. This frustrated Sheri, who implied that more "frame negotiation" (Wise, 2016) was required before Amy could use the stereotype appropriately.

Sheri: Amy will mess it up. Like there'll be male friends over and after they've left she'll say, "Ooh, he's a bit tepi for you". And I'll have to point out that he's not at all—just a Pakistani boy with an accent. You get mad and think, "Do you really just think we're all the same?"

As with Jhanvi, Sheri was concerned that misuse of the stereotype would extend the discrimination faced by British Asians (in this case, young British Pakistani men). She also questioned her true position in relation to the inter-racial and intra-ethnic boundaries traced during discussions with Amy about "tepis," with Amy's occasional misuse of the term serving to highlight the racial divide between flatmates. For Amy herself, the blurring of boundaries was an additional source of confusion, with her flatmate Sheena sometimes applying the stereotype to British Bangladeshi residents of the estate.

Amy: Yeah, that messes things up. I mean, sometimes just other Pakistanis, sometimes Bengalis, too.

Sheena explained the slippage in terms of social distance and, more specifically, feeling less assured than Sheri about applying the term to British Pakistanis.

Sheena: I'm not like these boys, (our) families (are) different as well. But we're not massively different. I grew up with boys like that, but now our paths aren't the same at all. Plus, you know, this area isn't very Pakistani anyway. Just loads of Bengalis … Yeah, they're Muslim like us. (But) they don't really speak English. And just stick to their own. Not like us at all.

Here Sheena blurs and shifts boundaries in ways that partially account for Amy's confusion, with context and relational differences coming into play.

6 | CONCLUSION

Building on recent attempts to bring together conviviality and boundary making (Wessendorf, 2020), along with insights into intra-ethnic othering (Charsley & Bolognani, 2017), in this paper we have examined how white British residents of a superdiverse housing estate draw on the intra-ethnic distinctions explained to them by British Bangladeshi and British Pakistani neighbors and flatmates. They used these distinctions to formulate judgments about the unrespectable behavior of other British Bangladeshi and British Pakistani residents and visitors. In doing so they underscored a number of Skeggs' (1997) assertions about the dynamics of respectability, including the centrality of organization of the home and family life to allegations of unrespectability, and differential access to the mechanisms used to produce and display respectability along various lines of social division.

The nature of the distinctions which underpinned intra-ethnic boundaries was hardly surprising. The use of the "fresh" stereotype and its assertions regarding lack of cultural capital, excessive traditionalism and positioning within transnational social fields chimed with Charsley and Bolognani's (2017) exploration of this stereotype among British Pakistanis. The "tepi" stereotype touched on similar themes, but its use placed particular emphasis on vectors of intra-ethnic difference which did not correspond with obvious signs of material wealth and status; for example, Sheri was eager to stress that although her family home may be smaller than those belonging to the parents of "tepi" young men, a set of differences relating to interpretation of Islamic codes, regional origin and place of settlement, gender relations and cultural capital set them apart.

In using their new-found knowledge of intra-ethnic boundaries to formulate judgments about British Bangladeshi and British Pakistani neighbors and visitors, the white British residents we focus on here drew on notions of home in a material and more symbolic sense. For Ann and Terry, it was the intimacy of sharing a physical boundary—with one home quite literally on top of the other—that led to concerns about unrespectable rhythms of family life. But, as they saw it, their commitment to settling and making a home in a superdiverse area entailed using convivial labor to learn about the intra-ethnic boundaries that existed within the local British Bangladeshi community. Similarly, Amy used convivial labor to learn about the intra-ethnic boundaries applied to British Pakistanis (and to a lesser extent, British Bangladeshis) by her flatmates Sheri and Sheena. This labor was performed with a view to understanding the conversations that took place in her flat and the judgments her flatmates made about the behavior of low-status visitors and acquaintances.

However, despite their proud use of convivial labor to "settle in" at home, which seemed to correspond with a desire to distance themselves from extreme whiteness (Lawler, 2012)—in favor of what they hoped would be a more unobtrusive whiteness—white British residents' deployment of intra-ethnic boundaries in the formulation of judgments about unrespectable behavior was perceived by British Asian interviewees as both offensive and exclusionary. It was not only that the reproduction of these boundaries intensified the marginalization of certain low-status British Bangladeshis and British Pakistanis. In failing to recognize some of the nuances of the "fresh" and "tepi" stereotypes, white British residents risked extending the discrimination faced by British Asians by inaccurately applying elements of a stereotype—as in the case of Ann, Terry, and the Osmans—or inaccurately labeling people—as in the case of Amy and the young British Pakistani men who visited her flat. Furthermore, the British Asian people that white residents sought to learn from—Jhanvi, Sheri, and Sheena—felt they were asked to occupy an ambiguous "in-out" position by virtue of being quizzed about intra-ethnic boundaries. This positioning, combined with the inappropriate deployment of stereotypes by white British residents, served to reinforce the divide between white British and British Asian interviewees.

Our findings add to the literature on conviviality and the realities of the metropolitan paradox by showing how intra-ethnic stereotypes are used in cross-racial judgments about respectability. Just as Wise's (2005) interviewees spoke both positively and negatively about their Chinese neighbors during a single interview, in this paper we have seen how the same act of convivial labor—engaging with flatmates or neighbors across racial lines to learn about the intra-ethnic stereotypes used to understand the reasons for unrespectable behavior—can express the subtle dynamics of inclusion *and* exclusion. Ostensibly these inter-racial exchanges

seemed to unite white British and British Asian residents within the bounds of respectability (through the exclusion of "unrespectable" British Bangladeshi and British Pakistani residents/visitors). However, white British residents' attempts to avoid making sweeping and potentially racist statements by borrowing from intra-ethnic stereotypes, especially when these stereotypes were deployed imprecisely, could still convey assumptions about the underlying sameness of British Asian communities, thereby distancing and offending even those they sought to include.

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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ENDNOTES

[1] In analyzing "inter-ethnic" and "inter-racial" dynamics we recognize the contested nature of "race" and "ethnicity" as both terms and concepts. We follow Meer (2014) in understanding ethnicity as having a looser definition than "race." That is, while the former centers on the definition of group membership along the lines of real or imagined features such as language, culture, religion and collective memory, the latter premises group membership on a supposed biological unity (often imputed to the group by outsiders). However, while this notion of "race" as an objective category has been discredited, with social scientists showing how it is the result of social construction, belief in "race" and racial difference persists and continues to have very real consequences. The proliferation of inter- and intra-group differences in superdiverse settings makes it increasingly difficult to draw a clear line between assertions of ethnic and racial difference. As a result, our use of the terms "inter-ethnic" and "inter-racial" is tentative and provisional.

[2] The names of all places and people (besides London) have been replaced by pseudonyms.

[3] There was a slippage between the terms "Bengali" and "Bangladeshi," with the terms used interchangeably by almost all respondents.

[4] The Cambridge Online Dictionary defines a "wide boy" as "a man who is dishonest or who deceives people in the way he does business."

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

WILEY

"There's just too many": The construction of immigration as a social problem

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Abstract

This article presents findings collected in 2016–2017 from a multi-method ethnographic study of Shirebrook, Derbyshire in the English East Midlands, examining the narratives used by the local authority (LA) and local residents that construct immigration as a social problem. In doing so, it contributes to the literature on race and migration by extending analysis beyond metropolitan localities with long histories of multi-ethnic settlement, to consider a relatively small, peripheral former colliery town. The paper demonstrates how migration is framed as a social problem by central government funding streams with consequences for localities, and the influence this has on local narratives of social change. The construction of immigration as a social problem is rooted in the constraints of austerity and longer-term processes of deindustrialization and economic restructuring, with representations and understandings of place being constitutive of anti-immigrant sentiment. This article deepens our understanding of responses to immigration in the UK, and has broader implications for understanding the relationship between place, state polices and local narratives.

KEYWORDS
class, deindustrialisation, ethnography, migration, place

1 | INTRODUCTION

This article examines the narratives used by a local authority (LA) and local residents that construct immigration as a social problem. Britain's post-industrial towns have been at the center of recent debates over emergent right-wing populism, represented by a number of key events, most recently including Brexit and the collapse of the so-called "red wall"[1] in the 2019 general election. Yet post-industrial towns remain relatively under-researched in the context of race and migration. This research extends analysis of race and migration beyond large urban areas with long histories of diversity, to consider a relatively small, and predominantly white, former colliery town that falls "in-between" an urban/rural binary (Burdsey, 2016; Nayak, 2010). The findings illustrate how the construction of immigration as a social problem is rooted in constraints of austerity and longer-term processes of deindustrialization and economic restructuring, representations and understandings of place, and how central government funding streams encourage local authorities to frame social problems in particular ways. The article contributes to our understanding of how immigration is constructed as a problem, exploring how this construction works through place at various scales and how place itself is constitutive of anti-immigrant sentiment. In addition to contributing to how we understand responses to immigration in the UK, there are broader implications for understanding the relationship between state policies and local narratives about migration.

The following section reviews literature on race and migration, emphasizing the significance of place and attentiveness to geographical contexts for understandings of situated encounters with racialized others. The fieldwork site, research context and methods are then discussed. Three analytical sections then follow: The first examines how migrant numbers are used to construct immigration as a social problem, foregrounding the Local Strategic Partnership's *Building Resilience* program (2017) and how this is shaped by the economic context and government funding, before documenting how the numbers game is played by the LA, and how this features in residents' interview testimonies. The second section investigates the symbolic representations of Shirebrook as both urban and rural and the variable mobilizations of these landscape representations to construct immigration as problematic and legitimize its opposition. The final section examines access to resources, in particular the LA's role in defining immigration as the cause for declining services, constructing it as *the* legitimate social problem affecting the town.

2 | PLACE, RACE AND MIGRATION

Focused on the "superdiversity" (Vertovec, 2007) and "urban multiculture" (Jones et al., 2015) of major urban settings, post-industrial towns have been largely absent from race and migration scholarship. The applicability of findings in major cities to places that are more "representative of where most of the British population is likely to be living" (Valluvan, 2019, p. 41) remains largely unknown. Changes in migration flows to areas with comparatively less historical diversity has increased this need to look beyond the city (Burdsey, 2016; Vertovec, 2007). For instance, migrants from European Accession[2] nations tend to be drawn to meet labor demands created by low-wage economies in demographically aging and depopulating post-industrial towns. Emerging sociological research has begun to focus on arguably more mundane and peripheral locations, such as Peterborough (Rogaly, 2020); Stoke-on-Trent (Burnett, 2011); northern English "mill towns" (Miah et al., 2020; Rhodes, 2011; Thomas et al., 2018); the English seaside (Burdsey, 2016; Grillo, 2005); and rural locations (Neal, 2002; Tyler, 2012). However, there are few studies of race and migration within the distinct socio-spatial context of deindustrialising colliery towns.

The urgency of extending sociological analysis of race and migration beyond metropolitan areas has been initiated by several key moments. First, to make sense of riots in several Northern English mill towns in 2001, and the electoral success of the British National Party in the early 2000s (Miah et al., 2020; Rhodes, 2011). Second, in the wake of Brexit and the collapse of the so-called "red wall" in the 2019 general election. So-called "left behind"[3] post-industrial towns were argued to be pivotal to this political realignment (Goodwin & Heath, 2016;

McKenzie, 2017); however, closer analysis of the Brexit vote suggests a more complex picture (Chan et al., 2020; Dorling, 2016). The centrality of the "left behind" to emergent forms of right-wing populism extends beyond the UK and is discussed in the context of mainland Europe (Scheiring, 2020) and the United States (Hochschild, 2018).

Attention to place is vital to understand situated encounters with racialized others (Nayak, 2010; Neal, 2002; Parker & Karner, 2010). Burdsey's (2016) conceptualization of the seaside is instructive for making sense of place's significance in relation to former coalfields. First, we are encouraged to think beyond the urban/rural binary to consider geographical "'third spaces' … that fall 'in-between' the city and the countryside" (Burdsey, 2016, p. 88; Nayak, 2010). Burdsey (2016) notes how the predominance of positioning racialized minorities within urban settings reifies an association between people and place, denying their existence beyond deprived inner-city locations. While the countryside is imagined as a timeless white space, and site of safety and retreat from urban multiculture (Neal, 2002). This illustrates "how race is spatialised and space is racialised" (Burdsey, 2016, p. 83), implicit in the "left behind" characterization of post-industrial towns which has come to signify a narrowly defined *white* (British) working-class (Bhambra, 2017; Rhodes et al., 2019).

Former mining communities provide a distinct socio-spatial location to explore race and migration. Although different to the seaside, coalfield communities can also be thought of as "in-between" urban and rural and were characterized as such in regeneration literature that highlighted how urban deprivation and decay coincides with rural isolation (Townsend & Hudson, 2005). Beynon and Hudson (2021) also illustrate the coalfields' in-betweenness through their development in the countryside away from the urban centers typically associated with industrialization. Industrial decline meant that many coalfield communities were officially (re)declared as rural without reverting "to an agrarian past" and so do not fit "easily into any map" (Beynon & Hudson, 2021, p. 236). Sociological research on coalfields emphasized physical isolation, mono-industrial character, and strong forms of social solidarity mediated and strengthened through networks associated with the colliery, trade union and welfare institutes (Bulmer, 1975). This characterization has been justifiably criticized for homogenizing mining communities (Strangleman, 2018), while others have made a distinction between tight-knit, single industry and isolated *miners'* towns, with more economically and socially diverse *mining* towns (Gilbert, 1995). Nevertheless, the physical isolation and prior dominance of a single industry is useful for contemporary understanding of many former mining communities.

The status of coal mining in the national imagination has fluctuated. Like the seaside (Burdsey, 2016) and English countryside (Bonnett, 1998; Neal, 2002), mining communities were periodically construed as sites of national pride and identity, providing the fuel to power industrial revolution and empire (Ebke, 2018). As such, the coalfields have assumed a central role in narratives of the nation, which fixes "particular types of racialised bodies within and outside it" (Burdsey, 2016, p. 19). But this elevated status was contingent. Industrialization as it coincides with the urbanization of colliery towns was also associated with racial degeneration (Bonnett, 1998) and historically miners and mining communities were constructed as a "race apart". From "the earliest days of industrial mining, metaphors of darkness, difference and racial otherness spilled out from below ground onto the face of the earth, marking off mining settlements from the rest of the nation" (Gilbert, 1995, p. 48). The status of mining communities waned after the 1984–1985 miners' strike from the "*cause célèbre* of the liberal intelligentsia" (Bright, 2011, p. 67) to the "enemy within", as labeled by then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher. After the industry ended, this status has transformed into the "left-behind", providing the basis for nostalgic narratives of "'coal nationalism' where coal is [again] turned into a key symbol of security … in relation to threatening outsiders" (Thorleifsson, 2016, p. 566). As such, coal mining communities have at various times been seen as deserving or undeserving constituents of the nation (Shilliam, 2018).

Walkerdine and Jimenez (2012, p. 55) argue that when small communities grow around an industry a strong sense of "communal beingness" develops through shared histories of social change, solidarity, trade unionism, and struggle. This has the capacity to produce a fear of outsiders and reluctance to move away. However, this potentially characterizes post-industrial communities as static, "narrow and parochial" (Strangleman et al., 1999, p. 1.1). Migration within the UK and Ireland was a feature of mining communities, with families moving from declining

coalfields to more productive collieries (Phillips, 2018), and British miners migrated to coalfields across the globe (Knotter, 2015). Gilbert (1995) illustrates this complexity, emphasizing that mining communities' identities derive from interactions with the outside world through migration, and the influence of education and popular culture. Migration included the introduction of European Voluntary Workers from Eastern Europe and Italy to the mining industry post-World War II, despite resistance from trade unions (Catterall & Gildart, 2005; McDowell, 2009). Other work has indicated diversity in the coalfields, such as a recent heritage project highlighting the role of Black and African-Caribbean miners in the UK coal industry (www.blackcoalminers.com). Tyler's (2012) ethnographic research in a former coal mining town in Leicestershire also demonstrates younger residents questioning racism and the colonial worldview of some of the town's older residents. This further problematizes the image of the narrow and parochial former coal mining community, revealing the potential for conviviality to exist alongside conflict (Karner & Parker, 2011).

Economic context is key to understanding migration in peripheral post-industrial towns. Labor demand has underpinned changing migration patterns through job growth in insecure low-waged work in former industrial areas, which relies disproportionately on migrant labor (Beatty & Fothergill, 2017). This is compounded by austerity, which has severely reduced welfare and public services, impacting Britain's older industrial areas particularly hard (Beatty & Fothergill, 2017). Hansen's (2021) recent research in Sweden challenges the conventional assumption that low-earning migrants and refugees are a fiscal burden and threat to the welfare state. Rather, Hansen (2021) demonstrates that, rather than austerity, proactive and significant increases in government spending in demographically aging and depopulating localities whilst directing migrants into those areas, leads to economic growth and increased tax revenues. But also leads to *real* resources in the form of new inhabitants and labor to offset the impact of aging and population decline. However, increased migration into an impoverished context contributes to a sense of competition between settled communities and new migrants over few resources (Lloyd et al., 2021; Miah et al., 2020). The matter is made more complex when the competition is also presented in racialized terms.

However, economic context is inadequate to make sense of responses to migration on its own. Bhambra (2017) criticizes the "left behind" conceptualization in analysis of the Brexit vote for its "methodological whiteness" which obscures the racialized narratives operating in emergent right-wing populism, as well as the impact economic restructuring has on minorities and migrants (see also Miah et al., 2020; Rhodes et al., 2019). Lloyd et al.'s (2021, p. 8) research on migration in an area still contending with the legacy of deindustrialization illustrates the fractious ways immigration is responded to in the context of perceived decline and socio-economic disadvantage. However, they offer no explanation as to why some "white" working-class residents misidentify migrants as 'the true cause of anxiety and socio-economic status', questioning whether identifying an "object of fear" is in fact racist (Lloyd et al., 2021, pp. 16–17). As Lentin (2020, p. 57) argues, the "adjudication of whether a statement, an action, or a process is racist … eschews engagement with what race *does* as a discursive and performative regime". The reduction of race to questions of individual morality therefore "bypasses a more nuanced analysis of the landscape in which these events play out" (Lentin, 2020, p. 58). This is significant in the context of widespread popular and political anti-immigrant sentiment, particularly in the lead up to the EU referendum (Mondon & Winter, 2020; Moore & Ramsay, 2017; Virdee & McGeever, 2018). Anderson (2017, p. 1533) contends that Brexit resulted from 'multiple policies that disenfranchised and impoverished millions of people on the one hand, and years of setting up "migrants" as the reason for the lack of jobs, low wages, [and] poor public services'. This leads us to question what role the state and media play in constructing racialized interpretations of social problems whilst simultaneously obscuring alternative accounts.

Media representations of recent East European migrants use a number of well-worn racialising frames to construct them as threatening and "not white" (Fox et al., 2012; Rasinger, 2010), contributing to the shaping of public perceptions of migration (Blinder & Allen, 2015). Drawing on Bourdieu's (1991) theory of symbolic power, Tissot (2018, p. 151) demonstrates the "social production of social problems" via state policies aimed at strengthening community cohesion and the categorization of particular French urban neighborhoods as "sensitive areas".

Implicit in these policies was a racialising frame that constructs immigrants as "people who created social ills" rather than face them (Tissot, 2018, p. 153). Therefore, the state plays a key role in defining problem populations and constructing which social problems are to be perceived as legitimate. A second consequence of this policy framing is that 'problems' are framed as local level cohesion issues divorced from broader systemic inequalities. In the UK, community cohesion and integration policies are similarly active in the construction of social problems, as well as place-images including categorizing so-called "failed spaces of multiculturalism" or identifying the "white" working-class as a threat to national cohesion (Jones, 2015; Miah et al., 2020; Thomas et al., 2018). In their extensive research in the satellite "mill towns" around Manchester and Leeds, Miah et al. (2020, p. 246) note that community cohesion policy portrays "both 'race' and the agency of racialised 'communities' as being causal to the (real and substantial) social problems and challenges of the region".

Although post-industrial decline is experienced by a multi-ethnic working-class, right-wing populism's racialising frame means that reaction is increasingly articulated through a politics of English nationalist resentment in public discourse, particularly where there is a declining class trajectory (Mann & Fenton, 2017; Virdee & McGeever, 2018). The long-term impacts of industrial closure in the coalfields are demonstrated by Beynon and Hudson (2021), not only due to the destruction of the economic base, but also in terms of a loss of status within the national economy and loss of culture and identity. Additionally, coalfield communities felt abandoned by the Labour Party and their failure to address gradual decline. As Makin-Waite (2021) illustrates in relation to Burnley, the former mill town, loss of faith in traditional political affiliations creates a void for populist nationalism to exploit. As such, it follows that resentment is likely to be present in deindustrialising coalfield communities and can be expressed through themes of entitlement to welfare, housing, jobs and health care, as well as "fairness, civility, loss of community, political correctness and the lack of voice" (Mann & Fenton, 2017, p. 39).

In sum, this article contributes to the literature by extending analysis beyond established multi-ethnic metropolitan localities to consider a much smaller former colliery town, foregrounding the significance of place in our understanding of how immigration is responded to. In doing so, the role of central government funding streams in framing how social problems are perceived is highlighted and the implications this has for localities.

3 | METHODOLOGY

This research draws on data collected in Shirebrook, a town in the Bolsover district of Derbyshire approximately five miles from Mansfield. The decision to use Shirebrook's real name in any outputs from this research project was due to the presence of much-publicized sportswear retailer, Sports Direct's warehouse meaning that, even with a pseudonym, identifying Shirebrook would be relatively easy. Coal mining dominated much of Shirebrook's history, triggering its rapid development from a small rural settlement of less than 600 people in 1891 to a town of 11,116 by 1911. By Gilbert's definition, Shirebrook was a *miners*' town, characterized as "tightly-knit single-industry communities, socially and often geographically isolated and distinctive" (Gilbert, 1995, p. 51). Widespread deindustrialization from the 1980s directly impacted the town; Shirebrook colliery, which employed 2000 people, closed in 1993, and a substantial number of jobs were lost in the manufacturing and textiles industries in the wider area. Subsequently, the coalfields have been blighted by persistent economic and social problems (Phillips, 2018).

As part of the regeneration work intended to offset the impact of the colliery's closure, Sports Direct relocated their head office and main distribution warehouse to the site of the former colliery. Sports Direct is a sportswear and equipment retailer focusing on the provision of a wide range of products, high levels of stock, and cheap pricing. By 2016 at Sports Direct's Shirebrook base there were around 200 directly employed permanent members of staff, and 3000 temporary agency workers working primarily to dispatch items to Sports Direct's physical stores and for online orders. Sports Direct is typical of the low-waged and insecure work that has moved into Britain's former industrial areas, which relies disproportionately on the young and migrant labor (Beatty &

Fothergill, 2017). An exposé of the working conditions in the Shirebrook warehouse caught the attention of the local and national media (Goodley & Ashby, 2015), leading to a parliamentary select committee investigation into working conditions. Following this, several articles appeared in the national press blaming East European migrants, drawn in to Shirebrook to meet Sports Direct's labor demands, for social problems in the town (Moore & Ramsay, 2017).

Shirebrook's overall population declined between 1981 (11,077) and 2011 (10,885) (Centre for Towns, 2021), rising slightly to a mid-2017 estimate of 11,750 at the time of fieldwork (ONS, 2020). Average age increased considerably between the 1981 and 2011 censuses: Over 65 s have increased by 28.3%, whilst 16–24-year-olds have decreased by 24% and under 16 s by 20.1% (Centre for Towns, 2021). The aging of small towns brings policy challenges for healthcare, transport, housing, and education (Warren, 2018), and is likely to draw in migrant workers to meet any new labor demands. Shirebrook's population was 94.8% white and British in 2011 (Derbyshire Observatory, 2020). Data on EU migration for a relatively small area like Shirebrook are difficult to attain; however, Bolsover had one of the largest increases in non-UK born residents in the East Midlands between 2001–2011, the majority of which are from Poland (Migration Observatory, 2017). Shirebrook is the most deprived town in Derbyshire, with high levels of child poverty and fares poorly on deprivation indicators for housing, economy, education, and health, and wellbeing (Derbyshire Observatory, 2020). Shirebrook has one of the lowest (pre-Covid) economic activity rates in Derbyshire (63.7%) yet relatively low unemployment rates due in part to the "hidden" unemployment frequently found in post-industrial towns (Beatty et al., 2007). Employment in Bolsover is primarily in care, services and elementary occupations, average pay is below the national average, and the East Midlands has one of the highest concentrations of temporary agency workers anywhere in the UK (Ball et al., 2017).

This research draws on data collected as part of a multimethod ethnographic study exploring economic and social change conducted between October 2016 and December 2017. The ethnography included 667 h of participant observation in a variety of public settings including the high street and marketplace, community events, cafes, pubs, library, and council and community group meetings. I also volunteered at two organizations: a welfare rights center that provided advice for people navigating the benefits system, support with appeals and tribunals, and foodbank referrals; and at English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes organized by Unite the Union. Research methods included biographical interviews, photo-elicitation interviews, participant observation and document analysis. This paper focuses primarily on data collected from documentary analysis, particularly the Bolsover Partnership's (2017) *Building Resilience* program: a successful bid for funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government's (DCLG) Controlling Migration Fund (CMF) led by the Bolsover LA. The CMF has its origins in the Labour government's 2009 Migration Impacts Fund, which was scrapped by the coalition government in 2010 and then reintroduced as the CMF in 2016. Its purpose is to help local authorities manage the impact of migration in local communities (MHCLG, 2018). Biographical interviews are also a main source of data for this paper. These were conducted by the author with 27 participants lasting between 45 min and two hours. The sample included 15 men and 12 women aged between 22 and 74; all were white, 17 were born in the UK and 10 were Polish. The biographical focus was designed to capture temporality, including the life trajectory of the participants, trajectory of place and narratives of social change. The focus on trajectories of life and place is pertinent to the analysis because it enables participants to provide accounts which they use to make sense of their present position. Questions were organized around six broad themes: home; family history; work history and economic life; the everyday; Shirebrook; and the future. Participants were recruited through the ethnographic fieldwork. The data were managed and analyzed thematically using NVivo software. Codes were developed flexibly, guided by the literature but also emerged from the data itself. Fieldnotes and transcripts were initially coded in vivo when themes relevant to the theoretical framework were identified. This bookmarked sections of data from which further codes were developed iteratively between theory and data. As analysis progressed codes were reorganized by deleting, combining and renaming.

4 | FINDINGS

4.1 | The numbers game

This section examines how migrant numbers are used to construct immigration as a social problem. Analysis foregrounds the Local Strategic Partnership's *Building Resilience* program (2017) and how this is shaped by austerity and government funding. The analysis will then explore the way numbers are used by the LA and how they feature in interview testimonies with residents. According to the program website (Bolsover Partnership, 2021), an increase in migrants settling in Shirebrook intensified pressure on public services and heightened community tensions. This led to a visit from representatives of the DCLG, who invited the Bolsover Partnership to apply for resources from the CMF, which successfully secured £1.26 m of funding in 2017. It is not the intention of this paper to assess the impact of migration on Shirebrook. But the initiative itself, framed by the CMF, played a key role in constructing immigration as a problem before we even look at the narratives within the document. The first issue to consider is austerity and the significant reduction in local authority budgets known to have impacted poor communities, like Shirebrook, particularly hard (Fitzgerald, 2018; Gray & Barford, 2018). These cuts mean that local authorities must act to find alternative funding sources to meet demands. The DCLG invited the Bolsover Partnership to bid for money from the CMF and so local issues *must* then be framed in relation to immigration if they are to access much-needed financial resources, despite a lack of evidence to suggest immigration increases pressure on resources (Portes, 2019; Thomas, 2019). The role of LAs is politically restricted to the local situation and available funding streams, making it difficult for them to identify social and economic issues originating from national decision making as the source of problems (Jones, 2015, p. 126). This means that the impact on local communities, resources and services potentially emanating from other processes such as deindustrialization and austerity—neither of which feature in *Building Resilience* (Bolsover Partnership, 2017)—are disregarded and immigration persists as the sole contextualization for social issues. Therefore, as "specialists in symbolic production" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 168), the LA, via a central government funding stream, designate immigration as *the* legitimate social problem effecting Shirebrook, which has the power to shape public perception of migrants and immigration.

The LA's adoption of the concept of *resilience* is also influenced by "political and bureaucratic structures" (Jones, 2015, p. 127). Resilience discourse has come to prominence as a local and central government policy agenda, particularly in the context of austerity and the promotion of voluntarism and localism. There is significant academic debate over the concept (e.g., Dagdeviren & Donoghue, 2019; Hickman, 2018) but broadly, resilience policy involves placing responsibility onto civil society and individual community members and away from the state in the context of hardship, and is increasingly mobilized in relation to immigration and "community cohesion". Recent work by the anti-racism group, Hope not Hate, has situated anti-immigrant sentiment in English and Welsh towns as an issue of community resilience (Clarke et al., 2020). Garratt et al. (2021) note how resilience discourse in relation to community cohesion extends threats to resilience beyond shocks created by capitalism, to particular sections of the population. "Resilience, as an alleged imputed quality of communities implies, above all, their capacity to maintain themselves in the face of change" (Garratt et al., 2021, p. 58). Therefore, by mobilizing resilience in the context of immigration, the *Building Resilience* program constructs migrants and immigration as the threats Shirebrook residents must be resilient in the face of.

The logic of numbers is a key feature in migration discourse and, while the *Building Resilience* program plays the "numbers game" (Fox et al., 2012, p. 686), their account of population change is difficult to make sense of. They claim at the 2011 census that there has been a "significant change" in "Ethnic Minorities being 624"; that there has been a 'change' of 477 "in country of birth" across Shirebrook's five wards; and that there have been 684 National Insurance Registrations (Bolsover Partnership, 2017, p. 4). However, there is no indication of the time period over which these changes have happened. Significantly, they state the total population as 13,300, but this is for the electoral division which includes the neighboring village of Pleasley, yet they divide the population between Shirebrook's five wards, effectively adding the population of a whole village to Shirebrook's South East ward (Bolsover Partnership, 2017, pp.

3–4). This gives the impression that Shirebrook's population has grown by 2888 from 10,412 in 2001, rather than the actual increase of 473 to 10,885 in 2011 (Centre for Towns, 2021). This modest increase of 4% is significantly less than the 7% population growth for the UK as a whole (ONS, 2011), and longer-term census data suggest that Shirebrook's total population has remained relatively consistently around 11,000 over the last 100 years. The issue is not so much about accuracy of the numbers of migrants in Shirebrook, and the lack of clarity in the *Building Resilience* program demonstrates the known difficulties in measuring immigration (Anderson, 2017; Devanney et al., 2021); rather, the issue is about what these numbers represent. Devanney et al. (2021) note local and central governments' overreliance on statistical data in the formation of immigration policy. The logic of numbers appears objective and appeals to common-sense ideas about place as a container that becomes "full" (Charteris-Black, 2006). As Anderson (2017, p. 1529) argues, the state is "always open to the charge that there are "too many" migrants".

Participants' accounts of the impact of immigration on Shirebrook were often ambivalent. The same person could remark on how migrants had contributed to the revitalization of the town but then, through the logic of numbers, argue that there were simply 'too many' in Shirebrook. For example, I asked Victoria, a 35-year-old unemployed hairdresser, how Shirebrook had changed:

> Obviously the ratio of people, or the influx of Eastern Europeans has sort of boosted the population I think really … But I think at the end of the day, Shirebrook was going quite downhill before Sports Direct opened and the Eastern Europeans came over. I mean for example, there's quite a few Polish shops on the marketplace and things like that. But if they hadn't've opened, the marketplace would've been an absolute dive because things were just closing one after another … I just think that has made a difference in the fact that it has kept things open, it's kept thing running in Shirebrook. The income is still coming into Shirebrook instead of going out to wherever … Now I think the population seems to have just rocketed, which is ok but it's then starting to drain the resources … The main problem is the fact of just purely the amount of people, there's just not enough space, I suppose, for that many people.

Victoria's account demonstrates the complex way many residents interpret change in Shirebrook. On the one hand immigration is interpreted as positive in terms of a much-needed boost to the declining marketplace, but on the other is construed as a drain on resources and the idea that Shirebrook is an already full container that cannot accommodate more people (Charteris-Black, 2006). Residents' ambivalence is significant because it demonstrates the potential for a positive interpretation of migrant presence and so does not suggest a resolute anti-immigration stance. However, in the context of strained material circumstances and a sense of competition over few resources, the prevailing interpretation is that there are "too many" immigrants in Shirebrook which is legitimized and sustained by the framing of social problems by the LA via the CMF and heightened anti-immigrant discourse more broadly. Migrant numbers were also articulated in both policy and interview data using liquid metaphors, known to contribute to othering (Fox et al., 2012):

> The *flow* of migrants from EU countries continues via the recruitment agencies employed by Sports Direct. (Bolsover Partnership, 2017, p. 5, emphasis added)

> Over the years the Market Square in Shirebrook has become uninviting and tired which has subsequently diminished many opportunities to thrive and has attracted higher Anti Social [sic] Behaviour following the *surge* of migrant workers.
> (Bolsover Partnership, 2017, p. 22, emphasis added)

> When yer live in an area where erm, yer've got an *influx* o'people and yer've lost control over it … it meks yer think it's about time we did summat about this. (Craig, a 47-year-old, works in the building trade, emphasis added)

Fox et al.'s (2012, p. 687) analysis of the racialization of Eastern European migration in the tabloid media demonstrates how news stories about migrant numbers "invite concerns and even incite fear". The use of liquid metaphors exacerbates these concerns and presents immigration as out of control, illustrated by the above quote from Craig. The idea of control is particularly significant and is not simply about loss of control over the movement of people, but is intimately linked to loss of control over social change (Charteris-Black, 2006). As such, these metaphors evoke memories of a more meaningful past which is, by contrast, disrupted by change for the worse and so resonate with fears associated with a loss of power and status. The idea of control then, is about controlling the 'negatively evaluated social changes' (Charteris-Black, 2006, p. 573) which has come to be represented by migrants via populist nationalism and the CMF's framing of social problems.

4.2 | Material and symbolic landscapes of place

This section draws on Shirebrook's "in-betweenness" that sees it represented as both urban and rural. The materiality and esthetics of place will also be explored, demonstrating how the town's perceived decline is used to position immigration as disorderly and out of place. In the opening pages of the *Building Resilience* program Shirebrook is described as one of Bolsover's "most deprived ex-industrial communities" (Bolsover Partnership, 2017, p. 2). This characterization draws on typologies associated with urban localities to rationalize that immigration into an area already struggling with deprivation and economic change is problematic (Burdsey, 2016). The use of 'deprived' alongside 'ex-industrial' also carries symbolic weight, signifying the "left behind". Even when these terms are used in reference to areas with larger multicultural populations, as demonstrated in Rhodes et al.'s research (Rhodes et al., 2019) in Oldham and Miah et al.'s (2020) in Dewsbury, the constituency imagined as 'left behind' is a working-class that happens to be white. As such, Shirebrook is constructed as a place where at best there are "legitimate" concerns about immigration, and at worse potential volatility toward outsiders (Miah et al., 2020; Thomas et al., 2018). Elsewhere in the document the Local Strategic Partnership switches to instead invoke a sense of rural nostalgia and stable white Englishness disrupted by the arrival of Eastern European migrants:

> Bolsover district has seen increases in Eastern Europeans over the last decade. Being a small rural district, with a static population of 75,866 representing a higher percentage of white, UK born British residents (Census 2011) the increase is significant. (Bolsover Partnership, 2017, p. 3)

Jones et al. (2015) illustrates how nationalist narratives of British identity, imagined to be white and unchanging but under threat from emergent multicultural forms of Britishness, is a feature of community cohesion debates. These narratives are particularly effective in relation to the countryside which has a long history as a foundation of English national identity (Bonnett, 1998; Neal, 2002). As such, "[t]he narrative of a countryside invaded by immigrants invokes unspoken connotations of both race and nation" (Jones, 2015, p. 46).

In an interview, Sheila, a 54-year-old voluntary worker, drew on Shirebrook's older "pit *village*" identity to invoke an image of a rural location unable to accommodate migrants:

> You can't just chuck immigration into a small, it's not a town, it's a village. You can't. Market town? Come on, you can't just chuck that into a small village wi'out no back-up structure. You can't do that, it's never gonna work, it's never gonna be viable, you will always get these problems. Probably in cities and that you can get away wi' a lot more. But even in cities you've still got your subcultures ant yer, cus you'll go to a part of Sheffield and it's all like Pakistanis and there's a white part of Sheffield, but you can't have those subcultures in little tiny villages wi'out it causing problems.

Sheila stresses that Shirebrook is a village through opposition to the practice of rebranding former coalfield communities as "market towns" after deindustrialization (Bright, 2011). First, she justifies the need for greater immigration controls through the invocation of Shirebrook as a "tiny little village" that lacks the "back-up structure" to absorb migrants, indicating the already strained material conditions there. Significantly, migration into the town is not only a recent phenomenon. Post-war European Voluntary Workers moved to Shirebrook and, as a productive colliery, mining families migrated to the town from declining coalfields between the 1960s and 1980s, obtaining council houses in the town's new estates. Relative prosperity and the way collieries invested in the communities they were embedded in at that time (Beynon & Hudson, 2021) meant that any impact from migration was less obviously felt. However, in the context of austerity and disinvestment strained material conditions *are* felt and are interpreted as resulting from immigration when framed that way by the LA and the CMF and in the context of heightened anti-immigrant sentiment in political and public discourse. Second, Sheila contrasts Shirebrook with existing fragmentation in the city, by focussing on the "village" element of Shirebrook's older "pit village" identity she invokes the image of a tight-knit traditional community where emergent diversity would inevitably be problematic.

Using other localities as metaphors to make community cohesion intelligible also works though place. Policy practitioners in Jones' (2015) study primarily used metaphors to present a positive image of their own LA by contrasting it with other places known for community cohesion problems. Jones (2015, p. 114) notes how particular place names require no further elaboration to provoke "imagined geographies of cohesion" because of locally and nationally recognized associations between the place and the problem. For example, in the period after the 2001 riots, Oldham and Bradford were frequently named to signify ethnic segregation and tension. In the *Building Resilience* program, place metaphors were used to indicate the type of place Shirebrook is, and the problems faced:

> A Community Cohesion Conference was organised by Bolsover Partnership in November 2014 attracting 70+ stakeholders, demonstrating the importance that partners attribute to addressing the issues of migration and the effects on local communities and service providers. Colleagues from Boston Borough Council and Nottingham City Council were invited so partners were able to hear of their experiences and approaches in dealing with the impact of migration on their communities. (Bolsover Partnership, 2017, pp. 6–7)

The reference to Nottingham, one of the closest major cities to Shirebrook, arguably signifies a metropolitan multi-ethnic urban area with long histories of multiculturalism (e.g., McKenzie, 2015, pp. 31–34). This positions Nottingham City Council as an authoritative figure on community cohesion that the Local Strategic Partnership can learn from, Shirebrook is then imagined in opposition to this: as a non-urban area negotiating immigration for the first time. Post-referendum, Boston in Lincolnshire, is arguably a clearer metaphor for cohesion problems. A highly segregated, semi-rural area with a high concentration and rapid increase of Eastern European migration, Boston received considerable media attention after recording the highest "Leave" vote in the 2016 EU referendum (Lumsden et al., 2019). As such, Boston signifies the type of community cohesion issues faced in Shirebrook though EU migration and the backlash against this represented by Brexit as "white" working-class rebellion. The Bolsover Partnership then build further on the signified fear of a racist white backlash by commenting that "tensions within Shirebrook … escalated to the point where some members of the resident community demanded action this including [sic] organised marches and demonstrations" (2017, p. 7), and how this caught the attention of the local and national media (2017, pp. 8–12).

The *Building Resilience* program builds on heightened tensions by drawing on the significant media gaze trained on Shirebrook triggered by revelations over working conditions at Sports Direct and stories about migrants' use of public space including claimed anti-social behavior and street-drinking attributed to Polish "culture" (Bolsover Partnership, 2017, pp. 6–11). There is a strong emphasis on integration, a term mentioned 18 times in the document, suggesting relationships in Shirebrook are fractious and appealing to broader concerns associated with ethnic segregation and community cohesion (Lentin & Titley, 2011). For example: "The pace and nature of change and the resulting

sense of powerlessness contribute to growing levels of resentment and creates barriers to integration and community cohesion" (Bolsover Partnership, 2017, pp. 17–18). This signifies the presence of a migrant population unwilling or unable to integrate with a resentful "white" working-class. Much of the discussion relates to "differences in culture" and, drawing on media representations, there is a suggestion that street drinking is an undesirable feature of Polish culture that requires intervention (Bolsover Partnership, 2017, pp. 12, 31–33). This is a racialising discourse, which positions Polish culture as inferior and incompatible with the dominant English culture (Patel & Connelly, 2019; Virdee & McGeever, 2018). But this is also reflective of Shirebrook's aging population and the relative differences in ages between settled and new migrant populations. The anxieties associated with anti-social behavior are embodied by young men, so while overall population numbers have remained relatively static, the ethnic composition by generation has changed.

The concern over the presence of migrants and their use of public space is also articulated through both the materiality and esthetics of place. An increase in the number of Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMO) to accommodate migrant workers is argued to have contributed to growing community tensions and complaints from Shirebrook residents, initiating an increase in Environmental Health issues, including rodent infestations, domestic noise, housing disrepair and overcrowding, fly-tipping, and abandoned vehicles (Bolsover Partnership, 2017, pp. 26–28). Migrants' use of Shirebrook marketplace is associated with it becoming "uninviting and tired" (Bolsover Partnership, 2017, p. 22), which is responded to with initiatives aimed at esthetic improvement. First, this includes "painting the shop fronts and buildings in the market square" to support "a vibrant and inviting place where the existing residents will want to visit", leading to a reduction in anti-social behavior (Bolsover Partnership, 2017, p. 22). Second, Bolsover Partnership (2017, pp. 30–33) propose to improve migrants' awareness of "social norms" by implementing "Nudge Theory principles":

> Spraying foot prints on the walk ways in the square will direct individuals and groups to key points such as seating and waste facilities to further support the reduction in ASB [Anti-Social Behaviour] incedents [sic] in the market square. This will lead to a reduction in groups "hanging around" and litter around the square

Smith et al. (2021) illustrate how everyday esthetic judgments are potentially racialising through repeated juxtapositions of the material consequences of poverty, such as squalor and disorder, with the presence of diverse populations. The examples above demonstrate this relationship which is compounded by proposed interventions aimed at establishing integration through orderliness, reinforcing the notion that "perceived disorder or messiness of local space can thus be taken … as aesthetic evidence of … (racialised) disorder" (Smith et al., 2021,p. 105). These dynamics associated with "culture" and the materiality and esthetics of place also featured in interviews:

> Their culture as well has ruined this area … Because of what was going on, their way of life, they don't drink indoors their socialising is outside and that's causing trouble … Yer can go anywhere and there's beer cans galore … under a tree or a lamppost and you'll see a pile of cans … They were crapping, all that kind of thing, sex in the bushes, all in a park where children are goin' to school. (Henry, 74-year-old, retired postal worker)

We do not drink on our parks, simple as … This is not the Shirebrook way, I do not know if it's a city way but it's not a Shirebrook way. We do not drink on parks, we do not make noises or drink where our elderly are (Sheila)Henry draws on the materiality and esthetics of place through reference to litter, sex, crap and toilet paper ascribed to the faulty culture of Polish migrants said to have "ruined" Shirebrook. Sheila's account works through place differently, marking

Polish culture and the 'city way' as inferior to the 'Shirebrook way', signifying a homogenous imagined community characterized by civility and moral superiority.

The construction of immigration as a social problem in Shirebrook is rooted in the material and symbolic land-scapes of place. The significance of Shirebrook as a former mining town, and as such "in-between" urban and rural localities, is illustrated through these examples. Representations of the town shift dependent on the argument and the imagery wished to be invoked to construct immigration as problematic, whether that is a deprived "left behind" town with the potential for populist backlash, or a hitherto static and tight-knit rural village with no prior experience of immigration.

4.3 | Access to declining resources

The final section examines access to resources, in particular the LA's role in defining immigration as the cause for declining services, constructing it as *the* legitimate social problem effecting Shirebrook. The *Building Resilience* program states that immigration has led to:

> a strain on public service providers such as the Police with the number of ASB [Anti-Social Behaviour] Hate Crime Dispersals, the Fire Service with HMO [House of Multiple Occupancy] issues and fires, Community Safety Team, the Local Authorities and Town Councils, HMO Enforcement, litter and detritus, Social Services, School numbers of pupils and Health providers with double appointments. (Bolsover Partnership, 2017, p. 3)

The program focuses significantly on Shirebrook Health Centre, where it is said that "migrants" needs have placed a significant strain on their service and this has impacted upon local residents such as by the increased use of double appointments' (Bolsover Partnership, 2017, p. 36) to allow time for translation for non-English speakers. The impact immigration has on health services is debated. Devanney et al. (2021) found increased pressure on some GP practices in areas already suffering from the impacts of multiple deprivation, and also noted that healthcare professionals high-lighted how the use of interpreters had implications for service delivery. However, other research has found that any impact from immigration on NHS waiting times was limited to immediately after EU accession in 2004 in deprived areas outside of London, and more broadly there is little evidence to suggest that immigration has a negative impact on the NHS (Giuntella et al., 2018; Wadsworth, 2013) or is a burden on welfare in general (Hansen, 2021).

There are alternative explanations for any decline in services at Shirebrook Health Centre, but which remain absent from the *Building Resilience* program. First, as is common amongst villages and small towns across the UK, Shirebrook has an aging population (Centre for Towns, 2021) which has greater healthcare needs putting increased strain on health services (Warren, 2018). Second is Shirebrook's poorer than average health (Derbyshire Observatory, 2021)—a common feature of the former coalfields (Beynon & Hudson, 2021)—and how health inequalities have been exacerbated by austerity and welfare reform (Bambra & Garthwaite, 2015). Austerity has also negatively impacted on real-term healthcare spending despite its apparent protection from cuts (Fetzer, 2018; Taylor-Gooby, 2012). Hansen's (2021) research in Sweden demonstrates that migration actually generates increased revenue, rather than the orthodox interpretation of low-wage migration draining resources. However, this surplus is also stimulated by investing government grants into the demographically aging and depopulating localities where migrants are then di-rected to, rather than attempting to balance the books through austerity, or by creating a stratified system that denies migrants access to welfare (Hansen, 2021). A key difference is that the investment in Sweden that Hansen (2021, p. 183) highlights is proactive: migration coincides with significant investment which benefits the locality and so is seen as a "blessing" rather than burden. The CMF, however, is reactive where investment is understood as necessary to "fix" problems attributed to migration. The key point being that the DCLG, through the CMF, compels the Local Strategic

Partnership to use immigration as the foremost contextualization for any strain on resources. The symbolic power of the state works "to impose a … way of seeing the social world" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 106), and so constructs immigration as the principal social problem effecting Shirebrook. This framing has the power to (re)produce negative perceptions of immigration and can intensify competition over entitlement to declining resources.

The perception that immigration is a drain on resources was evident in the ethnographic data. In particular, I encountered rumors that Polish migrants received preferential healthcare treatment and that there were particular days of the week dedicated to treating them. Healthcare was also brought up in interviews too, for example Michelle, a 48-year-old homemaker, commented:

> They [the doctors] have to have two appointments when they see a foreigner so somebody can translate for 'em, and apparently [the doctor] said that just lately it's gonna get to the point that they can't tek no more people on cos they just haven't got the room to do it, so yer back t'infrastructure

Craig also associated immigration with declining resources:

> there's just too many of them and that's not their fault … I'd like to know how much extra revenue the town and the district councils have got because these migrant workers must be paying some sort of council tax and rates … I mean the Health Centre asked for £600,000 to extend the building so that they could see more people and they said no

Both of these accounts work through the materiality of place, and the recognition that Shirebrook is poorly resourced and yet the participants rarely associated this with austerity. Craig's comment that any pressure on resources was "not their fault" again demonstrates participants' ambivalence with regard to migrants' presence, and both quotes could be interpreted as recognition of the pressure of a growing population on resources. However, it is worth reiterating that there has only recently been a modest increase in Shirebrook's overall population after several years of decline. Craig also recognizes that migrants contribute through "council tax and rates" but any redistribution from that is not felt in Shirebrook. In the context of austerity, the decline in scope for councils to address local issues is well known (Makin-Waite, 2021), which is exacerbated by an aging population and the impacts of deindustrialization. There is a very real sense of pressure on declining resources, but this is interpreted as a problem created by immigration in the context of the CMF framing and heightened political and popular anti-immigrant discourse.

Jobs were also articulated as resources impacted by immigration. For example, Simon, a 51-year-old, unemployed due to ill health, argued that migration had impacted wages and availability of work:

> Yer've got thousands of Polish people coming in, I mean I like Polish people, they're nice people, but it's gonna grate on people's nerves intit, when they can't get jobs. Here though [in] Shirebrook, there is a racist element, yer 've got to say that there is, although I can understand it … The thing is when you bring people in from like another country, like Poland … it's gonna lower the wage rate for local people

Again, Simon demonstrates an ambivalent response and appears uncomfortable aligning himself with what he recognizes as racialized attitudes but does suggest resentment that immigration is a threat to the material conditions of Shirebrook's British-born residents (Mann & Fenton, 2017; Patel & Connelly, 2019). Sports Direct is typical of the low-waged precarious work created in the former coalfields (Beynon & Hudson, 2021) and former industrial areas more broadly (Beatty & Fothergill, 2017). Older male former industrial workers can more easily opt out of the labor market thanks to generous redundancy payments, occupational pensions and industrial injury benefits, but this is more difficult for the young (Beatty & Fothergill, 2017). However, Shirebrook's aging population means there are

fewer young people who, along with migrants, are more frequently drawn into precarious labor (Ball et al., 2017). Additionally, low-wage economies mean "that even two incomes could not compare with wages earned in the mine" (Beynon & Hudson, 2021, p. 231), and so low-wage precarious work is arguably uneconomical for those with dependents (Shilliam, 2018). As such, migrant workers are drawn in to meet labor demands. Therefore, "the consequence of migration has not been to increase unemployment or drive down wages" (Beynon & Hudson, 2021, p. 230). Rather, migration is an outcome of deindustrialization but is construed as a threat in the context of decline and heightened mainstream anti-immigrant discourse.

5 | CONCLUSION

This article has contributed to scholarship on race and migration by extending analysis beyond large metropolitan areas to a place "in-between" an urban/rural dichotomy through the consideration of encounters with racialized difference in a former colliery town. This is significant because post-industrial towns have been central to debates over emergent forms of anti-immigrant populism in recent years. The construction of immigration as a social problem is firmly rooted in the economic context and the impacts of austerity, deindustrialization and economic restructuring. Through the concept of "resilience" the burden of negotiating the shocks of uneven capitalist development is placed on civil society and individual community members, and where social problems are located as emanating from particular populations, such as migrants, who are constructed as a threat to community resilience. Despite the difficulties measuring any impact caused by immigration (Anderson, 2017; Devanney et al., 2021), it is constructed as a threat through the logic of numbers which draw on the idea there are simply "too many" for a place to contain. This is particularly potent in an impoverished context when the suggestion is that migration is out of control, evoking fears over negatively evaluated social change and loss in power and status.

The construction of immigration as a social problem is also rooted in the material and symbolic landscapes of place. Here, the significance of the "in-betweenness" of isolated former coalfield communities comes to the fore, demonstrated at once though urban invocations of a deprived "left-behind" town unwilling or unable to accommodate racialized others, and a rural stable white Englishness disrupted by the arrival of Eastern European migrants. The everyday esthetics of place are significant here too, and the racialising frame which constructs messiness and disorder as evidence for the need to intervene in the faulty culture of racialized outsiders. Finally, access to declining resources in the construction of immigration as a problem was articulated by residents through a racialized politics of resentment over rightful access. The decline in availability or quality of services was articulated as emanating from the pressures of immigration and rarely interpreted as resulting from austerity or economic restructuring. This contrasts against the findings described by Hansen (2021, p. 185), where migrants settling in smaller depopulating municipalities "rejuvenate ageing communities and add real resources that support the sustainability of welfare services and the local tax base". A fundamental difference being that the Swedish government departed from austerity measures and instead, purposely and significantly increased spending in migrant-receiving municipalities, meaning that immigration was seen as an opportunity for declining communities. However, in the UK and constrained by austerity, the CMF works backward compelling local authorities to frame migration as a burden that needs to be managed in order to receive a cash injection. A key strength of this research is that data are collected at a range of analytical scales and so the role of the LA, framed by central government, in constructing immigration as the legitimate cause of social problems at the expense of alternative explanations is made evident. This paper demonstrates the symbolic power of the state to construct immigration as *the* foremost social problem effecting Shirebrook, and the interplay this framing has with local narratives. Negative evaluations of immigration were not necessarily universal across all of Shirebrook's settled residents, and many of my sample demonstrated ambivalent attitudes revealing a complex combination of both positive and negative readings of population change. However,

framing of immigration as the legitimate social problem affecting Shirebrook has the potential to produce, incite or legitimize anti-immigrant sentiment, directing residents toward nationalist populism and intensifying competition over scarce resources.

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ENDNOTES

[1] The term "red wall" entered the UK political lexicon in 2019 to describe traditional Labour voting seats across the English North and Midlands that were won by the Conservative Party in the 2017 and 2019 general elections.

[2] European Accession refers to the expansion of the EU in 2004 to include Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia; and the inclusion of Bulgaria and Romania in 2007.

[3] The "left behind" is a term that first appeared to make sense of emergent support for far-right and right-wing populist parties, such as the British National Party and the UK Independence Party. In particular, it gained traction in relation to the 2016 EU referendum and refers to a predominantly white and English working-class said to be marginalized by globalization and deindustrialization and alienated by liberal political values, immigration and multiculturalism (Rhodes et al., 2019).

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

WILEY

Dynastic cores and the borrowed time of newcomers. Wealth accumulation and the Norwegian one percent

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Abstract

This paper explores the trajectories of Norwegians who, in their late-thirties, possessed financial assets, such as securities, company shares and stocks, qualifying them as the wealthiest one percent nationally. We describe the accumulation of financial wealth over a 25-year period in adulthood and study how different wealth sequences are linked to family origins and kinship ties. Although some Norwegians manage to build up large fortunes from relatively modest starting points over their life courses, we find that the value of the assets possessed by self-made individuals, and their ability to retain wealth over time, differ significantly to those based on dynastic lineage. Among the latter group, profound wealth early in adulthood and strategic positions in the economy add to propel exponential ownership of financial wealth from a young age and throughout adulthood. This chimes with C. Wright Mills' suggestion that the amassing of great fortunes is driven by two mechanisms of the *big jump* that enables initial asset build-up, and the *accumulation of advantages* that flows from advantageous economic and social ties. Kinship seems of key importance to ensure the efficacy of both mechanisms. Differences in the relationship of wealth

accumulation and class origin seem to have little to do with educational strategies. We draw attention to direct wealth transfers and the institution of marriage as two little explored dimensions involved in dynastic closure.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Recent concerns about increasing economic inequalities are often situated in terms of notions of the wealthiest 'one percent.' In studies of wealth concentration, the rich usually appear as a somewhat abstract category, with unclear demographic foundations and contradictory traits, such as being increasingly self-made (Kaplan & Rauh, 2013), while relying increasingly on inheritance (Piketty, 2014). Thus, the lack of sociological knowledge about the wealthy—a concern repeatedly voiced by sociologists from the early (e.g., Sorokin, 1925) to the late phases of the 20th century (e.g., Giddens, 1976; Rubinstein, 1977; Scott, 1982)—still holds true. By addressing questions about the wealth trajectories, class origins and closure strategies of possessors of top-level wealth, this research contributes by fleshing out the social characteristics of this abstract category and offering new insights into how privileges become accelerated over the life course.

In Scandinavian countries, there is a growing body of literature highlighting the centrality of inheritance in amassing great fortunes (Hansen & Wiborg, 2019) and the profound concentration of top wealth in those countries (Hansen, 2014; Pfeffer & Waitkus, 2021). Thus, notions of dynastic tendencies in Scandinavian countries have recently emerged (Björklund et al., 2012; Hansen, 2014; Sjögren, 2018). This gives rise to a fascinating paradox, given that these societies often receive attention for their alleged egalitarianism. Whereas housing wealth is important in stratifying wealth inequalities among the Norwegian population at large, a growing concentration of top wealth in recent years is driven by the accumulation of financial assets, such as stocks and securities (Aaberge & Stubhaug, 2018). This suggests that concepts such as 'the one percent' point to groups that are not merely distinct in society due to their ownership of vast wealth, but also due to positions of power that may enable them to control the means of production and the means of finance.

Curiously, the increasingly and enduringly powerful propertied classes are not at the forefront of current leading approaches to empirical class analysis (although some exceptions exist, see e.g., Flemmen, 2012; Savage et al., 2015; Wodtke, 2016). This is unfortunate, not only because capitalist property is immanently linked to capital accumulation in classical class theory (Savage, 2015), but theoretical concerns with strategies of reproduction and social closure offer important perspectives on the biographical experiences of the wealthiest (Bourdieu, 1996; Savage et al., 2005). In wealth scholarship, different types of assets are often treated uniformly (e.g., Adkins et al., 2020; Piketty, 2014). Conflating different sources of wealth, such as housing wealth and ownership of productive and financial assets, downplays the distinct social relationships that arise through the organization of private property in capitalist society (Wright, 2005, pp. 137–138).

Instead of studying great wealth by summarizing different types of assets, we focus on financial assets—such as company shares, stocks, and securities—which we believe are closer to the conventional interest in capitalist property ownership in advanced societies. We add to this literature by studying six Norwegian birth cohorts who, in their late-thirties (in 2004), possessed financial assets qualifying them as the wealthiest one percent nationally.[1] We ask whether these individuals enduringly or exponentially own top financial wealth over the life course and

in what ways are different wealth trajectories shaped by class backgrounds and kinship ties? Our aim is to cross-fertilize insights from both class analysis and scholarship on wealth inequalities and contribute to these research fields in two interrelated ways.

First, we offer a comprehensive map of how top financial wealth is accumulated over a period that covers most of adulthood. By using social sequence analysis, and studying a 25-year panel, we construct a typology of the various pathways to the accumulation of financial wealth among individuals from their mid- to late-twenties into their fifties. Our findings demonstrate how wealth tends to 'monopolize new opportunities for getting "great wealth"' (Mills, 2000[1956], p. 105). While some individuals exponentially accumulate wealth throughout adulthood, others seem to be living on borrowed time.

Second, we follow Piketty's (2014) central thesis of the return of patrimonial capitalism and explore class origin. Here, we use a detailed class scheme to separate a small, dominant category of managing directors, business leaders and top-level business professionals—what we dub an economic upper class – from a category endowed with more cultural than economic capital, such as elite professionals, higher-level civil servants, professors and architects. We link our typology of wealth sequences to class origin and find that the likelihood of owning top one percent financial wealth throughout adulthood is disproportionate to having parents with significant control and ownership of capital. Our findings offer little support to the notion that formal skills and educational credentials are the most important factors in mediating class privilege, even when measuring credentials in a rather granular way.

In order to dig more deeply into the kinship structures of these wealthy individuals, we turn to multiple correspondence analysis to study family resources as interrelated to, rather than as independent from, each other. Significantly, we include two underexplored dimensions of dynastic closure—extended family ties through parents-in-law and the role of homogamy, and the direct transfer of economic capital through inter-vivos gifts and bequests. Our study reveals significant variation in the biographical experiences of the wealthy in Norway, most clearly demonstrated by a contrast between *newcomers* from modest family backgrounds and *dynastic cores* from backgrounds of profound privilege. These different family contexts are significantly associated with exponential growth of financial assets in adulthood. In closing, we draw attention to the wider implications these biographies of affluence may have for the social, political, and cultural dimensions to social inequality in general and in the Nordic welfare regime in particular.

2 | WEALTH ACCUMULATION AND DYNASTIC WEALTH

There are *intergenerational* aspects to Piketty's (2014) interdisciplinary intervention. Capital in the 21st century, he writes, is driven by the return of 'patrimonial capitalism' where inherited, rather than self-made, wealth is the key to gaining top wealth. But how important is inherited capital among today's capitalists? Scholars are divided on the matter. On the one hand, some studies conclude that self-made wealth has become more common and that the proportion of inheritors among the super-rich has declined over time (Edlund & Kopczuk, 2009; Khan, 2012). According to Kaplan and Rauh (2013), rather than being wealthy heirs, today's super-rich have accessed higher education and used their skills in profitable and booming industries. Indeed, education, net of income differences, has been shown to propel the accumulation of wealth in terms of both pace and size (Killewald et al., 2017, see also Keister, 2005).

On the other hand, Keister and Lee (2014) have shown that top income and wealth distributions only partly overlap and that the importance of inherited wealth is greatest among those at the top of both distributions. A number of Scandinavian studies has also demonstrated the strong reproduction of top wealth between parents and children (Boserup et al., 2018; Gustavsson & Melldahl, 2018; Hansen, 2014; Melldahl, 2018) and the influx of the upwardly mobile into top wealth categories has declined in recent decades (Hansen, 2014). A recent study even suggests that family origins not only help attain the largest fortunes but also affect the likelihood of successfully

retaining such wealth over time. By focusing on the super-rich Forbes lists in the USA, Korom et al. (2017) have found that inheritors are more likely to be relisted over time compared to the self-made super-rich.

According to C. Wright Mills, two crucial mechanisms enable the 'appropriation of big money' and the amassing of great fortunes over an individual's economic career. First, he points to the centrality of a *big jump*, which entails coming 'into command of a strategic position which allows him [they] the chance to appropriate big money.' This is usually dependent on having secured a big enough sum of money for top-wealth accumulation. Once the big jump has been achieved, the amassing of further wealth is secured through a second mechanism, *the accumulation of advantages*. The more that is achieved in the 'big jump' the easier it is to accumulate wealth: 'the more he [they] has, and the more strategic his [their] economic position, the greater and the surer are his [their] chances to gain more' (Mills, 2000[1956], pp. 110–111). *The accumulation of advantages* is contingent upon both 'psychological readiness' and 'objective opportunities', and is facilitated by advantages associated with positions in the economy, social networks and membership to 'important cliques', 'inside information' and so on.

Of course, Mills emphasized that both mechanisms are often ensured through the privileges that flow from coming from a wealthy family. Inheritors may take advantage of big jumps made by their predecessors. Illustrative of this phenomenon in present-day Norway is the fact that three out of the 10 richest (dollar) billionaires under the age of 30 in the world are Norwegian heirs.[2] Research has shown that wealthy Norwegian parents transfer wealth to their children at a young age, helping propel wealth accumulation in adulthood (Hansen & Wiborg, 2019). Here, we explore the role of bequests and inter-vivos transfers among the super-rich. To our knowledge, this has not been previously studied.

Yet, the impact of class background on wealth accumulation may also be mediated by educational credentials. Selective education may ease access to the highest-paying jobs, with lucrative opportunities for savings and easy access to advantageous credit (Dwyer, 2018; Fourcade & Healy, 2013); or selective educational backgrounds may forge network ties with educational alumni that prove beneficial to subsequent business and investment opportunities (Pinçon & Pinçon-Charlot, 1999, p. 222). Indeed, educational qualifications account for approximately one-quarter of the intergenerational reproduction of wealth (Pfeffer & Killewald, 2015). On the other hand, evidence from Sweden suggests that reproduction via the education system is less persistent among the wealthiest family dynasties, probably reflecting the vast 'freedom from economic necessity' that flows from large fortunes (Melldahl, 2018, p. 444).

In addition, class origins may channel a host of social and cultural mechanisms beneficial to the accumulation of wealth and the likelihood of experiencing the *accumulation of advantage* (Pinçon & Pinçon-Charlot, 1999).[3] Children who grow up in wealthy families with business backgrounds may develop field-specific dispositions, or a 'psychological readiness', to use Mills' term, that help shape their inclinations to engage successfully in the accumulation of profit (Hartmann, 2000; Kuusela, 2018; Neely, 2018). They may benefit by developing 'financial literacy' (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2014), and gaining access to professional consulting and management services (Glucksberg & Burrows, 2016; Harrington, 2016; Herlin-Giret, 2021), which help them to secure profitable returns on assets. Moreover, kinship ties may provide ample opportunities through social networks and career opportunities in general, or through family-owned businesses in particular (Allen, 1987; Carney & Nason, 2018; Korom et al., 2017; Mills, 2000[1956]). Family-owned businesses are a large, important part of the Norwegian economy and family representatives are often involved in managing company boards (Berzins et al., 2018). Research also suggests that originating from a wealthy family provides a safety net, mitigating the potentially adverse repercussions of making risky investments while bolstering the pursuit of elite careers (Pfeffer & Hällsten, 2012; Toft & Friedman, 2021).

Familial ties beyond parents may also help propel wealth accumulation. Not only can spouses and in-laws benefit those who marry into wealthy families, but wealthy families may join forces through marriage. Marriage strategies may, as such, constitute strategies of reproduction (Bourdieu, 1976, 2014) and serve as distinct sources of elite closure (Kocka, 1984; Mills, 2000[1956]). Recent Scandinavian evidence suggests that the wealthiest families are increasingly marrying homogamously (Wagner et al., 2020) and that the likelihood of upper-class homogamy is more persistent for the children of the upper class than for upwardly mobile 'newcomers' (Toft & Jarness, 2021).

Attending to these dimensions, our study comprehensively maps the role of parents-in-law and the institution of marriage in stratifying the life courses and biographical experiences of those who amass great fortunes in Norway.

3 | THE ECONOMIC UPPER CLASS IN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC COUNTRIES

In Norway, the concentrated affluence and intergenerational reproduction of wealth at the top end of the distribution is found to be similar to that of most European countries (Hansen, 2014; see also, Pfeffer & Waitkus, 2021). Generally, financial wealth is unequally distributed to a greater extent than composite wealth that includes fixed assets, such as home ownership (Hansen, 2012). As in the USA, Norway has witnessed a u-shaped pattern over time, with a recent intensification of high-end inequality (e.g. Alstadsæter et al., 2018, Table A10). This seems to suggest the position of a thriving class of capitalist owners has been strengthened in recent years.

This may seem surprising, in light of widespread notions of Scandinavian egalitarianism. The Nordic model entails comparatively generous public services, such as education and health services, active labor market policies, insurance schemes in case of sickness or unemployment, and centralized wage bargaining. The Nordic countries have generally been found to have high-fluidity with regard to class mobility and wage elasticity (Corak, 2013, but see Bukodi et al., 2020). Although the Nordic model strongly regulates employees' working lives, it does not strongly regulate capital.

A number of scholars have linked this u-shaped pattern of high-end inequality to policy changes starting in the 1980s, including the deregulation of credit markets, the easing of restrictions on financial markets and a reduction in capital gains tax.[4] Most recently, inheritance tax has been abolished and wealth tax reduced (Aaberge et al., 2018). Moreover, Norway has experienced rapid economic growth since the early 1990s, with a booming oil industry and surging property values, in an environment that has provided ample opportunities for wealth accumulation. Since the 1990s, wealth inequalities have also been increasingly stratified by class origin, suggesting that wealth-based opportunity hoarding is on the rise in Norway (Hansen & Toft, 2021).

In sum, even though Norwegian society has comparatively high fluidity rates, compressed wage distribution and safety nets provided by a comprehensive welfare state, these coexist with concentrated affluence at the top of society and, possibly, the development of wealthy dynasties enduring over generations (Björklund et al., 2012; Hansen, 2014).

4 | DATA AND METHODS

4.1 | Data

The panel structure of the registry data allows us to study wealth accumulation at an individual level over a 25-year period, covering important periods in the working lives of 1963–1968 birth cohorts. We study individuals in these birth cohorts who owned financial assets in 2004 that placed them in the national one percent, i.e., at ages 36–41. This population is chosen because we can study individual-level wealth sequences during the majority of adulthood and pay attention to the period before and the period after the one-percent threshold. It should be noted that those who own wealth at this level in their late thirties are not representative of the national one percent, who tend to be older. Among those who were older in 2004, however, our ability to study inter-vivos transfers from early ages is limited. Moreover, we find that the class origins of these younger age groups among the one percenters are not particularly distinct in comparison to those of older ages. We chose 2004 because it permits the study of wealth accumulation during important moments of adulthood (from ages 25–49 for the 1968 birth cohort and 30–54 for the 1963 birth cohort). This particular year does not seem to offer any specific
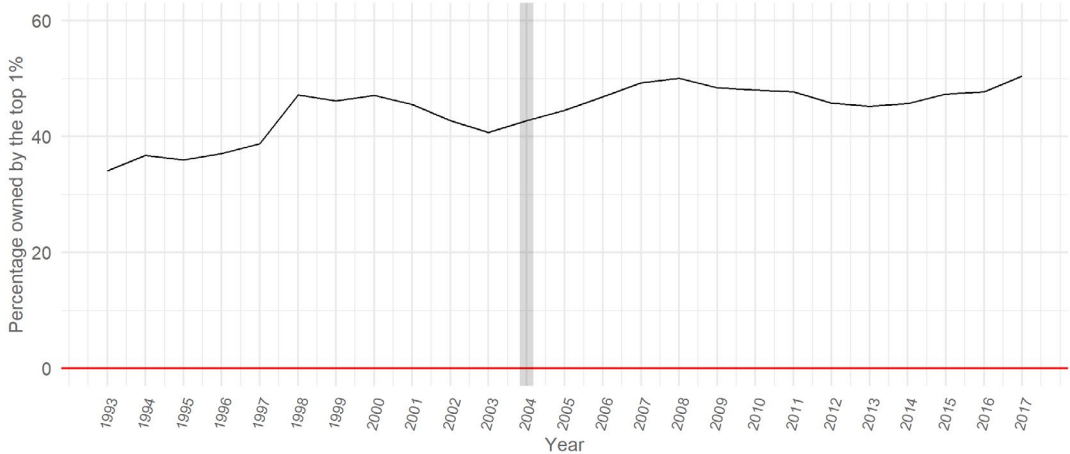
FIGURE 1 Percent of total financial wealth in the working-age population (ages 25–60) that is owned by the wealthiest one percent [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

challenges with respect to period effects. As seen in Figure 1, the share of financial wealth owned by the wealthiest one percent grew steadily in that period and 2004 does not seem to have been a deviant year. Notably, we see that, by 2017, the wealthiest one percent owned half of all financial wealth among the working-age population.

4.2 | Variables

We study the accumulation of financial capital, including liquid assets of various types, such as shares in stock funds, bonds and money market funds, bank deposits, listed shares, stocks, and holdings from other securities. There are significant benefits to the use of these data. They are not self-reported, nor are they restricted to the population whose wealth exceeds a certain tax limit, which is often a limitation to the use of wealth data from other sources. However, an important limitation is that wealth hidden to evade tax could not be recorded. As tax evasion is more common among the super-rich (Alstadsæter et al., 2018), this may lead to an underestimation of class inequalities in wealth attainment. In addition, real estate, land and ownership in unincorporated businesses were included as real capital in the registers.

For each year, we divide the distribution of financial wealth among the working-age population[5] (ages 25–60) into categories by inserting cut points at percentiles 50, 75, 90, 95, 99, and 99.9. These categories serve as the different states in the sequence analysis that we employ to analyze trajectories of wealth accumulation over a 25-year period.

The majority of those who own financial assets at the national one percent level qualify as capitalists in most class schema. Yet, in order to understand the class situations *within* this group, we construct a detailed categorization to differentiate between those who were self-employed/proprietors/rentiers (SPRs), executives, business professionals, and non-business employees in 2004. SPRs are defined as those whose capital income exceeds their labor income, or those without occupational affiliations; they are differentiated from top-level executives who are corporate heads of either small or large enterprises. Business professionals are those who are occupationally active in business, such as the financial industries, but who do not have executive positions. The aim of this category is to capture the growing importance of 'financial intermediaries' and auxiliary professionals in advanced financialized economies (Folkman et al., 2007). Finally, we separate individuals who hold assets at the level of the national one percent but who are occupationally active in non-business activities, such as the cultural industries or state administration (Gustavsson & Melldahl, 2018).

The class position of parents, siblings (including step- and half-siblings), partners and parents-in-law are based on the Oslo Registry Data Class (ORDC) scheme (Hansen et al., 2009), shown in Figure 2. The scheme explicitly aims to capture the upper class and to recognize divisions within this group according to the Bourdieusian principle of capital composition, where economic capital is differentiated from cultural capital. In our analyses, we collapse this division within the lower-middle class, as our main interest is to contrast the most privileged class backgrounds with those who possess the fewest resources (the unskilled working class). The economic upper class consists of positions assumed to possess considerable control and ownership of capital, such as business leaders, executives, and top-level business professionals. The cultural fraction reflects occupations thought to possess power in terms of national cultural expressions and representation, such as academics, museum directors or architects, while the balanced fraction typically includes the elite professions (e.g., lawyers, civil engineers) or top-level bureaucrats and state functionaries (e.g., secretaries of state, department heads).

Parental occupation information is taken from the 1970 and 1980 censuses. We define class origin based on the parent who occupied the highest vertical class position. If both parents occupied positions at the same vertical level, but in different class fractions, we prioritize the economic fraction over the cultural fraction or 'balanced' fraction. The same procedure is followed for the class positions of parents-in-law. Extended-kinship variables are analyzed using multiple correspondence analysis in order to study them as interrelated, rather than independent of each other (as described below). Here, we are mainly interested in kinship ties associated with positions of power and ownership. The variables and the categories are shown in Table 1.[6]

Parental wealth is the sum of the net worth of the mother and father ((finance capital + real capital) − debt) when their offspring was 36 years of age. We follow the same procedure for in-laws. Bequests and inter-vivos transfers capture the total sum transferred from 1995–2013. As direct monetary transfers may trigger exponential capital accumulation over time, we also use a categorical variable to study the timing of the first transfer, as outlined in Table 1. For net worth, bequests and inter-vivos transfers, we calculate the percentile distribution for the total birth cohorts and insert cut-points, as shown in Table 1. For the cut-points of in-laws, we use the values of the distribution of parental net worth to provide comparable categories.

To assess the importance of educational credentials for mediating class origins, we start our analysis by exploring how the relationship between class origin and wealth sequences is affected by a control for educational
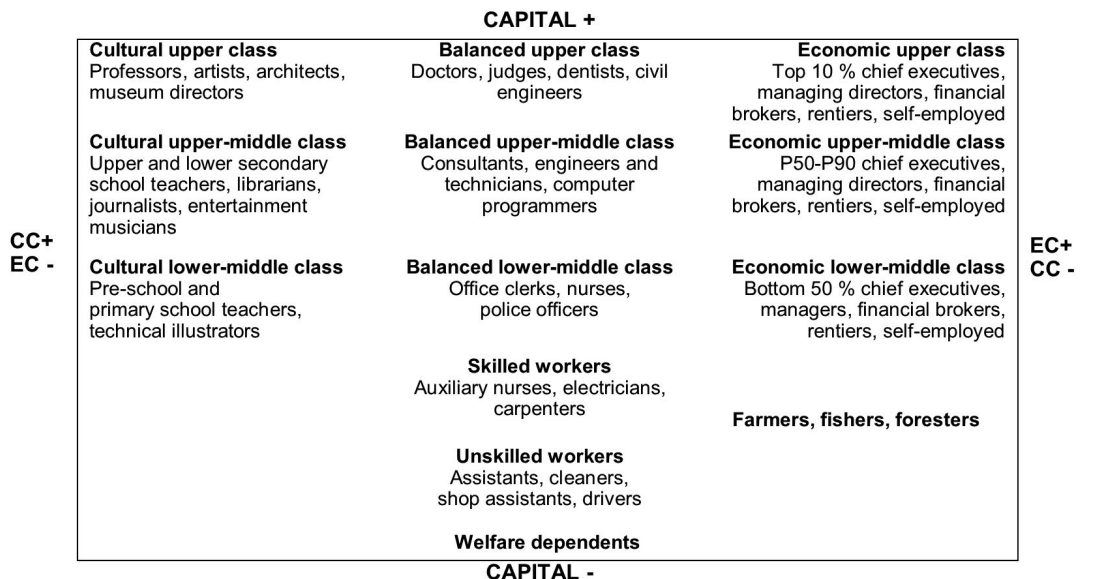

CAPITAL +

	CC+ EC -	Cultural upper class Professors, artists, architects, museum directors	Balanced upper class Doctors, judges, dentists, civil engineers	Economic upper class Top 10 % chief executives, managing directors, financial brokers, rentiers, self-employed	EC+ CC -
		Cultural upper-middle class Upper and lower secondary school teachers, librarians, journalists, entertainment musicians	Balanced upper-middle class Consultants, engineers and technicians, computer programmers	Economic upper-middle class P50-P90 chief executives, managing directors, financial brokers, rentiers, self-employed	
		Cultural lower-middle class Pre-school and primary school teachers, technical illustrators	Balanced lower-middle class Office clerks, nurses, police officers	Economic lower-middle class Bottom 50 % chief executives, managers, financial brokers, rentiers, self-employed	
			Skilled workers Auxiliary nurses, electricians, carpenters	Farmers, fishers, foresters	
			Unskilled workers Assistants, cleaners, shop assistants, drivers		
			Welfare dependents		

CAPITAL -

FIGURE 2   The Oslo Register Data Class Scheme (ORDC) with example occupations

TABLE 1 Descriptive statistics for the 1963–1968 birth cohorts, by one percent-status in year 2004. Variables for the specific multiple correspondence analysis to the right. Missing variables are deemed to be 'passive' (p) in the analysis, meaning they do not affect the results (Hjellbrekke, 2018)

	Analytical sample	Remaining pop	Variables for the multiple correspondence analysis	Analytical sample	Remaining pop
♀ (%)	21.63	49.29	Class origin (%)		
Number of children in year 2003 (%)			Other uppper class	11.14	5.97
No children	11.91	14.90	Economic upper class	13.13	1.14
One child	11.10	14.32	Other upper-middle class	9.66	10.43
Two children	39.73	38.58	Economic upper-middle class	20.31	6.95
Three children	28.85	23.48	Lower-middle class	15.53	17.54
Four or more children	8.41	8.71	Skilled working class	7.35	13.40
Parental net worth at age 36			Unskilled working class	14.09	27.92
Mean	15,900,000	2,620,946	Farmers/fishery/forestry	6.84	5.63
Standard deviation	42,200,000	6,611,500	Missing (p)	1.96	11.01
Mean (€)	1,560,704	257,265	Parental wealth (%)		
Wealth transfers, 1995–2013 (mean)			<p25	7.61	20.65
Inter-vivos transfers and bequests	2,553,307	658,001	p25/p50	8.86	21.88
Standard deviation	5,961,126	1,289,439	p50/p75	13.64	21.87
Mean (€)	250,626	64,588	p75/p90	15.24	13.01
Educational length (%)			p90/p99	29.24	8.47
Obligatory education	10.53	22.63	Top 1%	20.60	0.70
High school	40.63	43.09	Missing (p)	4.81	13.42
Bachelor's	35.04	23.55	In-law wealth (%)		
Master's or higher	13.67	7.55	<p25	11.46	15.01
Missing	0.13	3.18	p25/p50	14.38	16.46
Class situation in year 2004 (%)			p50/p75	17.65	16.27
SPRs	47.69	0.41	p75/p95	21.66	14.30
Executives	29.11	4.66	Top 5%	11.33	3.73
Business professionals	5.26	9.07	Missing/no partner (p)	23.52	34.23
Non-business employees	15.69	61.37	Siblings' class position (%)		
Outside of the labour force	0.00	13.17	None in the economic upper class	56.58	87.31
Missing	2.25	11.32	1 in the economic upper class	26.41	7.79
Has a partner (%)			>=2 in the economic upper class	12.13	0.75
No	12.74	19.41	Missing/no sibling (p)	4.88	4.16

TABLE 1 (Continued)

	Analytical sample	Remaining pop	Variables for the multiple correspondence analysis	Analytical sample	Remaining pop
Yes	87.26	80.59	Partner's class destination (%)		
			Other uppper class	8.28	6.73
			Economic upper class	11.91	5.28
			Cultural middle class (up+low)	6.48	5.38
			Balanced upper-middle class	7.61	8.49
			Economic upper-middle class	5.71	4.17
			Balanced lower-middle class	12.80	7.68
			Economic lower-middle class	9.34	6.83
			Skilled working class	5.91	12.86
			Unskilled working class	9.63	13.96
			Outside of the labour market	9.60	9.21
			Missing/no partner (p)	12.74	19.41
			In-law class position (%)		
			Upper class	12.20	5.46
			Other upper-middle class	10.01	7.81
			Economic upper-middle class	9.72	5.39
			Lower-middle class	15.05	13.50
			Skilled working class	9.40	10.22
			Unskilled working class	16.66	21.18
			Farmers/fishery/ forestry	4.59	4.40
			Missing/no partner (p)	22.37	32.05
			Bequests and inter-vivos gifting, 1995–2013 (%)		
			Not recieved	44.83	71.44
			Median and less	14.96	14.38
			p50/p75	11.33	7.16
			p75/p95	15.08	5.68
			p95/p99	7.32	1.10
			Top 1%	6.48	0.24
			Timing of first wealth transfer (%)		
			Not recieved (p)	44.83	71.44
			1993/1997	15.56	4.70

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

	Analytical sample	Remaining pop	Variables for the multiple correspondence analysis	Analytical sample	Remaining pop
			1998/2000	12.52	5.15
			2001/2007	18.87	10.99
			2008/2013	8.22	7.73
			N	3,116	409,992
			%	0.75	99.25

qualifications consisting of 74 unique combinations of educational field and educational level. To provide an indication of the educational backgrounds of the Norwegian one-percenters, Table 1 outlines the highest education level attained.

Table 1 illustrates the selectivity of our analytical sample in comparison to the complete 1963–1968 birth cohorts. The individuals who possessed financial assets that qualified them as the wealthiest one percent nationally in their late-thirties were disproportionately from very wealthy and privileged families, on average they received large amounts of direct wealth transfers, and a significant proportion of them had one or more siblings in economic upper-class positions. Compared to the population at large, they tended to have higher levels of educational attainment and were married to partners from disproportionately well-resourced backgrounds and social classes. Importantly, the Norwegian one-percenters are overwhelmingly men.

4.3 | Methods

Sequence analysis offers a way to study trajectories in an exploratory and holistic manner.[7] Most techniques for dealing with traits that vary over time emphasize one temporal feature, such as a specific transition or the duration of a state. Sequence analysis is holistic in that it searches for similarities between trajectories with respect to the entire list of states in a timeline.

First, dissimilarities are calculated by producing a pair-wise dissimilarity score between all the sequences in the data. This offers a quantification of the degree of dissimilarity between each sequence pair and scores are then mobilized to group similar sequences into a typology. The aim is to provide a simplified depiction of how 'ideal-typical sequences' evolve over time (Abbott & Hrycak, 1990).

To calculate the pair-wise dissimilarities between sequences, we employ the widely used optimal matching algorithm. The degree of dissimilarity between sequences amounts to the efforts required to turn one sequence into another through three elementary operations: insertion, deletion, and substitution. Each operation is assigned a cost that is modeled by the researcher. Different strategies can guide the costs assigned to the substitution of one state for another or the cost for inserting and deleting states (indel) in a sequence. We generate substitution costs by calculating the absolute difference in the mean levels of wealth between two states, making substitutions involving states that are far apart in the wealth distribution more costly than transitions that are closer in worth. Indel operations are less sensitive to the timing of states in a sequence and since we believe timing to be of great theoretical importance when modeling wealth accumulation, we follow the common practice of setting the indel costs to half the maximum substitution cost (Lesnard, 2014).

We then subject the resultant dissimilarity matrix to hierarchical agglomerative clustering using the Ward procedure in combination with PAM-clustering (partitioning around the medoids), as suggested by Studer (2013).[8]

We decide on the number of clusters to include in our typology by gauging different measures of the quality of each partitioning, as well as stressing the sociological interpretability of the types produced (see Appendix A for quality statistics for alternative solutions with different numbers of groups).

In order to study the relationship between wealth sequences and class origin, we first use multinomial logistic regression, where the sequence typology serves as the dependent variable. After establishing this initial relationship and assessing the educational mediation of this association, we turn to multiple correspondence analysis.[9] This allows us to analyze multiple indicators of dynastic privilege, providing a deeper understanding of the biographical divisions among the wealthy. Based on a range of indicators for each individual, the technique searches for the fewest dimensions that capture variance in the data. Geometric representations of these oppositions offer both an account of which individuals are closely related to each other based on shared attributes, and which attributes tend to co-occur for individuals. The key task for the researcher is to sociologically interpret the dimensions. After we reveal the main oppositions in the data, we explore how these divisions relate to wealth sequence and gender differences. This is achieved by projecting our wealth sequence typology and gender variables onto the kinship space (Hjellbrekke, 2018). This addresses the question of whether one-percenters who resemble one another in their origins and kinship ties also resemble one another in their wealth sequences and gender.[10]

5 | RESULTS

5.1 | Wealth accumulation and the life course

Figure 3 shows four typical trajectories of wealth accumulation retrieved from our cluster analysis. We visualize the sequence typology with both state distribution plots (the left column) and index plots (the right column). The colors indicate the level of wealth owned at different points in time. The state distribution plots show the typicality of each state for each year along the x-axis, while the index plot illustrates how each individual wealth sequence unfolds over time. In these plots, one line represents one sequence. We have ordered the index plots by silhouette widths so that the most characteristic sequences within a cluster are ordered at the top (those closest to the center of the cluster and those furthest from the closest cluster) (Studer, 2013, p. 15). The cluster statistics suggest a somewhat weak structuring (see Appendix A), but given that we study social phenomena over a 25-year period, this could be expected. Arguably, the typology signifies sociologically meaningful differences during this period of time. We have labeled the plots to emphasize their most defining features.

The first cluster is one of extreme privilege. This cluster groups individuals who, almost exclusively, are not only in the top one percent, but are the top 0.1% of the wealthiest individuals in Norway from their late twenties into their fifties. The levels of wealth amassed early on in adulthood suggest that the position of appropriation of great wealth occurs from early in the life course and we name this cluster *head start and extreme wealth*. In the first year of observation, almost 75% owned financial assets at the national one percent, yet more than 50% owned wealth at the national 0.1%. By 2004, 96% owned financial assets at the national 0.1%, setting them apart from their peers within the national one percent. The amassing of top finanical wealth persisted throughout the period of observation and thus into their fifties. Among Norwegians who own finanical assets at the national one percent in their late-thirties, this type of wealth sequence is atypical. Only five percent of the analytical population experienced this wealth trajectory throughout adulthood and the remaining clusters feature periods of owning fewer assets.

In contrast to the first cluster, the individuals with other types of wealth accumulation are characterized by starting with less wealth in their late twenties. Therefore, these involve a 'climb' in one sense or another, and only a very small proportion started at the top of the wealth distribution. The wealth trajectories of the first period of study resemble those of the second and third cluster. Around the turn of the millennium, however, when these
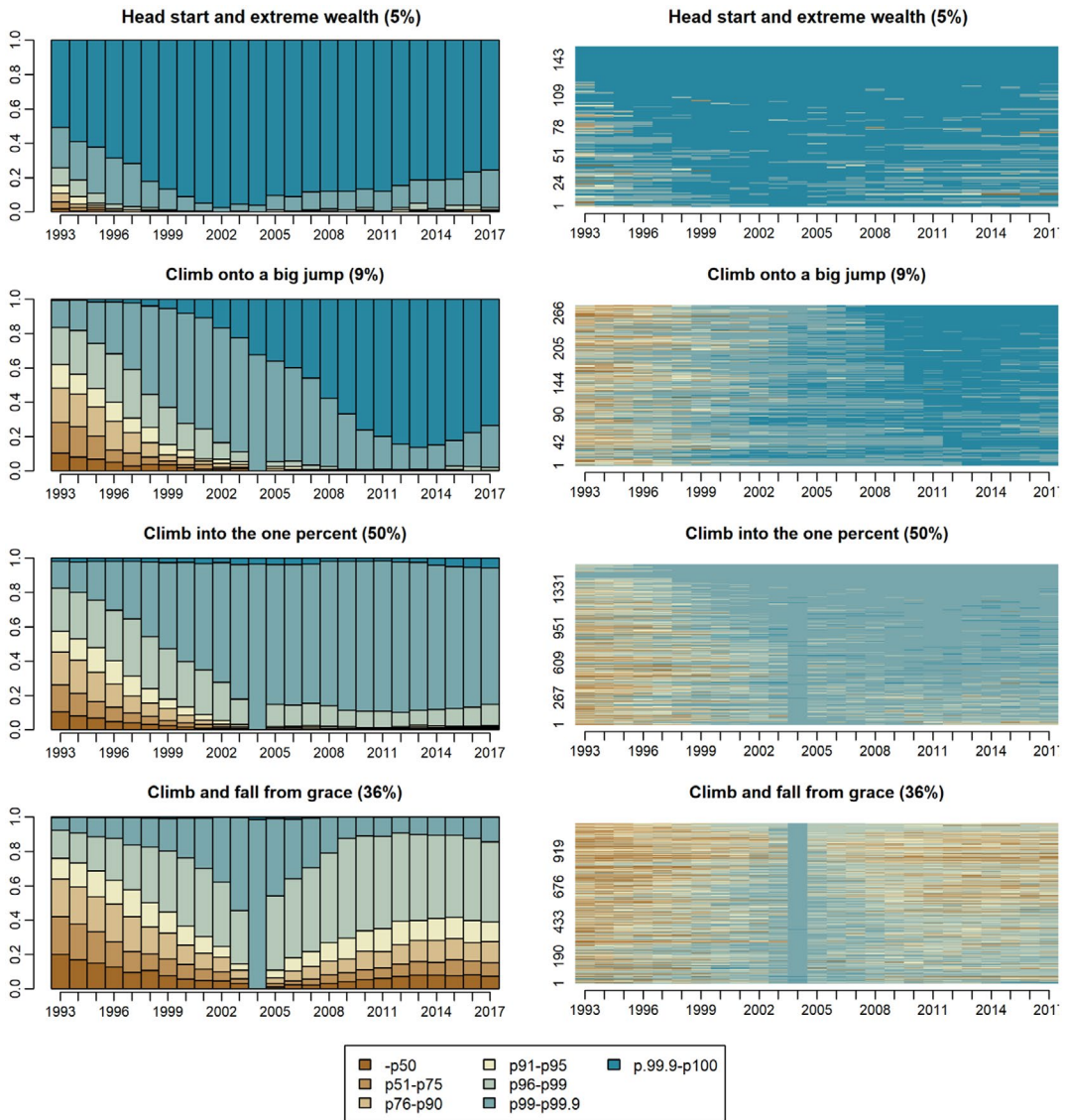
FIGURE 3 Four different types of wealth accumulation. State distribution plot in the left column and sequence index plot, ordered by silhouette widths in the right column. The most characteristic sequences within a cluster are ordered at the top in the index plots

individuals were in their mid-thirties, the second cluster started amassing great wealth at a higher pace than the third cluster. By 2004, almost one third of the second cluster owned wealth at the national 0.1% and this share increased throughout their forties and fifties. The second cluster, therefore, seemed to *climb onto a big jump*, while the climb for the third cluster mostly arrived above the one percent threshold. Albeit never reaching the upper echelons of the 0.1%, most successfully retained their wealth at the national one percent throughout adulthood. Amounting to 50% of the wealth sequences in our sub-population, this trajectory, the *climb into the one percent*, is the most typical for the birth cohorts under investigation.

The final cluster, which we name *climb and fall from grace*, is more distinct than the other typologies due to longer periods of owning relatively less wealth. This cluster, amounting to 36%, not only had a comparatively longer climb into the top one percent but also experienced a greater loss of wealth during their forties and fifties. More

than 40% started their accumulation cycle in their mid-twenties with assets worth less than the 75th percentile and, despite reaching the top one percent ten years later, by their fifties, only 12% had retained levels of wealth at the national one percent and 27% owned assets below the top ten percent.

Figure 4 shows the evolution of wealth for each of the sequence types. We plot the percentage increase from median financial wealth in the population for each year. This figure demonstrates large differences in asset ownership among those in their late thirties who are among the top one percent nationally. In particular, we see the persistence of *the accumulation of advantages* that is often associated with great fortunes (Mills, 2000[1956], p. 110f). Ownership of financial assets at the high-end of the top one percentile—from early on in the first cluster and obtained mid-career for the second cluster—yielded cumulative advantage and exponential wealth accumulation over time. This is particularly evident with the first cluster. Figure 4 shows that while the analytical sub-population owned financial assets at the national one percent in the middle of their careers (2004 is marked in grey), they are simply *not the same types of one-percenters*. Their starting points were vastly different and the amounts of wealth amassed by their mid-thirties vary greatly. The opportunities for exponential growth intensify over the life course, and this seems particularly true for those lucky few who are offered a head start. For the *head start and extreme wealth* cluster, there seems to have been some muted interference from the economic crisis of 2008; however, the cluster's superior levels of worth were noteworthy throughout the period.

The typology thus separates meaningful variation with regard to pathways to great wealth, as well as the various pathways after the one-percent status in 2004. Measuring the one percent at one point in time, therefore, risks obfuscating the fragility of percentile bins in a distribution, such as the one percent. While some individuals accumulated wealth that has endured and grown exponentially, others seem to be living on borrowed time.

Table 2 provides an overview of the descriptive statistics for each cluster in 2004, the year when every type was among the top one percent of the financially wealthy in Norway. To further understand the different dynamics that enable or constrain possibilities for wealth accumulation, we turn to the different economic positions that defined each cluster in 2004. As noted by Mills (2000[1956], p. 111), for some, the big jump may
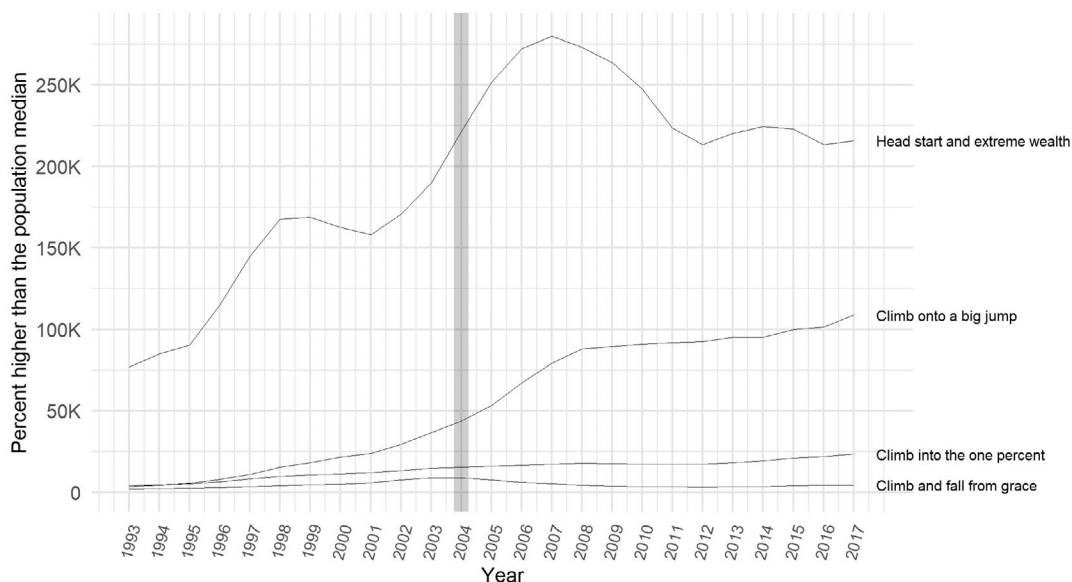

FIGURE 4 Average wealth of each accumulation type over time. Percent higher than the population median. Two-year averages

TABLE 2 Descriptive statistics for year 2004 (when in the top one percent)

	Head start and extreme wealth	Climb onto a big jump	Climb into the one percent	Climb and fall from grace	Total
Class situation (%)					
SPRs	64.52	49.82	49.42	45.34	48.79
Executives	30.97	43.01	32.92	21.64	29.78
Business professionals	3.23	2.15	5.19	6.81	5.38
Non-business employees	1.29	5.02	12.47	26.21	16.05
Company sector[a] (%)					
Private business	89.47	92.83	86.32	76.27	83.71
Finance and banking	3.16	3.59	5.25	5.46	5.08
State and municipal	7.37	3.59	8.43	18.27	11.21
Company size[a]					
Mean	441	295	534	1,029	673
♀ (%)	34.62	16.49	21.11	21.83	21.63
Mean finance capital (2019 NOK)	100,660,866	18,363,081	7,534,792	5,190,593	12,329,293
Mean (€)	9,663,443	1,762,856	723,340	498,297	1,183,612
Cluster statistics					
Max (state, %)	p99.9-100, 82%	p99.9-100, 40%	p99-99.9, 67%	p96-99, 39%	
Min (state, %)	p-50, 0.26%	p-50, 1.86%	p-50, 1.85%	p99.9-100, 0.40%	
Average Silhouette Width (ASW)	0.53	0.34	0.15	0.50	
N	156	279	1,568	1,113	3,116
%	5.01	8.95	50.32	35.72	100.00

[a]Valid percent for employees only.

be secured through bequests and gifting within wealthy families but, in order to 'parlay considerable money into the truly big money, he [they] must be in a position to benefit from the accumulation of advantages.' It is through positions within the economic structure and within institutions that opportunities for amassing large fortunes often arise.

Table 2 offers some indication of this. While more than a quarter of the *climb and fall from grace*-type were non-business employees in 2004, the *head start and extreme wealth* and the *climb onto a big jump* clusters were significantly more likely to hold positions as SPRs (with no occupational affiliation) or executives in their mid-thirties. In particular, the profile of the *climb onto a big jump* cluster suggests the centrality of executive positions for securing a big jump mid-career and the subsequent accumulation of advantages. The *head start and extreme wealth* cluster, on the other hand, was the most likely to be self-employed or hold a position as proprietor or rentier (SPRs) and, at this point in their life course, those in this cluster were already firmly enjoying the benefits of a previously obtained big jump and its associated accumulation of advantage. In 2004, both economic position and company traits varied between the different wealth sequences. In particular, the *climb onto a big jump* was more likely to be employed within relatively small-sized private businesses, while public sector employment within large companies was more common for the *climb and fall from grace* type.

An interesting gendered dynamic also distinguishes the two most privileged clusters. While the *head start and extreme wealth* cluster is distinct from the remaining sub-population in its greater share of women, the *climb onto a big jump* cluster disproportionately consists of men. The two remaining clusters are no different from the female share in the total sub-population, although the glaring underrepresentation of women among the national one percent, as seen in Table 1, merits attention in its own right.

Table 2 also quantifies the vast discrepancies in the value of assets owned in 2004, as already evident in Figure 4. Clearly, these clusters were not equally 'one percenters' in their mid-thirties. At that age, the *head start and extreme wealth* cluster already owned assets worth a mean sum of 100 million NOK, while the *climb and fall from grace* cluster—those unable to retain their wealth in the following years—owned assets that were worth a mere 5 percent of this. For those who climbed their way onto the big jump, their mean worth of 18 million NOK hints that a big jump was already in play by their mid-thirties.

5.2 | Class origin, educational mediation, and wealth accumulation

So far, our sequence analysis has revealed meaningful variation among the one-percenters; not only have we shown different pathways to top-level wealth but also important differences in the level of success in remaining at that level over the life course. Next, we explore whether the different wealth sequences are structured by class origin. In Figure 5, we employ multinomial logistic regression and outline the average marginal effects for each sequence type when comparing different class origins to unskilled working-class backgrounds (see Appendix B for the tables). The squared points denote class-origin estimates when controlling only for demographic traits (gender, children (and an interaction term between the two) and birth cohort), while the triangular points also include controls for granular educational dummies. We have marked significant estimates in black and insignificant estimates in gray.
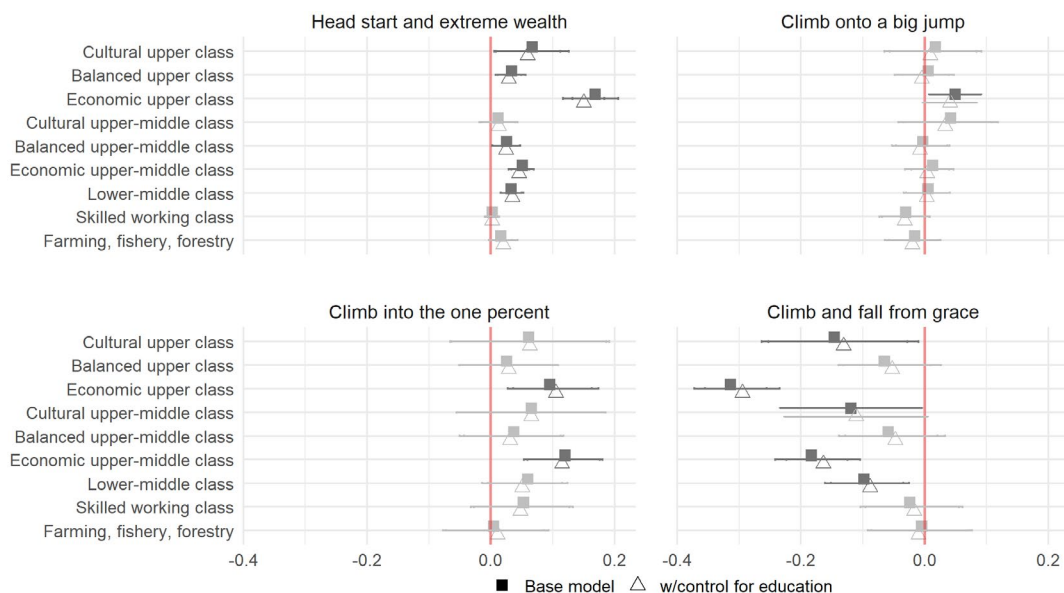

FIGURE 5 Average marginal effects. The relationship between class origins and the accumulation sequences. Controls for demographic variables in squared points, additional controls for granular education dummies in triangular points. Significant estimates from unskilled working-class origins in black, insignificant estimates in grey [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

We find significant class-origin differences in the likelihood of experiencing the various accumulation trajectories. In particular, we find the largest associations when comparing children of the unskilled working class to children of the economic upper class: the probability of experiencing the *head start and extreme wealth* sequence is 17 percentage points higher, whereas the probability of experiencing the *climb and fall from grace* trajectory is 31 percentage points lower. Indeed, the likelihood of retaining one's wealth above the one percent threshold, as captured by the first three clusters, was significantly more likely for children of the economic upper class in comparison to children of the unskilled working class. As noted by Mills (2000[1956], p. 115), 'It is difficult to climb to the top, and many who try fall by the way. It is easier and much safer to be born there.'

Strikingly, and consistent with Melldahl (2018), we find that such class-origin differences are unlikely to reflect mediation via the educational system. Our granular control for educational credentials (the triangular points) is barely distinguishable from our baseline estimates.[11] In order to provide a deeper understanding of the social divide between those who became wealthy in their mid-thirties, we turn to multiple correspondence analysis which allows us to more systematically unpack the significance of kinship among the wealthy.

5.3 | Kinship structures: parents, siblings, in-laws, and partners

To dig more deeply into the differences between the biographical divisions of the wealthy, we turn to multiple correspondence analysis. This allows us to study a range of family resources *inter*dependently, such as the class positions of parents, partners, siblings, in-laws, the net worth of in-laws and parents, and the timing and volume of direct intergenerational transfers of economic assets (see Appendix D for the coordinates and contributions for the dimensions and Appendix E for the cloud of individuals).
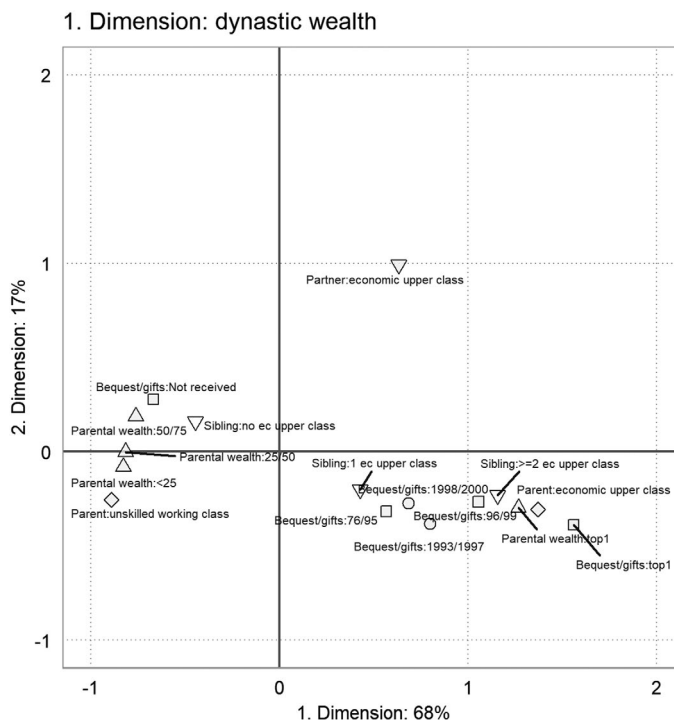

FIGURE 6 Attributes that contribute above averagely in the construction of the first dimension

We retain two dimensions for our analysis as, in combination, they capture 85 percent of the modified rates, although the first dimension is highly dominant in the space. Figure 6 depicts, horizontally, the attributes that define this first division. On the one hand, it identifies individuals whose parents typically hold positions in the economic upper class and who are among the super-rich, whose siblings (plural) and partner have reached positions in the economic upper-class and those who had typically received the highest amounts of bequests and inter-vivos transfers by their late twenties/early thirties. These profiles are defined in contrast to the left-hand side of the space, where we typically find those one-percenters whose parents and siblings are not affiliated with positions of power, where parents tend to be less wealthy and are less likely to transfer economic assets directly. Thus, the first—and most crucial—dimension dividing the Norwegian one-percenters can be found between what we might term *dynastic cores* and *newcomers* to financial wealth.

The second dimension, while less divisive, highlights the institution of marriage in strengthening privilege. Figure 7 depicts, vertically, the attributes that most clearly define the second dimension. In the top segments are marriages in which both in-laws and partners occupy upper-class positions and, while in-laws tend to own considerable wealth, their class positions are not exclusively linked to the economic realm. These one-percenters tend to originate in the cultural and balanced upper-class or upper-middle class fractions and are also distinct in not having received direct transfers. These profiles, in turn, are contrasted with those with in-laws and partners in the working classes and who possess considerably less wealth. The second dimension contrasts the one-percenters who, through the institution of marriage, have wealthy in-laws and partners in positions of power (often beyond the economic sphere) and those who do not.

Do individuals with similar kinship and family ties also have similar wealth sequences? To assess this relationship, we cut the space into different regions, differentiating between north, south, east, and west. Within a radius of 0.5 standard deviations from the barycenter, we identify a center category with profiles regarded as
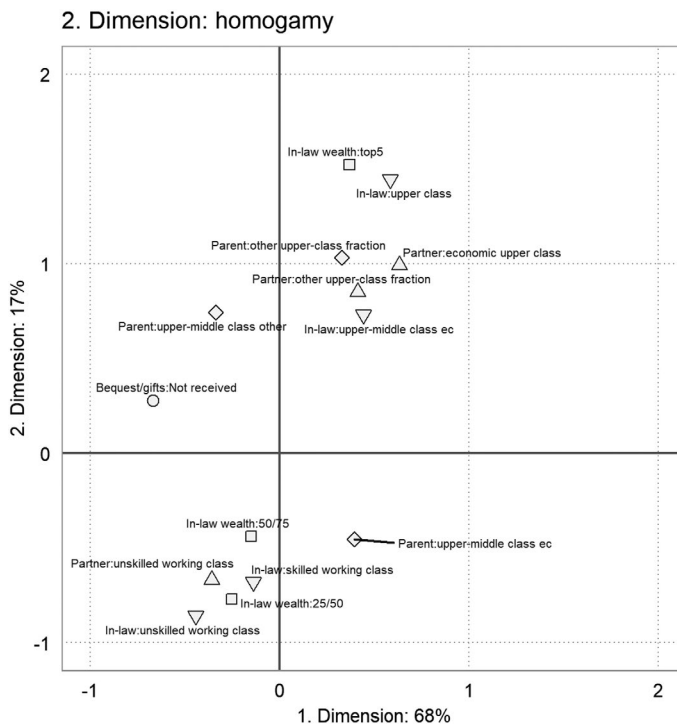

FIGURE 7 Attributes that contribute above averagely in the construction of the second dimension
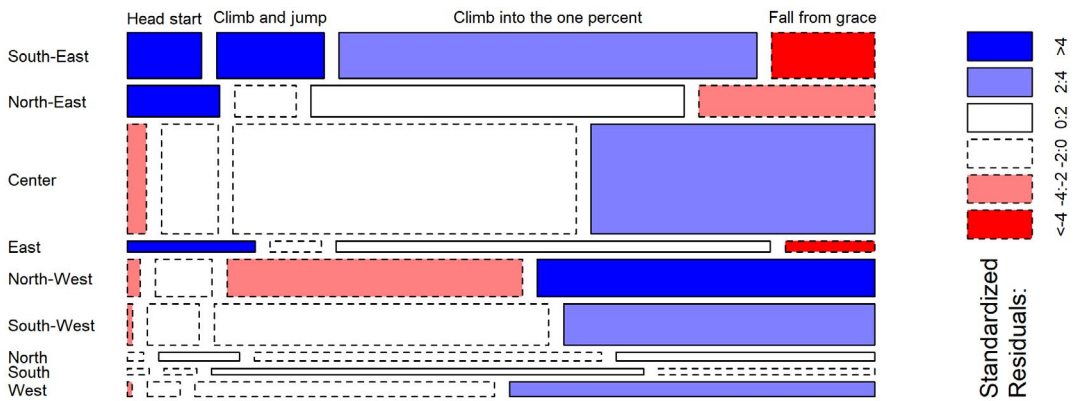
FIGURE 8 Mosaic plot of standardized residuals. The association between the sequence clusters and the different regions of the kinship space

insufficiently distinct from the average profiles of the group in total. A chi-square test of the regions of the space and our sequence typology suggests a significant association and Figure 8 shows the association for each cell in this contingency table using Pearson's (standardized) residuals (see Appendix F for further details).

In the plot, each region is represented by a bar and the size of each bar reflects how many positions each region encompasses in the space. Each bar is divided into four according to the sequence typology. Blue indicates that the occurrence of the sequence type is greater than might be expected if it were random and red indicates that the occurrence is lower than might be expected if it were random. The plot reveals that the associations are strongest for wealth sequences characterized by a *head start and extreme wealth* and for the most unfavorable trajectory that experiences a (relative) loss of wealth over time. The *head start and extreme wealth* type is clearly associated
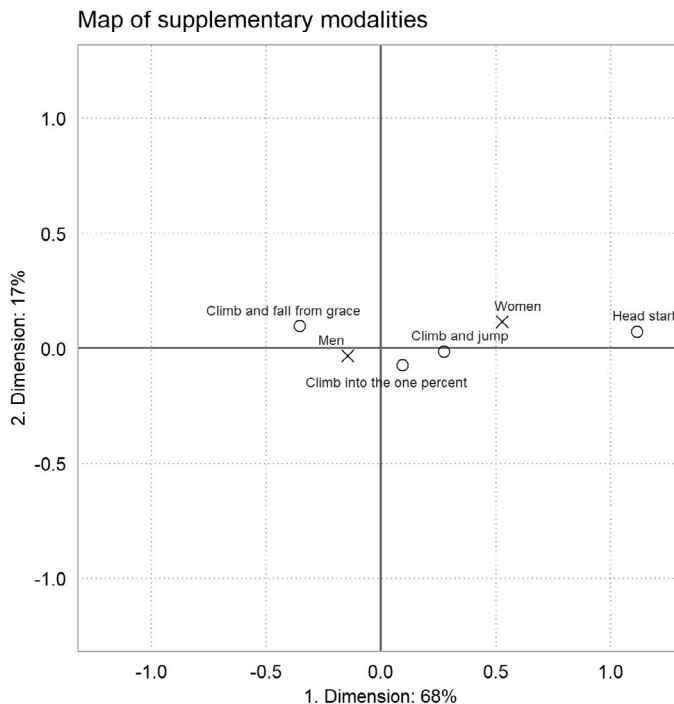
FIGURE 9 Mean position of each supplementary category

with the eastern regions of the space, including both the south-east of dynastic origins and the north-east, where resourceful origins go hand-in-hand with upper-class marriage. Those who *climb onto a big jump* do not display a similar tendency for upper-class marriage, although they are equally overrepresented in the south-eastern regions of dynastic origins.

In general, the *head start and extreme wealth* cluster is located in regions that are inversely associated with the *climb and fall from grace* type. Those who experience a relative loss of wealth in adulthood are more strongly associated with the western regions of the space, characterized by modest family origins, highlighting their position as 'newcomers' to top financial wealth. The positive relationship between this wealth sequence and the north-western regions may also suggest that marriage may constitute a mobility strategy, as well as being a strategy of reproduction (immobility) among the established upper class.

Importantly, the associations shown in Figure 8 should not be exaggerated; the regional cut-points of the space force our attention to the most distinct positions. The center category of 'average profiles' is fairly large (approximately one-third of our one-percenters) and the location of the average position of our sequence type is visualized in Figure 9 to provide a better account of the 'typical' location of the wealth trajectories. In addition, we visualize the mean points of male and female one-percenters.

The greatest differences are visible along the first dimension, highlighting the importance of dynastic lineage. Women are located to the right of the space, suggesting their relative inclination for being 'inheritors'. There are 'notable' distances between the genders (0.68 standard deviations) and 'large' distances [i.e. above 1 standard deviation (Le Roux & Rouanet, 2010, p. 59)] between the *head start and extreme wealth* type and those who *fall from grace* after their climb (1.46 standard deviations), as well as those who *climb into the one percent* (1.02 standard deviations). Interestingly, we also find 'notable' distances between the *head start and extreme wealth* and *the climb onto the big jump* (0.84 standard deviations). The latter type is also notably distant (0.62 standard deviations) from the *climb and fall from grace* type. The mean points thus corroborate the firm association between the first dimension of dynastic lineage and the likelihood of exponentially accumulating wealth throughout adulthood.

6 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This paper has offered important insights to the trajectories of top-wealth owners in Norway by following a select group of individuals who, in their mid-thirties, owned financial wealth at the national top one percent. Four different types of accumulation have been identified. A highly privileged minority, whose wealth has grown exponentially throughout adulthood, was disproportionately recruited from capitalist origins and owned significantly more wealth than the remaining one-percenters at all periods under observation. Their high levels of wealth early on in adulthood have permitted them to exponentially accumulate wealth over time; both a Millsian *big jump* and the related *accumulation of advantages* seem to have operated in full force to bolster their fortunes throughout adulthood. Those showing more unstable trajectories, such as those who climbed up but failed to retain top financial wealth over time, are less likely to be of upper-class origin; they also owned less wealth and were less likely to be in positions of control and ownership in the economy. In short, the ability to retain one's assets beyond the one percent threshold over time (as captured by three of the clusters) is significantly less probable for the long-range upwardly mobile compared to the children of the economic upper class. Thus, while there are 'self-made' one-percenters in Norway, these individuals are more likely to experience (relatively speaking) a 'fall from grace' and, as such, seem to be living on borrowed time. Tellingly, and corroborating the findings of Melldahl (2018), such class-origin differences among the wealthy are unlikely to reflect inequalities within the education system, as shown by our granular measure of educational field and the length thereof.

For some, great fortunes had already been amassed in early adulthood while, for others, the big jump of great asset build-up, and the unleashing of the advantages that cumulate with the ownership of top financial wealth,

occurred later in adulthood. Of those who climbed onto a big jump, a disproportionate number were the sons of economically privileged families with executive functions in small- and medium-sized private firms. The role of family-owned businesses and the organizational underpinnings to these pathways to great wealth merit further attention (see also Carney & Nason, 2018).

Moving from a class-origin estimate to a multiple correspondence analysis, we explored the consolidation of economic power by visualizing how parental wealth, the class affiliations of siblings and parents, the strategies of direct monetary transfer and the institution of marriage interact in producing vastly different biographies. We found that the most decisive contrast among the one-percenters is that between *newcomers* from modest origins and individuals from *dynastic cores*. Our findings correspond to Piketty's (2014) emphasis on patrimony in contemporary society. Among the one-percenters, a specific fraction originates from very wealthy family contexts, where parents, siblings, *and* partners tend to enjoy vast amounts of economic control and ownership. Individuals in this fraction also typically received large bequests and inter-vivos transfers early in adulthood. Such *dynastic cores* are in contrast to less wealthy, working-class family contexts where siblings are not in positions of control and ownership of capital. A second principle of division reveals the role of the institution of marriage in strengthening privileges. Although this opposition is less salient, our analysis adds to recent findings that highlight the marriage market as a strategic arena for the preservation of top wealth and dynastic formation (Wagner et al., 2020). It also highlights the ways that the institution of marriage may enable social mobility.

Intra-class divisions between the one-percenters are statistically associated with different pathways to great wealth, suggesting that wealth accumulation is embedded in the social structure of kinship ties. The clearest crystallization of this association is found in the likelihood of accumulating enduring top-level wealth throughout adulthood and originating from families of dynastic wealth, and conversely, the association between a newcomer's position and the inability to retain financial assets at the level of the national one percent over time.

In short, and corresponding to the findings of Korom et al. (2017), family contexts characterized by multiple indicators of significant ownership and control of economic assets seem to foster advantages that help propel children's abilities to exponentially amass large fortunes throughout adulthood. Bearing in mind that, as Table 1 clearly shows, these individuals constitute a highly select group from the outset. Such differences are fascinating and testify to the enduring influence of parental and kinship resources, not only in structuring the likelihood of attaining elite positions, but in accelerating the degree of privilege the super-rich enjoy over time (cf. Friedman & Laurison, 2019; Korom et al., 2017; Toft, 2019).

The profound privilege that characterizes the dynastic core has important societal implications. Over their life courses, members of such dynastic cores enjoy economic leeway and ample opportunities for consumption that enhance their well-being and scope for action, but liquid assets, such as bonds, shares in companies and so on, are assets that imply strategic control of the economy.

Considering that the lived experiences of these dynastic cores are unimaginable for most of the population, whose lives are likely to be influenced by the power they wield, our biographical accounts have wider ramifications for class relations in contemporary society. In contrast to the newcomers—whose level of wealth sets them apart from the life chances of their family members—the experiences and life situations of the dynastic cores resemble those of their kin; siblings, parents and partners often enjoy positions of profound advantage, much like the one-percenters themselves. To the extent that such conditions shape their subjective beliefs, outlooks and frames of reference, their own privileges might become normalized, taken for granted and thus naturalized (Bourdieu, 1990). This seems even more likely if such biographies also entail limited contextual and spatial impulses (Toft, 2018) and homophilous social circles.

These trends might be particularly worrisome within the context of the Nordic model, core elements of which include universal welfare benefits and a high degree of societal trust. These are pressing matters for future research but, as witnessed in Finland—another Nordic welfare state—intensified economic inequality has probably fostered 'new imaginaries' among the corporate super-rich, where egalitarian policies may be resented and welfare recipients and the unemployed may be seen as undeserving, envious, and lazy (Kantola, 2020; Kuusela, 2020).[12] The pulling-away of the increasingly rich—economically, but perhaps also spatially, culturally, and socially—may,

therefore, preclude super-wealthy 'heirs' from understanding the social realities of the dominated. To understand these phenomena better, class analysts might be wise to follow the lead of those economists who suggest a 'return to capital', while sharpening their sociological tools to decipher the cultural, social and biographical dimensions involved in the concentration of top financial wealth and the preservation of large fortunes.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available for researchers through Statistics Norway. Currently, only researchers from Norwegian institutions are allowed access, pending approval by Statistics Norway and The Norwegian Centre for Research Data.

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ENDNOTES

[1] There is a close association between the distributions of financial wealth and total wealth (summarizing financial assets and real capital). For instance, our sub-population under study rank on average at the 98.5 percentile in the total wealth distribution in year 2004.

[2] https://www.forbes.com/sites/arielshapiro/2021/04/06/the-worlds-youngest-billionaires-2021-include-a-teenager-from-germany-a-crytpo-magnate-and-a-stanford-dropout, read 29.08.2021.

[3] We feel confident that the relationship between origins and wealth accumulation does not reflect other underlying characteristics, such as genetic variation that predisposes children of wealthy families to be particularly successful or talented in wealth accumulation. Apart from finding such arguments conceptually unconvincing, these hypotheses are not supported by quasi-random research designs (Fagereng et al., 2021).

[4] However, a tax reform in 2006 entailed higher taxation of capital gains. The super-rich adapted strategically by increasing capital incomes in the years prior to the reforms and dropping them after they were implemented (Alstadsæter & Fjærli, 2009).

[5] We have data for the complete birth cohorts from 1955 onwards. For the older cohorts, we rely on data for the parental population.

[6] Our results have been carefully weighed against alternatives and are thus robust to a range of alternative coding schemes. It should be noted, however, that our variables are more efficient in differentiating *among* the most resourceful (the right-hand side of the space) than *among* those of less privilege (the left-hand side of the space), as shown in Appendix E.

[7] The sequence analysis is performed with the R package *TraMineR* (Gabadinho et al., 2011).

[8] The PAM algorithm has the advantage of maximizing cluster homogeneity based on a global criterion; this is beneficial as it complements the Ward algorithm's emphasis on a local criterion (Studer, 2013).

[9] We use the R package *soc.mca* https://rdrr.io/cran/soc.ca/man/soc.mca.html.

[10] See Toft (in press) for a discussion about the methodological concern for both topology and process that underpins the effort to combine sequence analysis and geometric data analysis in our design.

[11] Interestingly, as Appendix C shows, granular control for education is not a strong mediator for the relationship between class origin and the likelihood of owning wealth at the national one percent in 2004 in the population at large.

[12] No comparable study of the super-wealthy is available in Norway. However, in analyzing a much more inclusive group, Gulbrandsen (2019) has found that Norwegian elites have become less supportive of redistribution in comparison to their elite peers in 2000, although the group overall largely voiced support for the Nordic model.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

WILEY

From integrated to fragmented elites. The core of Swiss elite networks 1910–2015

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Abstract

This article focuses on historical elite dynamics and investigates elites' integration over time. We describe the changing relations and composition of the central circles in Swiss elite networks at seven benchmark years between 1910 and 2015 by relying on 22,262 elite individuals tied to 2587 organizations among eight key sectors, and identify for each year the most connected core of individuals. We explore network cohesion and sectoral bridging of the elite core and find that it moved from being a *unitary corporate elite*, before 1945, to an *integrated corporatist elite*, between the 1950s and 1980s, before *fragmenting into a loose group*, with an increased importance of corporate elites, in the 1990s onwards. The core was always dominated by business and their forms of legitimacy but, at times of crisis to the hegemony of corporate elites, after the Second World War and (only) shortly after the 2008 financial crisis, elite circles expanded and included individuals with delegated forms of power, such as politicians and unionists. In the most recent cohort (2015), the share of corporate elites in the core is similar to the one before the First World War and during the interwar period. This *return to the past* echoes findings on wealth inequality and economic capital

accumulation by a small group of individuals organized around the most powerful companies.

KEYWORDS
coordination, elites, historical sociology, inequality, networks, social networks

1 | INTRODUCTION

How do elites change and why? While we can no longer claim that elites are "forgotten by the social sciences" (Savage & Williams, 2008), the resurgence of the sociology of elites still leaves many paths to be explored (Cousin et al., 2018). In particular, the temporal dynamic of elites remains open for inquiry. In light of how focusing on inequality during a long period of time has enabled economists such as Piketty (2014, 2020; Paidipaty & Savage, 2021; Savage & Waitkus, 2021) to reinvigorate debates on the links between capital accumulation and wealth inequality, this paper aims to take up Piketty's challenge to sociology (Savage, 2014) and describe elite dynamics. This study is concerned about elite groups coordinating through vast organizational networks and across different sectors over time. For the first time, we can analyze, over a historical period of more than a century, how relations between elite groups evolve and how the composition of cross-sectorial elites defined dynamically through elite networks change. We are able to show that the business elites running the companies linked to thorough processes of wealth accumulation have the primacy over other elite groups during the whole 20th century. More importantly, we show that while the power of this group has been mitigated by the prominence of other (political, administrative, union) elites after the Second World War, through the intensification of neo-corporatist processes fostered by the state, and shortly (only) after the 2008 financial crisis, the increased influence of the corporate elites at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century reminds us of the pre-war era and the related imperial forms of accumulation. In that sense, and in line with Savage's (2021) work on the historical importance of wealth inequality and economic capital accumulation by a small group of individuals organized around the most powerful companies, we observe a *return to the past*, where the corporate fraction of the elites are, again, as much prominent now as they were more than a century ago.

We explore the changing relations and composition of the central circles in Swiss elite networks by relying on a total of 22,262 elite individuals tied to 2587 elite organizations from eight key sectors (business, unions, politics, public administration, expert committees, academia, other organizations and associations and the military) divided into seven historical cohorts (1910, 1937, 1957, 1980, 2000, 2010 and 2015). By looking at the interlocks between elite groups and identifying those who integrate most frequently, we describe how the dynamics of the central social circle in Switzerland evolved during the 105 years studied. We explore the level of integration and the degree of cross-sectoral bridging in elite circles, showing how the Swiss elite networks' core (778 individuals in total) moves from being dominated by a *unitary corporate elite* before World War 2 to an *integrated elite* bridging several sectors until the 1980s, before the *network core fragmented*, with a renewed importance of corporate elites. The core was always dominated by business, but the level of integration and strength of business *vis-à-vis* other groups differed as challenges to elites changed. At times of crisis to the hegemony of corporate elites, after World War II and right after the 2008 financial crisis, elite circles expanded and became more diverse, including elites with delegated forms of power, such as politicians and unionists. The Swiss case is relevant, since it is a strongly decentralized system and a particularly internationalized economy. In this context, one could expect the elites to be only marginally integrated, but our findings on elite cohesiveness challenge this assumption.

In the next part, we contextualize the evolution of Swiss elites, review the literature on historical elite studies and discuss the conceptual dimensions of elite integration and bridging, before introducing how we built the network and our key indicators. Then, we present our findings on the historical integration and sectoral bridging dynamics of the core. Finally, we summarize our results and discuss the relevance of the Swiss case regarding the most recent findings on wealth and social inequalities.

2 | BACKGROUND: STUDYING ELITES OVER TIME

2.1 | Transformations of Swiss elites

We introduce a periodization of the changing elite relations in Swiss society. Several particularities of Switzerland make it an interesting case for elite scholars. Within this strongly decentralized and polycentric context, with a weak central state and a particularly internationalized economy (Kriesi, 1998), one could expect elites to be only marginally integrated, but findings on elite cohesiveness challenge this assumption. A small elite group, often linked to business, concentrates a large share of power. Weak trade unions compete with organized export-oriented employers supported by influential business associations (Katzenstein, 1985). Swiss elites share a set of common characteristics and do not integrate easily new groups into the power structure (Ginalski, 2016). Based on extant literature, three periods have been identified in the recent history of Switzerland corresponding to three distinct features of elite coordination and networks during the 20th and 21st centuries: (1) A *consolidation* period of elite relations, from the early 20th century until World War 2; (2) An *integration* period, from World War 2 until the 1980s; (3) A *fragmentation* period, from the 1990s onwards.

Since the end of the 19th century and until 1945, relations between Swiss elites followed a *consolidation* logic. The small size of the country led to the formation of a small elite group, who knew each other through organizational networks, leading to compromises between the main interest groups, political parties and the administration (Kriesi, 1980). Top company owners started to organize collectively to defend their class interests. They built dense corporate networks around financial firms that funded industrial companies and were supported by business associations (whose executive committee was formed of top company leaders and permanent secretaries) (Mach et al., 2016). Board directors developed strong organizational ties with other elite members (elected politicians, senior servants, renowned professors). Elite coordination intensified through meetings in various organizational structures, such as associations, party committees, the parliament (David et al., 2009; Eichenberger & Ginalski, 2017) or state expert committees (Bühlmann et al., 2017). Elites were strongly interrelated, often multipositionnal across various institutions, and even multisectorial (Bühlmann et al., 2012a), since *for example*, the lay parliamentary system allowed politicians to sit on other elite positions (Pilotti, 2017).

After World War 2, and until the 1980s, Swiss elites followed a sustained *integration* logic. The neo-corporatist system of expert committees ("extra-parliamentary commissions") increased exponentially. These groups, majoritarily composed of non-civil servants, are in charge of advising federal authorities, preparing legislation when implementing new laws or executing tasks for the state. In these committees, business elites met with politicians, university professors or other experts to coordinate on a particular topic (Rebmann & Mach, 2013). Given the growing importance of expert committees, elite coordination intensified across organizations and key sectors, and new groups were included. During the 1930s, unions (and their political ally the Swiss Socialist Party) and farmer organizations started to be included in neo-corporatist processes and their involvement grew bigger after the war (Rebmann, 2011). Coordination and cohesiveness within and between elite groups culminated between the 1950s and the 1980s.

From the 1990s onwards, elite coordination experienced a *fragmentation* dynamic. Financialization led the close connections between bankers and industrialists to disappear and banks became less prominent in interlocks (David et al., 2015). The private sector experienced an internationalization process. New transnational managers had fewer incentives to be integrated into Swiss networks (Bühlmann et al., 2012b) and relied on new strategies to sidestep traditional political channels: e.g., by founding in 1999 the US-like think tank *Avenir Suisse*, which defended their interests through lobbying activity and the media (Mach et al., 2021). Swiss multinational companies lost centrality due to economic turmoil in the 2000s. The country's major airlines company Swissair went bankrupt and was absorbed by the German Lufthansa. During the 2008 financial crisis, the biggest banks were hit severely (UBS had to be bailed out by the central bank). Since the 1990s, the parliament underwent a professionalization process and elected officials sat less in other organizations (Pilotti, 2017), while academia became more autonomous from political and economic powers, for example, for professors' appointment (Horvath, 1996). Neocorporatist processes through expert committees declined in importance (Beetschen & Rebmann, 2016). We add to the description of Swiss elites by exploring how these changes and periodization are reflected in the structure and composition of the central circles in elite networks in terms of sectoral representation.

2.2 | Historical elite studies

Processes of accumulation of capitals, resources, and assets by influential elites have been documented (Savage et al., 2005; Toft, 2019). As accumulation of different forms of capital often takes more than one generation, it is necessary to study elites historically (Nichols & Savage, 2017). This has even extended to historical analysis of changes in the upper classes (Scott, 1982) or relations between different power forms within large scale societies (Mann, 1986). Many elite studies have used historical sources to qualitatively describe changes in elite relations over time (Accominotti et al., 2018; Baltzell, 1958; Coleman, 1973; Mills, 1956). Through these studies, we understand how changes in elite relations reflect changes in the division of power across societies.

Changes in elite composition have been studied for long, from changes in the cabinet in the UK (Laski, 1928) and US (Mintz, 1975)—including links between cabinet and business (Freitag, 1975; Gill, 2018)—, or within business elites (Bendix & Howton, 1957; Friedman & Tedlow, 2003; Kaelble, 1980; Mills, 1945). Within the prosopography tradition (Broady, 2002; Lunding et al., 2020; Rossier, 2019), scholars studied collective biographies of elite groups spanning centuries, for example, on the Russian clergy (Plamper, 2000) or Finish business elites (Kansikas, 2015, 2016), focusing on changes in social background, education, career trajectory and, sometimes, gender. It is shown how elites have slowly opened up to newcomers, while remaining very selective. Most studies focus on elites defined positionally, but do not center on whether or not the set of positions included, their inclusion criteria, and internal relations evolved over time. Thus, if new groups enter the elites, these newcomers would not be included in these studies.

Studies analyzing evolution in relations within and between elite groups are less frequent, because of the difficulties of gathering relational data used for historical comparisons. Scholars have studied the evolution and recent decline of national corporate networks (Chu & Davis, 2016; Heemskerk & Fennema, 2009; Mizruchi, 1982; Mizruchi & Stearns, 1988). A conclusion is that, as political opposition to business interests from government or well-organized unions declines, so does the internal cohesion of the corporate inner circle (Mizruchi, 2013; Useem, 1984). However, while national corporate networks seem to fragment, transnational corporate interlocks are on the rise (Carroll & Fennema, 2002; Heemskerk, 2013; Murray, 2017). Other scholars mapped changing field dynamics within business elites (Bühlmann et al., 2012b; François et al., 2016; Timans, 2015) and evolving relations between elite groups through cross-sectoral flows of elite careers in France in 1969 and 2009 (Denord et al., 2018). Savage (2021) argues that social fields, where powerful field-specific elites exerted their power, increasingly lost part of their autonomy during the last decades. Inheritors, especially those who own wealth and other forms of economic capital, are now able to convert their advantages to an "objectified" form that can be

stored and passed on. This process results in the incursion of economic capital into other forms of (cultural, social, political and symbolic) capitals and in "entropy" mechanisms in all fields, while (economic) capital, accumulated in the global social space, gains in prevalence.

This study adds to this literature a focus on relations between elite groups, which maps changing dynamics in elite composition over more than a century. Our data do not have the granularity to focus on gradual year-to-year century long changes as recent studies of the 1% share of the income distribution (Alvaredo et al., 2013), class origins and educational achievements (Hansen & Strømme, 2021), elite schooling (Reeves et al., 2017) or elite cultural tastes (Friedman & Reeves, 2020), but allow us, for the first time, to analyze how relations *between* elite groups change, and how the composition of a cross-sectoral elite defined dynamically through elite networks evolve. We add to the discussions on how changes in elite composition are related to political developments, not least the evolving relations between the capitalist class and state and union powers (Mizruchi, 2013).
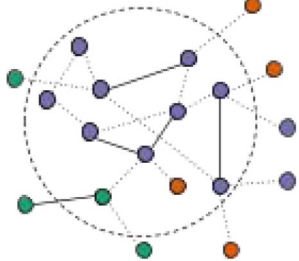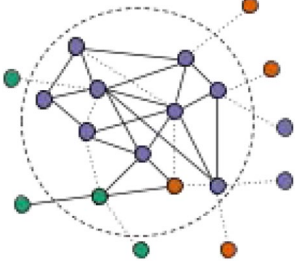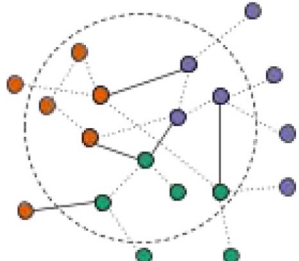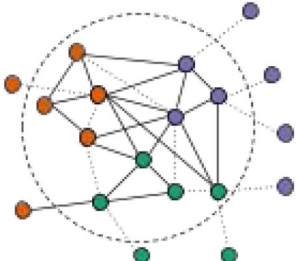
3 | THEORY: A TYPOLOGY OF ELITE NETWORK INTEGRATION

Elite integration is realized through their connections in vast organizational networks. Elites meet, collaborate and coordinate through affiliations to top institutions, which makes them become cohesive and bridge across sectors, depending on the importance and diversity of network ties (Domhoff, 1967; Windolf, 1998). The changing composition, as well as integration and sectoral bridging levels, at the core of elite networks allow us to explore elite changes. Identifying central actors and organizations in affiliation networks offer a blueprint of the power structure (Domhoff, in Denord et al., 2020). Mills' (1956) description of the power elite constitutes an empirical study on the particular balance of power in the 1950s in the US. He emphasizes how changes in the American power structure came about by institutional shifts in the relative positions—or different types of sectoral bridging—of the political, the economic, and the military orders (Mills, 1956). The three institutional orders—to which he would add kinship and religion in other societies (Denord & Réau, 2014; Gerth & Mills, 1953)—assumed historically dominant or subordinated roles within the power elite, in which the political order could also include organized farmers or unions. The power elite is constituted by "a set of overlapping circles" (Mills, 1956, p. 283) who manage to develop "coinciding interests", and the question of who composes the power elite cannot be defined theoretically (Mills, 1956, p. 277), but must be explored empirically. This entails looking at the sectoral composition of the central circles in national elite networks and at this group's level of embeddedness. Historically, US elites moved from pluralist "loose coalitions" in the early nineteenth century to "a heavy overlapping among the members of these several elites"—the integrated power elite—around 1950 (Mills, 1956, p. 269ff). In between these periods, more unitary and sectoral elites achieved supremacy, such as economic elites during the Gilded Age, and political elites during the New Deal period.

We distinguish between the network embeddedness (Granovetter, 1985) of elites and the degree elites are embedded across sectors to other elites. Elite networks' cohesiveness and the propensity of their ties to cut across sectors indicate the extent to which elites are involved in reciprocal commitments of loyalty to individuals both from their own field and in other sectors. Cohesive networks among corporate elites allow for the creation of a "classwide rationality" making key business leaders represent the capitalist class as a whole in other arenas of power (Useem, 1984), but these networks may fragment since their political success can render the ability to act in concert—which requires network embeddedness—obsolete (Mizruchi, 2013). Identifying central individuals and affiliations is one possible way to empirically describe which influential groups overlap and which role sectoral elites play in the power structure. By using elite networks to identify groups with the highest social overlap, we use what Mills (1956, p. 11) calls the "mutual attraction among those who 'sit on the same terrace'" to identify central circles of elites as the network core within a larger elite group, following a key question: What is the level of integration in elite networks both within and between sectoral elites?

In Table 1, we present a typology of these two forms of elite integration within the core. *Fragmented elites* primarily act in the interest of their own organizations having few structural constraints (Mizruchi, 2013). *Loose-knit elites* are weakly embedded with relatively strong ties to other sectors and are akin to pluralist elites differentiated by sector (Aron, 1950; Dahl, 1961), but united in search for compromise (Higley & Burton, 1989; Moore, 1979). *Unitary elites* are well-integrated in their own sector and dominate the central circle of the network. They take on "inner circle"-like qualities (Useem, 1984): they can express interests on behalf of the whole group and act in concert, and are only weakly structurally constrained by the interests of other elite groups. *Integrated elites* are both internally and cross-sectorally embedded. They are committed to the interests of their own sector and have well-established alliances with other key groups forming a power elite-like coalition (Mills, 1956). Looking at the integration level within elite central circles entails identifying the core group in elite networks and analyzing their cohesiveness and capability to broker between sectors. The type of sectors included in the core allows us to assess which institutional orders dominate an elite constellation. If a fragmented or unitary elite is identified, one sector dominates the others, while the distribution of sectors in loose-knit and integrated elites is indicative of their relative strength. In the less integrated elite types—fragmented and loose-knit elites—, the mutual commitment of the sectors, organizations and individuals in the core is much weaker. This may be because an elite group has established such a strong hegemony that collective action, coalition partners and internal coordination are no longer needed. This also means that, in times of crisis, when renewed coordination is needed, but the network infrastructure has disappeared, more loose-knit and unstable elite constellations are formed on the fly.[1]

TABLE 1 Elites by level and type of integration in the central circle of elite networks [Colour table can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

		Cohesion (integration within central circle)	
		Low	High
Sectoral bridging (Integration between groups in central circle)	**Low**	Fragmented elite	Unitary elite
	High	Loose-knit elite	Integrated elite

Note: Colors represent different sectors.

4 | STRATEGY, DATA, AND METHODS

4.1 | Building the Swiss elite networks and identifying the cores

This study relies on collaborative work resulting on a prosopographical database on Swiss elites constituted in the frame of research projects[2] (the *Swiss elite database*[3] established by the Swiss Elite Observatory—OBELIS—at the University of Lausanne). The aim of this collection was to build a list of the most influential institutions, and the people sitting at their top, in key sectors of Swiss society, which could take into account historical changes during a period of more than a century. Once this list was established, with some organizations (e.g., companies) appearing or disappearing given their particular influence at a given time, a list of the people occupying top positions within these organizations was built (often comprising people sitting on the board of these organizations and thus occupying executive or supervisory positions, including the people running top public organizations and sitting in the federal parliament). Biographical information on selected individuals (gender, date of birth and death, citizenship, place of birth, marriage, and family background—when available—, education, main occupation, career information etc.) was collected as a collaborative process by the many researchers involved within the OBELIS team. In order to complement this collection, we proceeded to a more detailed prosopography on many biographical indicators once we had established the list of the members of the core (*k*-shells) using a large variety of digital and historical sources and archives (some of these indicators being not featured in this present study, which addresses network and organizational dynamics, rather than biographical logics).

To study elite network changes, we rely upon an analytical strategy, which puts the focus on a thorough and theoretically-informed description, rather than looking for the causes of elite changes. It follows a claim that descriptive work can be highly productive and should not be subordinated to explanatory claims. Description, and the related visual methods, allows researchers to focus on social and historical processes in order to enrich empirical qualitative and quantitative outcomes (Savage, 2009, 2020).[4] Elite networks and their central social circles were built in a two-step procedure. First, a broader set of elites was defined, according to their position at the top of the most influential institutions in eight sectors (business, unions, politics, administration, academia, expertise, other interest associations, and the military[5]) and were collected systematically for seven benchmark years. The network was built based on the idea that the elites that sit on the same organization at the same time know each other and interact within decision-making bodies. Therefore, network ties not only mean connections between individuals and institutions (Gautier Morin & Rossier, 2021), but also among individuals who cultivate relations of knowledge, acquaintance, acknowledgement and interactions within important decision-making processes that potentially impact Swiss society as a whole. As a result, we did not build the network of each individual during their entire career, but rather focused on their precise interactions with other elite members at a given benchmark year. These benchmarks were chosen to capture different historical logics: the end of the long 19th century and before World War I (1910), the interwar period (1937), the postwar period (1957), the period before (1980) and after (2000) financialization of the economy and autonomization of politics and academia, the direct aftermath of the financial crisis (2010), and the most recent period (2015). Second, through elites' name and institutional affiliations, we built two-mode elite-to-affiliation networks for each year, using a total of 22,262 elite members tied to 2587 institutional affiliations. If two individuals were tied to the same affiliation at the same time, it means that they met personally and interacted by sitting together on its board or committee. We projected them into one-mode elite-to-elite networks, for a total of 375,374 edges. We then applied a *k*-shell decomposition procedure[6] and identified for each cohort a central circle within the network for a total of 778 individual elite positions (738 individuals) tied by a total of 9856 edges. *K*-shells indicate elite networks' cohesiveness. Sectoral diversity, based on the main sectoral occupation of shell members and the amount of sectors they were active in, is indicative of the level of sectoral bridging in elite networks. Table 2 summarizes the main properties of these networks. The mean k-score (the average number of individuals, to which shell members are connected within their second neighborhood, *that is*, they know directly or indirectly through another shell member) is relatively high and stays

TABLE 2 Properties of the networks

	1910	1937	1957	1980	2000	2010	2015
Total individuals	1584	1877	3110	4475	3738	3827	3651
K-shell members	75	103	211	197	96	47	49
% *k*-shells members	4.7%	5.5%	6.8%	4.4%	2.6%	1.2%	1.3%
Total edges	26,818	35,848	61,274	77,941	60,925	56,329	56,239
Edges among *k*-shells	601	900	3991	2977	772	372	243
% *k*-shells edges	2.2%	2.5%	6.5%	3.8%	1.3%	0.7%	0.4%
Density graph total	0.021	0.020	0.013	0.008	0.009	0.008	0.008
Density graph *k*-shells	0.217	0.171	0.180	0.154	0.169	0.344	0.207
Mean *k*-score	33	56	93	89	41	29	25

more or less stable in proportion across time (if we divide it by the number of individuals in each shell), which we take as evidence of the historical robustness of the decomposition method.

4.2 | Indicators

Once the shells were identified, we collected indicators[7] related to shell members' profiles. We look at the historical evolution of cohesiveness and sector affiliations of the core for each year through the share of *number of sectors*, *number of affiliations*, *affiliations to the main inter-sectoral meeting places* (company boards, parliament, expert committees), *the main company subsector* and *political party affiliation*. We also look at the evolution of the most *recurring affiliations* and *main sector*, and comment on the cohesiveness and bridging in elite networks through *sectoral configurations* of the two-mode *k-shell networks*.

5 | THE HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF COHESIVENESS AND BRIDGING IN THE SWISS ELITE NETWORK'S CORE

We describe the evolution of network cohesiveness and bridging in terms of number of sectors and affiliations, recurring affiliations and main sector, then analyze the structure of the network's core through our elite integration typology. Table 2 displayed changes in the core composition: from 1910 to 1980, the shells included between 4% and 7% of the elite population, but this share dropped significantly to 2% in 2000, and then 1% in 2010/2015. This drop is symptomatic of the fragmentation movement described earlier. Table 3 displays several features of the shells in terms of number of sectors and affiliations, ties to the main bridging organizations (company boards, the parliament, expert committees), company sector and political party affiliations.

The core was the most *multisectorial* (59% of shell members were affiliated to at least 3 sectors in 1957, and 48% in 1980) and *multipositional* (affiliated to the largest number of organizations) in 1957 and 1980, during the elite "integration" period described earlier, while in 2010, following the 2008 financial crisis, the shells were affiliated to the smallest number of sectors. Among *bridging organizations* between sectors and positions, company boards (which can bridge business with other sectors, for example, by including politicians), both from the financial and industrial subsectors, were the most recurring during the elite "consolidation" period, but lost in importance after the 1930s and reached their lowest point (6%) after the financial crisis, when big companies had suffered a critical hit and were not able to play their bridging role. Nevertheless, in 2015, companies became again central. Following a somewhat opposite movement, expert committees increased during the integration period and

TABLE 3 Sectoral composition of shells (in %)

Variable	1910 %	1937 %	1957 %	1980 %	2000 %	2010 %	2015 %
Number of sectors							
1	29	21	7	12	22	21	27
2	41	49	34	41	45	60	53
3	19	20	41	36	32	19	16
4	11	9	16	10	1	0	2
5	0	1	2	2	0	0	2
Number of affiliations							
2	13	18	5	11	31	38	41
3	37	22	18	18	27	32	39
4	27	24	26	24	14	11	10
5	7	17	14	11	14	9	6
6	8	10	11	14	10	6	2
7	7	2	13	6	2	2	2
8	1	3	6	5	0	2	0
9+	0	3	9	10	2	0	0
Top 110 companies board							
Yes	99	95	58	38	49	6	84
Federal parliament							
Yes	33	15	24	14	8	9	2
Expert committee							
Yes	20	35	88	91	59	89	27
Main company subsector							
Banking and finance	60	52	20	14	30	2	31
Industry	39	43	34	17	16	4	45

(Continues)

TABLE 3 (Continued)

Variable	1910 %	1937 %	1957 %	1980 %	2000 %	2010 %	2015 %
Commerce	0	0	4	7	3	0	8
None	1	5	42	62	51	94	16
Political party							
Free Democrats/Liberals	44	35	23	23	26	17	10
Conservatives/Christian Democrats	8	4	12	12	7	9	4
People's Party	0	2	7	7	1	9	4
Socialists/Greens	0	3	12	10	7	9	2
Other/elected without party affiliation	0	0	1	1	1	0	0
No known party affiliation	48	56	44	48	57	57	80
N	100% (75)	100% (103)	100% (211)	100% (197)	100% (96)	100% (47)	100% (49)

Note: Number of sectors: Sectors are the following (max. = 8): business; unions; politics; high civil service; expert committees; academia; associations; military officer. Main company subsector: In the case of affiliations to more than one company, the sector of the company with a CEO, chair or delegate of the board position prevails over the other positions as "simple" board member. Then, in the case of equal positions in more than one sector, a position in banking and finance prevails over a position in industry, and a position in industry prevails over a position in commerce.

lost their relevance only recently. The Parliament gradually became less central in bridging shell members, especially during the most recent "fragmentation" period, and political party affiliations followed a similar movement. The most important party was the Free Democratic Party, close to big companies and urban economic sectors, while links to the catholic Christian Democracy, the (at that time) agrarian Swiss People's Party (formerly Party of Farmers, Traders and Independents) or the social-democratic Swiss Socialist Party and their ally the Greens were equally marginal. In summary, in the consolidation period (1910, 1937), elites revolved primarily around company boards, while in the integration period (1957, 1980), elites relied more on neo-corporatist committees. These organizations lost their prevalence again to company boards in the most recent year (2015). Figure 1 displays the organizations that bridged shell members for at least three cohorts.[8]

We observe some very stable bridging organizations: the two chambers of the Parliament, the five major business associations, one of the major unions (USS), the two non-executive boards of the Central bank and some
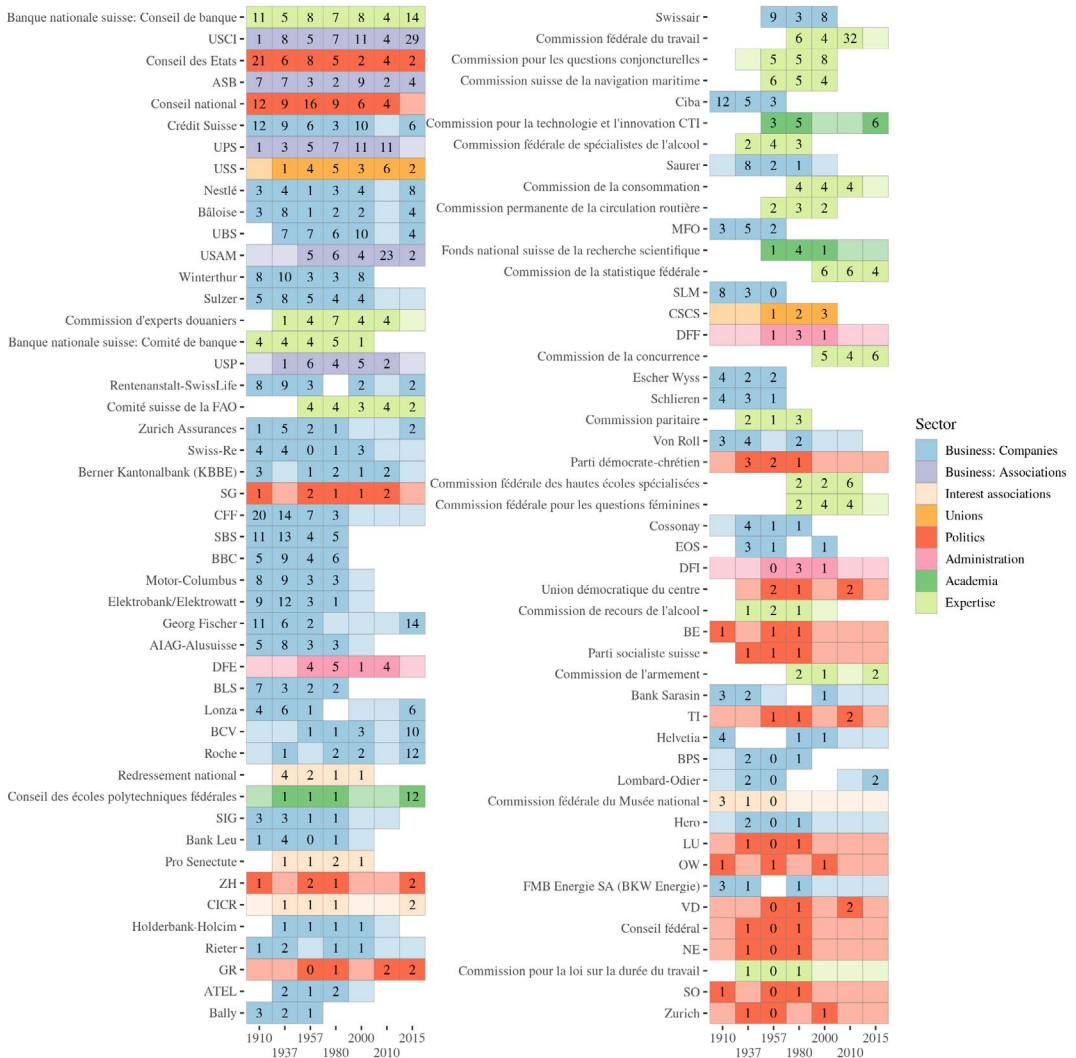

FIGURE 1 Heat map of recurring affiliations for at least 3 shell cohorts (in % of shell members affiliated) notes: Blank cells mean that the affiliation was not included for the year. Colored cells without a number mean that the affiliation was included, but no shell member was tied to it at the time [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

of the country's most important companies: the largest banks (Crédit Suisse, UBS and SBS, that both merged into UBS in 1998) and insurances (Bâloise, Zurich Insurance, Winterthur, Swiss Re and SwissLife), the food company Nestlé, the manufacturing firm Sulzer or the pharmaceutical company Roche. Other companies were very important until the 1980s and then lost their centrality, *for example*, the state owned Swiss Federal Railways (SBB/CFF) or Swissair, which disappeared in the 2000s. State and political organizations were influential power brokers during the second part of the 20th century: expert committees (e.g., regarding customs, economic forecasts or labour regulations), federal departments, canton and city governments and the main political parties. As already underlined, companies were the most bridging institutions in 1910 and 1937, then expert committees between 1957 and 2010, then companies again in 2015.[9]

Figure 2 displays the sectoral diversity according to the cores' main occupation (divided into five principal sectors: business, unions, politics, administration, academia).[10] Business was always the dominant sector, especially during the elite consolidation period (1910, 1937) and again in 2000 and 2015 (elite fragmentation period).[11] During the height of corporatism and elite integration (1957 and 1980), the core was more diverse and comprised more sectors: union leaders, politicians, civil servants and professors. State actors (political and administrative elites) were the most represented after business. Union elites acted for workers' interests in times of crisis; in the immediate aftermath of the financial crisis (2010), they became very present in the core, but were again excluded in 2015. Given this context, the core was more pluralistic again in 2010, since a relative weakening of business elites[12] made union and political elites more integrated. In summary, elite cores were more integrative in 1957 and 1980, when the state coordinated the elites, and in 2010, right after the crisis, when, given the economic context, the state had to step in again. We now consider the cohesiveness and sectoral bridging levels of the seven cores by looking at elite network configurations. Figure 3 displays for each cohort the two-mode networks of core members and the affiliations that bridged at least two of them.[13]

In 1910 and 1937, during the *consolidation period*, the core was highly cohesive, but the level of bridging between sectors was low. Companies and business associations constituted integrating affiliations of Swiss elites.
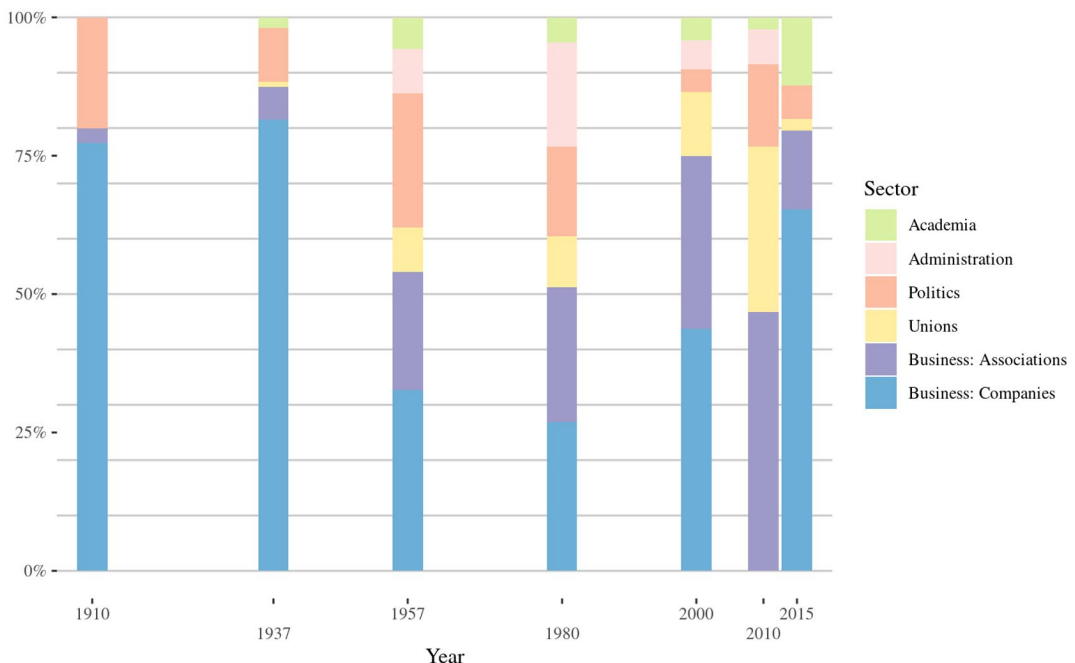

FIGURE 2 Evolution of the *k*-shells 1910–2015, by main sector (in %) [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Business elites were dominant, with each time a small group of somewhat peripheral political actors, who were integrated because of their proximity to business interests. This highly cohesive and lowly bridging *unitary elite core* enabled the corporate class to defend their interests, while expressing a limited commitment to other elite groups. After the Second War, during the *integration period*, a new elite constellation was in charge: in 1957 and 1980 the networks were highly cohesive and sectorally bridging. Core members stemmed from various sectors and sat on a variety of affiliations, among others bridging neo-corporatist expert committees. This *integrated elite core* resembled the most to the power elite (Mills, 1956), a cross-sectorial group with well-established and long lasting alliances between key sectors.

After the 1980s, the elites followed a *fragmentation period*: the cores became less cohesive and connections between sectors diminished. In 2000, a less diversified core was separated into two sub-groups: one group of business elites circling around companies, the other formed of a more heterogeneous crowd (politicians, unionists, civil servants, professors) organized around expert committees, while political organizations and business associations bridged between the two. In 2010, the core became very small, but more pluralistic than in 2000. It was formed of politicians and union and business association leaders tied to central expertise committees. In 2015, sectoral diversity was the lowest since 1937, with overwhelmingly present business elites who mostly organized around companies. Because of a renewed hegemony of business and a lesser need for collective action after the 1980s, the central group tended to correspond to a *fragmented elite core* in 2000 and 2015, with a low internal cohesion and low integration between sectors. However, in 2010, it corresponded to an unstable *loose-knit elite core*, still with a low integration, but a higher bridging between sectors, as a response to the short-term need for a renewed coordination in the crisis context, but without a strong internal integration. In summary, following historical developments (i.e., the aftermath of World War 2, the financialization process of the late 20th century and the 2008 crisis) and along with different affiliation configurations, the Swiss elite core changed drastically, from unitary elites to more integrated ones, and finally to more fragmented or loose-knit elite versions. The renewed importance of business since the 1990s echoes Savage's (2021) argument of a return to a past order, where wealth inequality is as important in the recent period as it was before the First World War. At the same time, the recent fragmentation of the elites goes in line with his description of a process of "entropy" in social fields, which become less autonomous, less cohesive and more permeable, while wealth and other forms of economic capital, accumulated by a small group of individuals organized around the most powerful companies, reassert themselves once again as the most distinctive form of capital in society.

6 | DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

We observed historical evolutions of the Swiss elites' core during 105 years, based on a typology of network cohesion and sectoral bridging in Switzerland over time. Table 4 summarizes our main findings.

We found that the core was always dominated by business, business organizations and corporate forms of legitimacy, but at historical times of crisis to the hegemony of business elites, *that is*, after World War 2 with the increase in neo-corporatist processes, and shortly after the 2008 financial crisis with the turmoil that multinational companies and banks went through, elite circles expanded and the core included individuals with delegated forms of power (politicians, civil servants, unionists, university professors). We found that, during the *elite consolidation period* (1910, 1937), the core was composed of a highly cohesive corporate *unitary elite*. Then, during the *elite integration period* (1957, 1980), the core moved toward a corporatist *integrated elite*, stemming from a diversity of sectors and organized around several types of affiliations, but most of all state expert committees. Finally, during the *fragmentation period* (2000, 2010, 2015), the cores became less cohesive, coherent, and organized. We found two elite configurations during the most recent period. In 2000 and 2015, the core took the form of a *fragmented elite*, composed of a loosely integrated group of (mostly) business elites
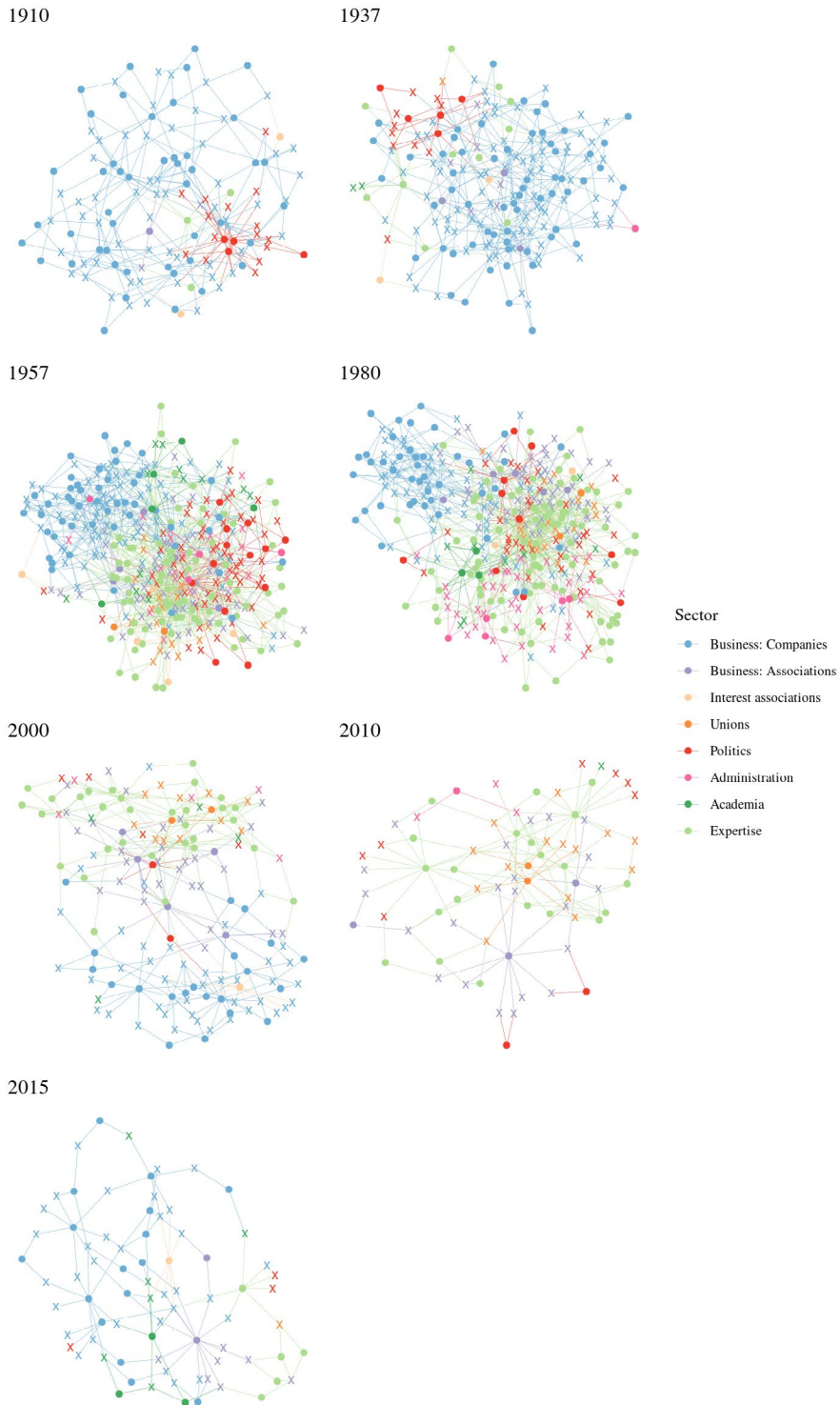
1910   1937

1957   1980

2000   2010

Sector
- Business: Companies
- Business: Associations
- Interest associations
- Unions
- Politics
- Administration
- Academia
- Expertise

2015

FIGURE 3 Two-mode network graphs of *k*-shells notes: Circles mark bridging affiliations and crosses mark core members. The colors correspond to the sector of the affiliation and the main sector of core members [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

TABLE 4 Typology of the Swiss elite core between 1910 and 2015

		Cohesion (integration within central circle)	
		Low	High
Sectoral bridging (Integration between groups in central circle)	Low	Fragmented elite core	Unitary elite core
		Years: 2000, 2015 ("fragmentation" period)	Years: 1910, 1937 ("consolidation" period)
		Characteristics: Loosely integrated business elites around companies and other organizations	Characteristics: Well-integrated business elites
	High	Loose-knit elite core	Integrated elite core
		Year: 2010 ("fragmentation" period)	Years: 1957, 1980 ("integration" period)
		Characteristics: Loosely integrated multisectorial elites around expert committees	Characteristics: Well-integrated elites from a diversity of sectors around expert committees

organized around companies and other types of affiliations. In 2010, after the financial crisis, the core took the shape of a *loose-knit elite*, formed of loosely integrated pluralist elites from a variety of sectors organized again around neo-corporatist committees.

These results were obtained by looking at the changes of a network that reunites the most important elite groups from each key sector in Switzerland, while being sensitive to historical and institutional dynamics. We identified the cores through a robust method already used on other elite networks (Larsen & Ellersgaard 2017). Our findings show the potential of analyzing the evolution in elite networks during a long period of time. Some changes could be caused by the varying reliability of our historical information in ties to key affiliations by elites, making the core group appear less stable and have less continuity. When some key institutions were not included in the core for a certain period of time (for example most companies in 2010), it does not mean that they disappeared from the network, but rather that they occupied a more peripheral position, which has to be interpreted in terms of distance to the core.[14] While we lack year-to-year granularity of the data, the findings still point to a particular development of Swiss elites. These dynamics merit exploration in other cases as well, comparing historical periods, but also engaging in a cross-country comparison, to focus on various elite network strategies when facing different types of pressure from below.

As a small capitalist state, the role of business in elite networks in Switzerland is of particular interest. In the start of the period, corresponding to the gilded age of high concentration of income and wealth described by Piketty (2020), we observed an inner-circle-strategy of business at the core of the network. Cohesion in the corporate network was high with key alliances to most important state officials, making the corporate elites able to act as a class-for-itself *vis-à-vis* other elite groups. Post-World War 2, the core of the elite network diversified to include key actors from politics, the state and unions, coinciding with periods of welfare state development and lower levels of economic inequality. However, as also shown by Mizruchi (2013) in the US case, this network fragmented as neoliberalism developed and inequality levels were again on the rise. Unlike in the early part of the 20th century, this movement did not mean a return to strong intra-corporate networks. Rather, the political success of neoliberalism reduced the demand for intra-corporate cohesion leading to a situation in which one gets what one wants, but has no social infrastructure to decide what one wants. This made the rapid changes in the 2010 network core of the Swiss elite networks noteworthy. In a situation of acute legitimacy crises of Swiss business, key actors from other sectors were suddenly called upon to restore a broader social alliance behind Swiss capitalism. Finally, in the most recent period, although business elites are less integrated, the prevalence of corporate elites and their accumulated wealth and economic capital has returned to the level of 1910, as described by Savage (2021), following the findings of Piketty (2014, 2020).

These changes in elite cohesion were accompanied in Switzerland by diverse economic and structural changes related to new exercise of elite power. For example, during the 1990s, at the beginning of the elite fragmentation period, new elite groups were able to converge. Liberal economics professors, allegedly marginalized from expert committees, formed an alliance with an informal group of big company representatives, outside of the traditional business association channels. Together, they issued various documents constituting a program "for a more liberal order" with the aim to liberalize domestic markets, privatize the major public utilities and reduce fiscal pressures. Their action was supported by the influential think tank *AvenirSuisse*. This "neo-liberal coalition" succeeded in being heard by the Swiss government, who appointed a special commission composed of their main members and without any union representative, paving the way for some liberal reformative agenda in the 1990s (Mach, 2002). This coalition took advantage of the fracturing logics of elites to become influential through new (more formal and public) channels, therefore relying less on network connections to do so (Mach et al., 2021). More generally, these dynamics were accompanied by several changes in Swiss society, such as an increasing transnationalization of the Swiss economy and labour markets,[15] an increase in income and wealth inequality at the very top (Martinez, 2017) or a decentralization and deregulation of collective bargaining (Mach & Oesch, 2003).

This analysis of the level of cohesion and cross-sectoral bridging in elite networks in Switzerland across 105 years has shown the different alliances forged by big business to defend their interest: From a starting point

of business unity, but little ability to bridge toward other sectors, followed by a new deal-like post-World War II coalition with labour, politics, state, and academia to a neoliberal era in which business relies more on their structural power than network embeddedness to protect their interest. However, once the legitimacy is threatened, as in 2010 after the financial crisis, which hit cornerstones at the top of the Swiss corporate elite particularly hard, the cross-sectoral bridges are reactivated, albeit only temporarily. This possible relationship between legitimacy strategies of capital, developments in inequality and the structure and composition of elite networks call for more discussion of the relation between the sociology of elite networks and comparative political economy (for a cross-sectional perspective, see: Cárdenas, 2012). Two lines of inquiry, both inspired by neo-gramscian perspectives, seem particularly promising. First, exploring to what extent elite networks mirror social blocs behind particular growth models in the perspective outlined by Baccaro and Pontusson (2019) could help us understand the economic underpinnings of elite networks. Second, exploring if and how different elite network constellations draw on development of hegemonic projects (Jessop, 2016) could aid our explorations of how the ideological foundation of a changing elite is maintained. The development in the core of the Swiss elite networks analyzed here certainly suggests that the structure of elite networks reflects the balance between social forces and gives us a blueprint to understand the strength of key forms of power in society. To conclude our paper, this research also opened on promising directions for the study of elite cohesion. Elite integration does not only happen through organizational ties, but also through common profile features, related to different forms of assets and resources, whether ascriptive, and linked to social background, elite family ties, gender and race or ethnicity, or acquired, and related to educational and professional features. In particular, it would be relevant to study changes in the core in the light of Bourdieu's (1996) description of the historical evolution of elite reproduction between family-based and educational-based logics. The account of these changes could be a first step into the historical study of the evolution of the strength of different forms of (economic, cultural and social) capital throughout the 20th century by considering the members of this core as "effective agents" within the field of power (Lunding et al., 2021).

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

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ENDNOTES

[1] In this model, we did not take into account how these elite groups acquired, accumulated and converted different forms of capital and resources—including network assets, that is, social capital—and how different elite fractions related to each other based upon their network embeddedness within the Swiss field of power (Bourdieu, 1996). This is part of an ongoing investigation that will lead us to other writings on the topic. The concept of the field of power is particularly relevant to study the evolution of the structure of the core of the network, including the recent fragmentation of elite relations and the resulting contestation of elite order due to these mechanisms.

[2] The main projects, funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation, were: "Les réglementations du gouvernement des entreprises en Suisse: origine, évolution et changements récents du comportement des entreprises" (PI: Thomas David; 2003–2006); "Les élites suisses au 20e siècle: un processus de différenciation inachevé?" (PIs: André Mach and Thomas David; 2007–2010); "Academic Elites in Switzerland 1910–2000: Between Autonomy and Power" (PIs: Felix Bühlmann, André Mach and Thomas David; 2013–2017); "The Swiss Power Elite and Field of Power. Tensions between Elite Coordination and Differentiation since the 1950s" (PI: Thierry Rossier, 2019–2020). Archival and historical work was undertaken to obtain the list of relevant organizations and individuals. The main sources to establish this list were the following: the commerce register and the economic and financial press for the business and union sectors; the website of the Swiss parliament and other cantonal websites and press resources for the political sector; the digitalized archives of the federal administration for the administrative and the military sectors; university personnel directories for the academic sector; and other annual reports and publicly available registers for other associations and organizations. See the details of the projects and used sources: https://www.unil.ch/obelis/en/home/menuinst/projects.html.

[3] See the website of the Swiss Elite Database, here: https://www2.unil.ch/elitessuisses.

[4] A descriptive approach can be obviously complemented by other types of analysis, such as statistical modeling. In particular, exponential random graph models (ERMGs) could help us to model network dynamics more deeply, according to micro-level individual and institutional mechanisms. However, this type of analysis is beyond the scope of this precise paper and should be explored in another study.

[5] See the details of the retained organizations for each sector in Table A of Online Appendix 1.

[6] See the description of the procedure in Online Appendix 2.

[7] See the details of the different used indicators in Online Appendix 3.

[8] In this table, most of the names of the affiliations are given in French. This should not be interpreted as a dominance of French-speaking institutions at the expense of other linguistic regions. Indeed, as the Swiss elite team is mostly based in French-speaking universities, the data were collected in French, and that included the names of elite organizations at the federal level, as featured in this study. However, these organizations are normally named differently in every official language. For example, the Swiss Federal Railways company is called CFF (*Chemins de fer fédéraux suisses*) in French, SBB (*Schweizerische Bundesbahnen*) in German, FFS (*Ferrovie federali svizzere*) in Italian and *Viafiers federalas svizras* in Romansh. More generally, an ongoing investigation on the geographical profile of the core members that will be featured in another study reveals that their distribution in terms of linguistic regions mostly matches the current distribution of the Swiss population.

[9] See in Tables B to H in Online Appendix 4 the 20 most recurring affiliations in the k-shells for each year. See also Tables I and J in Online Appendix 5 for the details of the economic subsector for all the retained companies and for all the companies linked to at least one member of the k-shells. We see that, to the exception of 2010, where only three companies were linked to the core, the representation of the different economic subsectors stayed quite stable for the whole period.

[10] See Online Appendix 6 for the details of the positions of shell members by sector (Table K) and of their multisectoriality (Table L).

[11] We actually split business into two subsectors, companies and associations, to let visible the evolution between the two.

[12] Corporate actors were completely excluded from the 2010 core, but were replaced by business association leaders, who acted in favor of business interests through neo-corporatist expert committees.

[13] See Online Appendix 7 for the two-mode graphs of the whole largest component.

[14] See again the complete networks in Online Appendix 7 to make sense of what the distance to the core means for each sector at each benchmark year.

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Resilience in the context of conflict-related sexual violence and beyond: A "sentient ecology" framework

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Abstract

In his research with Indigenous Evenki people living in Arctic Siberia, Anderson introduces the concept of "sentient ecology", defined as "the mutual interrelation of person and place". This interdisciplinary article starts from the basic premise that sentient ecology is relevant for research on resilience, and it aims to demonstrate this in two key ways. First, it uses sentient ecology as a novel framework for thinking about resilience, with a particular focus on conflict-related sexual violence (CSRV)—an area of scholarship that to date has given very little attention to the concept of resilience. The article locates resilience in the fluid and dynamic interactions between individuals and their social ecologies. What sentient ecology contributes in this regard is a different way of thinking about these interactions. In particular, it highlights some of the ways that female and male victims–/survivors of CRSV actively utilize and engage with the more-than-human living world around them in the process of rebuilding and moving on with their lives. Second, the article uses sentient ecology as a framework for thinking in new "sentient" ways about social-ecological systems (SES)—and how the social and ecological parts of these systems communicate with each other. Taking this a step further, it argues that sentient ecology offers a

potential basis for developing more posthumanist accounts of resilience as an extension of SES.

1 | INTRODUCTION

This article begins with a thought; what Morton (2010, p. 7) calls "the ecological thought", defined as "the thinking of interconnectedness". However, the ecological thought is more than just a thought that occurs "in the mind". It is also "a practice and a process of becoming fully aware of how human beings are connected with other beings—animal, vegetable, or mineral" (Morton, 2010, p. 7). At the center of this research is a concept—"sentient ecology"—that both reflects and illustrates the ecological thought and the significance of interconnectedness. In his anthropological research with Indigenous Evenki people living in Arctic Siberia, Anderson (2000, p. 116) defines sentient ecology as "the mutual interrelation of person and place". This interdisciplinary article does something new and original with the concept, with the aim of demonstrating its wider application and relevance.

First, the article uses sentient ecology as a framework for thinking about resilience, with a particular focus on conflict-related sexual violence (CSRV). Significantly, extant scholarship on CRSV to date has given little attention to the concept of resilience, for reasons that will be discussed. To be clear from the outset, this article is not making a normative argument that victims–/survivors[1] of CRSV "ought to be 'resilient'" (MacKinnon & Derickson, 2013, p. 262), and nor is it putting the onus on individuals to *be* resilient. Rather, it theorizes resilience as a process that is "co-facilitated by individuals and the systems of which individuals are part" (Theron et al., 2021, p. 361). In short, it adopts a social-ecological approach that emphasizes "the social and ecological systems and associated resources that are important to human resilience, including supportive relationships, quality education opportunities, meaningful employment, well-being-promoting built and natural environments, and enabling cultural heritage" (Theron et al., 2021, p. 361; see also Moletsane & Theron, 2017, p. 3; Ungar, 2012, p. 15).

Sentient ecology offers a different way of thinking about the interactions – and the nature of these interactions – between individuals and their social ecologies.[2] This is particularly significant for scholarship and policy discussions about CRSV, which have often given little attention to the protective resources that victims–/survivors of such violence may have within their social ecologies (Clark, 2021a). In particular, sentient ecology highlights some of the ways that female and male victims–/survivors of CRSV actively utilize and engage with what they have around them in the process of rebuilding and moving on with their lives. It thus resonates with and speaks to an expanding body of research examining the social and political agency of individuals (and communities) affected by conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence (see, for example, Berry, 2018; Kreft, 2019; Oliveira & Baines, 2021; Touquet & Schulz, 2021; Zulver, 2016).

Second, and building on the above, the article utilizes Anderson's concept of sentient ecology to make a bigger argument about resilience. While there exists a vast corpus of literature exploring resilience from multiple disciplinary perspectives (see, for example, Adger, 2000; Bourbeau & Ryan, 2018; Pascual-Leone & Batrez-Faz, 2021; Rutter, 1989; Ungar, 2021), in the last 20 years or so there has been a growing emphasis on interdependent social and ecological systems (SES; see, for example, Berkes et al., 2003; Faulkner et al. 2018; Walker et al., 2004). Colding and Barthel (2019) underline that "SES discourse is a steadily growing knowledge field". Yet, they also point to a lack of definitional clarity surrounding SES (Colding & Barthel, 2019). Significant in this regard is Schlüter et al.'s (2019) observation that "Interactions between humans and nature have been at the core of SES research for a long time, but doing justice to this interdependence when analyzing SES still remains a challenge". Responding

to this challenge, this article uses sentient ecology as a framework for thinking in new "sentient" ways about SES and "the links and feedback mechanisms" between them (Cretney & Bond, 2017, p. 11). Taking this a step further, it argues that sentient ecology offers a potential basis for developing more posthumanist accounts of resilience, and richer conceptualizations of SES, that do not "fix the boundary between 'human' and 'nonhuman'" (Barad, 2003, p. 821).

The article begins by exploring some of the possible reasons why extant scholarship on CRSV has neglected resilience and argues that the concept of sentient ecology can help to bridge this gap. The second section is methodological and discusses the fieldwork that underpins the article, namely interviews with victims–/survivors of CRSV in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Colombia and Uganda. The third section empirically demonstrates the significance of sentient ecology in the context of CRSV and illustrates a linkage between sentient ecology and resilience. The conclusion reflects on the broader relevance of sentient ecology for social-ecological theorizations of resilience and, ultimately, for new posthumanist work on SES.

2 | THE WIDER CONTEXT

2.1 | Resilience and CRSV

There is extensive research on the issue of CRSV (see, for example, Baaz & Stern, 2009; Kirby, 2013; Nordås & Cohen, 2021; Revkin & Wood, 2021; Schulz & Touquet, 2020). This scholarship has emphasized, inter alia, the myriad ways that such violence directly affects the lives of victims–/survivors, including physically and psychologically/emotionally (Akinsulure-Smith, 2014; Dossa et al., 2014; Liebling-Kalifani et al., 2011; Zalesne, 2020). In contrast, much less attention has been given to how victims–/survivors deal with their experiences and find ways to move forward with their lives (see, however, Coulter, 2009; Laxminarayan & Durr, 2019; Oliveira & Baines, 2021; Schulz & Ngomokwe, 2021). Particularly striking in this regard is the neglect of resilience. While there are some brief references to it, substantive and in-depth engagement with the concept remains largely lacking—a gap that this author's own research has sought to address (see, for example, Clark, 2021b, 2021c).

As one illustration, a report by Edström et al. (2016, p. 5), focused on northern Uganda, finds that "despite pervasive discrimination, groups of male survivors [of CRSV] have been able to develop resilience and mutual support through collective action". However, as the term resilience is left undefined, the report does not sufficiently demonstrate how these men have developed resilience; and the linkage that it appears to make between resilience and the "capacity of male survivors to organize collectively" is not fully explained (Edström et al., 2016, p. 5). Interestingly, Nordås and Cohen (2021, p. 202) argue that "Among sexual violence survivors and their families, studies have found inspiring evidence of resilience and growth". Yet, they only cite one study (Koos, 2018) in support of this. Zraly et al.'s research (2013), based on 16 months of ethnographic fieldwork in Rwanda, offers a deeper analysis of resilience, albeit one that is specifically focused on the concept's relationship with motherhood.[3]

The bigger point is that when scholars do refer to resilience in the context of CRSV, they primarily approach it from a psychological or socio-psychological perspective,[4] which misses some of the concept's richness and "multiple origins…within disciplines as varied as psychology, social work, engineering, and ecology" (Bourbeau, 2018, p. 24). As a lens for thinking about resilience, part of the utility of Anderson's sentient ecology is precisely that it brings some of these disciplines—specifically psychology and ecology—together in a novel way.

It is important to acknowledge that resilience is not an uncontentious concept. One set of critiques associates it with a wider neoliberal agenda that effectively "redistributes responsibilities—and possibilities of blame" from governments to citizens (Dunn Cavelty et al., 2015, p. 7). A "resilient subject", in short, is one "that must permanently struggle to accommodate itself to the world…a subject that accepts the disastrousness of the world it lives in as a condition of partaking in that world" (Reid, 2013, p. 355; see also Chandler, 2013; Joseph, 2013; Welsh, 2014). Viewed through a neoliberal lens, thus, resilience would mean leaving victims–/

survivors of CRSV to "positively adapt to change" (Chandler, 2016, p. 14) and "cope with uncertainty" (Howell & Voronka, 2012, p. 4). This particular framing makes the concept of resilience appear highly discordant and ontologically out of place in a field of scholarship and policy making that puts a strong emphasis on the needs and priorities of victims–/survivors—exemplified by the rhetoric of a "survivor-centred approach" to CRSV (Clark, 2021a).

However, neoliberal critiques of resilience have themselves met with criticism (see, for example, Bourbeau, 2018; DeVerteuil & Golubchikov, 2016; Schmidt, 2015). Bourbeau (2018, p. 22), for example, maintains that "scholars have been busy documenting neoliberal expressions of resilience without paying much attention to expressions of resilience not dictated by neoliberalism" (see also Corry, 2014, p. 257; Simon & Randalls, 2016, p. 6). Relatedly, Corry (2014, p. 264) makes the important argument—which this article itself seeks to demonstrate—that while critics view ecological notions of resilience "as opening the floodgates for a neo-liberal commoditization of nature and the biosphere", the inter-linking of social and ecological systems "could equally make possible a challenge to neo-liberalism".

Concurring with Simon and Randalls (2016, p. 7) that "[r]esilience is not ontologically given", this research theorizes resilience as a deeply relational concept (Luthar, 2006, p. 780) and locates it in the fluid and dynamic interactions between individuals and their wider social ecologies (Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011, p. 127). It defines resilience as "the capacity of both individuals and their environments to interact in ways that optimize developmental processes" (Ungar, 2013, p. 256). What is significant about this definition is that "it purposely decenters individuals to avoid blaming them for not flourishing when there are few opportunities to access resources" (Ungar, 2013, p. 256). Conceptualizing resilience in this way is therefore useful for drawing attention to where these social ecologies are failing or deficient—which directly challenges neoliberal interpretations of resilience.

This research also challenges the argument that resilience forces us "to become active participants in our own de-politicization" (Evans & Reid, 2015, p. 156; see also Evans & Reid, 2014). In particular, its discussion of resilience is not about depoliticizing CRSV and elevating victim–/survivor coping over international and national efforts to pre-empt and tackle such violence (Olsson et al., 2020; Pruitt, 2012); and nor is it about instrumentalizing victims–/survivors of CRSV as "implementers" of global resilience policies that they have few opportunities to resist (Bargués-Pedreny & Martin de Almagro, 2020, p. 343). On the contrary, this article's approach to resilience highlights the protective factors that victims–/survivors have within their social ecologies (including children, families, land and non-governmental organizations [NGOs]), and how they use these resources not only in rebuilding their lives but also, inter alia, in advocating for change, giving back to their social ecologies and resisting structural violence and oppression.

As an interdisciplinary piece of work on resilience that recognizes the latter's "multiple relations with other disciplines, concepts, and approaches" (Bourbeau, 2018, p. 24), the key aim of this article is to explore and demonstrate what Anderson's concept of sentient ecology can bring to social-ecological ways of thinking about resilience—and the relevance of this for the study of CRSV. It is important to acknowledge that existing scholarship on resilience, from various disciplines, has widely explored the significance of broad environmental factors. To take just one example, as scholars moved from psychological to more contextual socio-psychological ways of thinking about children and resilience (see, for example, Masten & Garmezy, 1985; Werner & Smith, 1992), "Subsequent research led to the delineation of three sets of factors implicated in the development of resilience: (1) attributes of the children themselves, (2) aspects of their families, and (3) characteristics of their wider social environments" (Luthar et al., 2000, p. 544). Anderson's concept of sentient ecology contributes something new as a way of thinking about resilience and the relevance of the environment. In particular, it illuminates "a relational way of being in the world that invites humans into an emergent and reciprocal dance with more-than-human lifeworlds" (George & Wiebe, 2020, p. 503). Outside the context of Indigenous scholarship (see, for example, Hatala et al., 2020; Morton et al., 2020; Tobias & Richmond, 2014), these "lifeworlds" have received little attention within resilience scholarship—and even less within extant literature on CRSV.

2.2 | Sentient ecology

In his work in the Taimyr region of Arctic Siberia, Anderson (2000, p. 13) notes that "What is unique about this region is the Putoran alpine plateau". These mountains, he explains, "have the ecological effect of pushing the treeline zone unusually far past the Arctic Circle", which has made the area along the edge of the plateau "a very rich and comfortable place to hunt wildlife and raise domestic reindeer" (Anderson, 2000, p. 13). This is due to the ease of quickly changing ecological zones (Anderson, 2000, p. 14). The relevance of the Putoran plateau in this regard brings forth the concept of "ecological edges", referring to areas where different ecosystems overlap with each other—meaning that they are often highly rich in resources. As one illustration, "by situating a camp or community on a shoreline, people are able to draw from both aquatic and terrestrial habitats to obtain needed goods" (Turner et al., 2003, p. 440).

Beyond their association with biodiversity, edges are also important in the sense of complexifying relationships. In ecosystems, for example, edges are "liminal spaces" constituting "zones of interaction" (Howitt, 2001, p. 240). Discussing the concept of "cultural edges" (Turner et al., 2003), Mulrennan and Bussière (2018) argue that it may have particular utility in "representing indigenous history as a series of encounters with neighboring and distant indigenous groups, settlers, and the state that involved interactions that were sometimes invited and welcome, but often imposed and resisted".

Although Anderson does not explicitly frame it as such, sentient ecology also exemplifies the significance of edges as sites of interaction. Sentient ecology is thus a highly relational idea that reflects different dimensions of connectivity (Tibet, 2018, p. 231)—a concept that is also partly about where things meet (Cooney, 2004, p. 326)—and "interactive connectivities that promote diversity, complexity, and relationality" (Rose, 2017, p. 491). More specifically, sentient ecology is about the deep interactions and connectivities between individuals and the worlds that they form part of and inhabit. Anderson (2000, p. 116) notes, for example, that being a *tundrovik*—meaning someone who lives on the tundra—"is not only a relational identity in the sense that it is a category encompassing people of multiple language groups and nationalities. It also implies an even stronger set of solidarities and obligations between people and certain places and animals" (see also Anderson, 2017, p. 137). Further elaborating on this, he underlines that "Evenki hunters act and move on the tundra in such a way that they are conscious that animals and the tundra itself are reacting to them" (Anderson, 2000, p. 116, n. 1).

A core aspect of sentient ecology is what Anderson (2000, p. 117) calls "knowing." Knowing is not only a resource, in the sense of helping people to get themselves out of difficult situations, but it is also about an individual's relationship with the land. For example, "A competent performance of one's knowledge earns a person respect, establishes one's status, but also entitles one to enter into a relationship with the land as an independent and competent person" (Anderson, 2000, p. 120). Anderson juxtaposes Evenki relationships with the land with the relationships officially prescribed for them during the Soviet period. In his words, "Instead of knowing the tundra, contemporary hunters and herders are expected to map the tundra—or at least to understand and respect how government officials imagine and enclose space" (Anderson, 2000, p. 15). The bigger point, thus, is that sentient relationships necessarily play out within a broader context and are not immune to external developments.

One illustration of this is Raban's book *Passage to Juneau*. It can be read, in part, as dealing with the thematic of lost sentience through its reflections on the invention of the magnetic compass—and what this meant for man's relationship with the sea. Without any instruments to guide him, "the primitive navigator knew his local sea in the same unselfconscious way that a farmer knows his fields" (Raban, 1999, p. 94). With the arrival of the magnetic compass, however, man became a mere "functionary" who "no longer needed to intuit the meaning of the waves" (Raban, 1999, p. 95). At the same time, however, seas also tell a story of deep and enduring sentient connectivities that persist across time and space (Cooney, 2004, p. 323; George & Wiebe, 2020, p. 499). This article specifically demonstrates that sentient connectivities tell a bigger story about resilience, CRSV and the "interconnectedness that characterize[s] our world(s)" (Tickner & Querejazu, 2021, p. 392).

Extant research on CRSV, including feminist scholarship, has strongly emphasized, in different ways, the concept of relationality that is central to Anderson's work on sentient ecology. Illustrating Longino's (1993, p. 111) argument that "[a] key feminist insight is that we are all in relations of interdependence", scholars have examined how sexual violence in conflict can affect and potentially harm relationships between direct victims–/survivors and their social ecologies—including their families and communities (Christian et al., 2011, p. 239; Denov & Kahn, 2019, p. 152; Mukamana & Brysiewicz, 2008, p. 382; Schulz, 2018, p. 598). If these social-ecological relationships make up a fundamental part of individuals' environments, scholarship on CRSV has also addressed and explored the environment in the broader sense of gendered and patriarchal structures that facilitate and legitimize the use of violence—and in particular violence against women (see, for example, Boesten, 2014; Davies & True, 2015; Kaya, 2020; Kreft, 2020). Additionally, it has examined some of the ways that socio-cultural environments can inhibit or deter victims–/survivors from reporting or speaking about their experiences (Pham et al., 2020; Schulz, 2018; Traunmüller et al., 2019), as well as the challenges of prosecuting CRSV in environments characterized by impunity or breakdown of the rule of law (Kravetz, 2017; Perissi & Naimer, 2020; Zawati, 2014). The environment in the sense of nature and ecosystems, however, has received little attention. Similarly neglected are the sentient connectivities that some victims–/survivors have with the environment—and which help them in the process of dealing with their experiences and moving forward with their lives. Herein lies the wider relevance and utility of sentient ecology beyond the particular context of Anderson's own research in Arctic Siberia.

3 | METHODOLOGY

This article draws on fieldwork undertaken in the context of a five-year research project about resilience and victims–/survivors of CRSV. Through its focus on three countries—Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH), Colombia and Uganda—that exemplify different patterns and uses of CRSV over different time scales, the research is analyzing, inter alia, how contextual and social-ecological diversity shapes expressions of resilience, and how different connectivities cluster, operate and rupture to tell a broader narrative about resilience. The study uses mixed methods to capture the nuances and complexities of resilience within a comparative multi-site research design.

This article draws specifically on the qualitative data, consisting of one-to-one semi-structured interviews with 63 female and male victims–/survivors of CRSV. The interviewees were selected from a larger dataset of 449 victims–/survivors of CRSV across the three countries (BiH n = 126, Colombia n = 171, Uganda n = 152), all of whom completed a study questionnaire (for an analysis of the questionnaire data, see Clark et al., 2021).[5] Two particular factors guided the selection of interviewees from the quantitative dataset. First, the questionnaire included the Adult Resilience Measure (ARM), a 28-item scale divided into individual, relational and contextual sub-scales (Resilience Research Centre, 2016). The ARM is designed to measure an individual's protective resources across these three interconnected levels, with a higher overall ARM score indicating a larger number of protective resources to support resilience. ARM scores were used to divide participants in each country into four quartiles, with the aim of exploring whether and how the range of ARM scores translated into the qualitative data in terms of particular themes and patterns, and interviewees were selected from across the quartiles. Second, it was important that selection choices reflected the demographic diversity within the quartiles (including gender, ethnic and age diversity), to respect the heterogeneity of victim–/survivor profiles in each country. The author and two postdoctoral researchers carried out the interviews. All interviews took place between January and July 2019 and were conducted in the relevant local language/s. With the participants' informed consent, interviews were recorded using fully encrypted digital voice recorders. Ethics approval was granted by the author's host institution, the research funder and by relevant authorities in each country (for a discussion of some of the ethics issues raised, see Clark et al., 2021).

The interview guide included questions about interviewees' conflict experiences, their lives today and their sources of support. Interviewees were also asked intersectional questions about how their gender, ethnicity and the place where they were born and/or lived today affected how they deal with challenges and adversities. All interviews were transcribed verbatim and translated into English. The transcripts were uploaded into NVivo and coded. The author developed the codebook, which underwent multiple iterations, over a period of 12 months and used thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify broad themes, clustered around a central connectivity core (see Clark, 2021d). Fundamentally, all of the themes—which include *"It is not there anymore": Broken and ruptured connectivities*, *"With them I get through it": Supportive and sustaining connectivities* and *"We have to live": New connectivities*—speak to the multi-dimensional connectivities between individuals and their social ecologies.

It is important to note that only three of the interviewees—all of them Colombian—explicitly used the terms "resilient" or "resilience". Participants in all three countries, however, variously spoke about the need to be strong, to "fight", to get on with life, to let go of the past and to have a focus. More significantly, all of them talked about the different ways that their social ecologies, and specifically particular resources within these ecologies—including their families, children/grandchildren, friends and contacts with local NGOs or women's associations—were helping them to deal with everything that they had gone through and to rebuild their lives (see, for example, Clark, 2021a). What also emerged from the data in this regard were stories of sentient ecology.

4 | STORIES OF SENTIENT ECOLOGY

In her book *Do Glaciers Listen?*—a question that itself reflects the idea of sentient ecology—Cruikshank, referring to a conference that she attended in southern Yukon in 1982, recalls the words of a First Nation elder in her eighties; "[h]er advice to 'listen for different stories' has stayed with me…" (Cruikshank, 2005, p. 76). In the context of this research and its exploration of resilience, part of the interview (and coding) process involved "listening for different stories" about the relationships—both positive and negative—between participants and their social ecologies. Significant in this regard was the active presence in the interviewees' stories of the natural environment and the more-than-human living world with which they interacted—an illustration of how "[w]e relate, know, think, world, and tell stories through and with other stories, worlds, knowledges, thinkings, yearnings" (Haraway, 2016, p. 97).

Several of the Colombian interviewees particularly stood out in this regard. When asked what title she would give her life story, one interviewee answered "The Caterpillar." She further elaborated:

> Why 'The Caterpillar?' Because to become what I am today, I had to be a caterpillar. Just think, the caterpillar goes through so many changes and those changes must hurt. [J]ust simply breaking out of the chrysalis…it hurts, it causes pain. In order to become the beautiful butterfly, it has to go through a painful preparation, right? So, that's what I had to go through (interview, Colombia, March 5, 2019).

Speaking about pain in relation to her understanding of the term "victim", another Colombian interviewee stressed that the impossibility of forgetting this pain made it imperative to get on with one's life. In her words, "…as I've said before, a person has to try to…to keep going. They've [referring to the perpetrators] trodden you down, but you have to burst into new life, like a flower or like a chrysalis, and try to keep going forwards" (interview, Colombia, March 13, 2019). In these two examples, the interviewees were essentially "thinking with" the world around them (Cruikshank, 2012), drawing attention to important relational connectivities in their lives.

In their own work on Colombia, with a particular focus on environmental peacebuilding, Yoshida and Céspedes-Báez (2021, p. 24) emphasize that:

Considering women and men as connected to and living actively in their ecosystems helps to enrich understanding of the implications of armed conflict for their lives and for their communities, and to highlight the key role of those implications on environmental sustainability, preservation, enrichment and transmission of knowledge in these areas.

Thinking about these connections, however, also means thinking about ruptured connections. It is important in this regard to first contextualize the concept of rupture in relation to SES. The key point is that because SES are in constant movement and flux, ruptures inevitably do occur (Walker and Salt, 2006, p. 85) and they are not out of the ordinary (although they may not be desirable).[6] Highlighting this, the back loop (release and reorganization phases) of the adaptive cycle (Gunderson & Holling, 2002) is quintessentially about rupture; it is when things break up and come apart. It entails "the collapse of accumulated connections and the release of bound-up knowledge and capital" (Holling, 2004). This rupture and breaking apart, in turn, mean that the back loop can offer opportunities for things to be significantly different (Walker and Salt, 2006, p. 82). According to Wakefield (2017, p. 86), for example, "What the back loop suggests to us is that the Anthropocene is now a time to explore, to let go—of foundations for thinking and acting—and open ourselves to the possibilities offered to us here and now". It should be emphasized that changes resulting from the back loop do not necessarily make things better or worse, although they can be positive or negative (Holling, 2004).[7]

When rupture occurs in the context of individuals' experiences of armed conflict and large-scale violence, the resultant changes can be deeply disruptive to lives that will never be the same again. Interviewees in BiH and particularly Colombia, for example, frequently spoke about forced displacement. What they had experienced in this regard were not "transitional ruptures", which, according to Wilson (2014, p. 18), can "lead to a sudden strengthening of community resilience", but more long-term ruptured relationships with their homes, land and communities. In some cases, forced displacement had also ruptured their ways of life and relationships with the natural environment, accentuating Mitchell's (2014, p. 5) argument that war "destroys human lives and habitations, but also animal and plant life, landscapes and cultures, as well as the complex linkages between these phenomena" (see also Clark, 2020).

A Colombian interviewee, as one illustration, strongly emphasized her *campesina* (rural/countrywoman) identity and articulated a deep sense of "knowing the land" (Anderson, 2000, p. 117). She knew how to survive off it and not to go hungry; "I learned so much—how to grow plantains, yuca. I know all that stuff. I learned to make *rellenas* [a type of sausage, similar to black pudding], I know how to make *tamales* [a traditional Colombian dish made from corn dough and wrapped in a plantain leaf]". However, she was now internally displaced in a city, completely disconnected from the world that she had known. The people were different ["Here, the women are not as nice as in the countryside where I used to live"], and not being able to keep animals made her feel "like being imprisoned". She thus expressed a deep yearning for a physical and emotional reconnection with the particular environment that she had grown up in and which had always been such an important part of her life. In her words:

> The only thing I long for, in order to be able to live well, in peace, is to get some farmland and be able to keep cows, pigs, chickens. To have what I long for. That would be the only thing that would enable me to rebuild; for everything to be as it was before in T [name of her village]. It would be having a farm again, being able to keep animals and all the things I had there (interview, Colombia, April 3, 2019).

As a very different example of rupture, some of the Ugandan interviewees spoke about physical injuries and chronic health issues that had affected their "knowing" relationship with the land, in the sense of altering how they interacted with it and sustained themselves and their families. A male interviewee talked about his abduction by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the time he spent in the bush. He had been made to carry heavy loads over long distances and this had significantly affected his physical health. In his words: "because of carrying heavy loads, it

weakened me, taking away my strength, so that I cannot dig" (interview, Uganda, March 26, 2019). In some cases, moreover, additional factors, such as drought (see Branch, 2018, p. 313), had further contributed to ruptures. A female Ugandan interviewee who suffered sexual violence after being forcibly recruited into the LRA and was now living with HIV explained:

> The challenges I face in life are too much drought these days. We do farming, but there would still be no food. How to get it is even harder as my body is still not light [healthy]. It makes getting it [food] hard because I do not have the energy to do casual labour (interview, Uganda, February 19, 2019).

All of these examples, and particularly the second two, in different ways illustrate Cooke et al.'s (2016, p. 832) argument that "human–environment (dis)connection can…be framed as an 'embodied' relationship", re-flecting the fact that "humans are not just mentally but also materially and physically immersed in their imme-diate environments". Experiences of displacement and ongoing health issues had created human-environment disconnection (and rupture) in the sense that although the interviewees were of course still living in and con-nected to an environment, they could not materially and physically immerse themselves in it—or parts of it—in the same way that they had previously.

It is important to stress that broken and ruptured connectivities are not necessarily incompatible with resil-ience. This does not mean, however, that ruptures are productive. Arguably they can be, in some circumstances, but the very fact that they are inherently contextual makes it impossible to make broad claims about what rup-tures might lead to. The bigger point is that the underpinning research on which this article draws is seeking to tell a story (or rather multiple stories) about resilience through connectivity, and ruptured connectivities were only one part of interviewees' stories. Demonstrating that human-environment relationships are heterogenous and dynamic (Cooke et al., 2016, p. 835), some interviewees were actively building new connectivities in their lives, such as creating their own associations (this was particularly the case in Colombia) to help other victims–/survivors of CRSV. In all cases, moreover, broken and ruptured connectivites existed alongside (enduring) supportive and sustaining connecivities in the interviewees' lives. For some of them, their relationships with nature and the more-than-human living world around them—which this article frames as examples of sentient ecology—were one of the many connectivities and "affective solidarities" (Tonkiss, 2003, p. 299) that were helping them, in various ways, to deal with their experiences of violence.

To examine this in more detail, the remainder of this section centers on three particular research participants—one in each country—whose interviews were especially rich in examples of sentient ecology. Focusing on just three interviewees allows for a fuller discussion of sentient ecology, what it looks like in different socio-cultural contexts and its significance for understanding some of the ways that victims–/survivors of CRSV deal with their experiences by drawing on relationships and relational connectivities that extant scholarship has not addressed.

4.1 | Šefik's story

"Šefik",[8] a Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim), was one of the five men interviewed in BiH. Early in the Bosnian war (1992–1995), he was taken to a camp where he suffered multiple abuses and human rights violations, including sexual violence. He spent a total of 15 months detained in several different camps and emphasized that he had "survived Golgotha". When asked to give three words to describe himself, he did not answer the question. Instead, he ex-pressed his ongoing struggles (accentuated by his staccato speech), more than 20 years on, to comprehend and make sense of what had happened to him as a man. He told the author:

> No…I cannot understand, well…Err…I mean, I am not…Those…I, I, I don't know, I cannot come to terms with this, that a man {does it} with another man, and forcefully. And among ourselves

[referring to the fact that men detained in one of the camps were forced to perform sexual acts on each other], like…And many other things…And now, that someone makes you do this, to have to do this. I cannot understand these people [referring to the camp guards] (interview, BiH, April 10, 2019).

Šefik had not talked to his wife about what he went through in the camps; he felt ashamed and embarrassed. He also briefly mentioned that his experiences, "especially at the beginning, while they were still fresh", had affected his intimate relationship with her. It was nevertheless striking that this interviewee—in contrast to many of the Bosnian interviewees—overall spoke very little about his family, although he did underscore that "If it was not for my family, who knows what would have become of me". In contrast, a particularly strong theme in Šefik's interview—and an illustration of sentient ecology—was the importance of a local lake.

Sometimes he sat with friends by the lake, but mostly he preferred being there alone. It was a place where he went to think and a place where he went to forget. In his words:

Like this, I go down to the lake and, as they say, I think of nothing, like…I go to forget. Or, well, also, I sit here and I love being alone sometimes. Sometimes…Sometimes I just don't like having anyone here. But there are friends, they come along, and sometimes, again…I stay here alone until midnight and when they all leave, then I think and…That's it.

When asked the question "Who or what is the source of support in your life?", Šefik talked about the lake. "This is something that keeps me going here", he maintained. The lake, however, was not simply a resource in his life. It was something much deeper; something that he was fundamentally connected to—and which was fundamentally a part of him. As he explained: "And, well, this birthplace, everything I have learned here. In fact, the water, water is to me…I possibly would not have returned here ever, but it is my birthplace and this lake that I have had since I was a child. As they say, I was born in the lake". The lake was a key part of his profound attachment to his birthplace (to which he spoke about being "rooted", "connected" and "tied"), illustrating the "mutual interrelation of person and place" that constitutes sentient ecology (Anderson, 2000, p. 116). His use of the word "learned", moreover, highlights the "knowing" that Anderson (2000, p. 117) writes about. In short, through Šefik's "knowing the lake", he had found a way to live with the past and to get on with life. As he summarized it, "I rest here. I rest mentally. Like this, I observe the ducks, fish. Pigeons come along…Like that, and I do not think about problems. I put the music on, over there, like that…This is it. My life, here".

4.2 | Isabella's story

"Isabella" is an Indigenous woman in Colombia. She had previously lived in an area where three armed groups were active—the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the paramilitaries—and was unsure which group the two men who had raped her were linked with. When asked about the impact of this particular experience on her life, Isabella reflected: "For me it's become something good—not because of what was done to me but rather because of what I'm doing with it now" (interview, Colombia, March 6, 2019). In 2016, she set up her own local association to help other women and girls who suffered violence during the armed conflict. Her work—which was a prominent leitmotif within her interview—was challenging, but it had re-energized her. In her words, "My life is very busy at the moment. I'm not so passive as I was before". She also viewed the members of her association as her main source of support, describing them as "my friends who are always around and always ready to see what we need to do, where we are going next, what we are doing and aiming for".

In contrast to Šefik, Isabella did not express any sense of attachment to a particular place, perhaps due to her ongoing internal displacement. The idea of sentient ecology was more implicit in her interview. If, as Masterson

et al. (2017) argue, "...there has been insufficient attention to understanding well-being as co-created by people and ecosystems", the important point is that both interviews, in different ways, provide illustrations of this co-created wellbeing. Particularly interesting in Isabella's case, as an example of how the relationship between people and nature "is also an intimate, physical and bodily relationship" (Cooke et al., 2016, p. 836), is the fact that she talked about re-connecting with her own body—and helping the women in her association to do the same. As she explained, "we are trying to get back in touch with our own bodies...We're remembering how to feel this body that has always been ours and that we started to lose because of things that happened to us and we could not process. That's what we are doing—it's a beautiful thing". If this process was a significant part of her personal journey, so too was the strong sense of sentient connectedness to the more-than-human living world that she conveyed through particular words and images. When asked what title she would give her life story, for example, she answered "My New Dawn". Elaborating on this, she explained:

> You are still just yourself, from the same roots, but stronger and with more support—because support is important; all the little bits of help you get every day are just so important for all the people who make up our daily life. It might be some little creature that keeps you company—hearing the sound of a bird singing in the morning. It's a little bit of companionship and it's the everyday things that keep you wanting to live each moment.

Like Šefik, Isabella made several references to water. Moreover, she indirectly attributed sentience to it. It did not "listen" like the glaciers discussed in Cruikshank's (2005) aforementioned work, but it could communicate through the sounds that it made. In Isabella's own words: "You sit on the banks of a river and listen to the sound of the water—the water speaks to you, it sings, it murmurs and you just want to keep going back to listen to those murmurs, all that. Music. It's a rebirth. A new dawn". She thus expressed "knowing" in the sense of knowing how to listen to the sounds around her—and how to emotionally incorporate them into her own life as part of rebuilding it. More broadly, the "knowing" that she exhibited vis-à-vis her sentient ecology extended to her knowledge of how to support others in difficult situations. Isabella talked about her efforts to find her daughter, who was captured and held by paramilitaries for two years, and it was during this time that she had started helping other Indigenous girls. She talked about walking miles with them and then taking them to the banks of a local river to get them to safety. Describing these journeys as "true Odysseys", she had essentially harnessed "knowing" for the benefit of both her own and the girls' wellbeing.

4.3 | Grace's story

"Grace" is an Acholi woman in northern Uganda. Born in 1984, which made her considerably younger than both Šefik and Isabella, like many of the Ugandan interviewees she gave a detailed account of her war experiences. Soldiers from Joseph Kony's LRA, which was active in northern Uganda from the mid-1980s until the mid-2000s, abducted her when she was 12 years old. She maintained that because of her young age, she had not suffered any sexual abuse while in captivity. It was a government soldier from the Ugandan People's Defense Force, she explained, who had abused her (following her release from the LRA) "in the way of sleeping" (a euphemism for rape). Talking about the sexual violence, she emphasized: "It touched my life because it is something that was against one's will...So you find that it burns your stomach [makes you angry]" (interview, Uganda, May 29, 2019).

Grace had faced verbal abuse from members of the community, including her younger sister (an example of a ruptured/broken connectivity with an important part of her social ecology). Describing her life today, however, she opined that there was some positive change; "The bleeding of the heart [sadness/hurt] that used to happen in my life is no longer there. At least my heart is gradually untying itself [loosening]." One of the factors that had contributed to this "untying" was finding out that she did not have HIV; her body remained "light" (healthy) and

she had not made her children sick. Her main priority now was finding the money to pay for their schooling, and her relationship with the land was very significant in this regard.

Like many of the Ugandan interviewees, Grace was a subsistence farmer. Her father had initially given her some land, and she and her husband's knowledge and efforts in cultivating it for two years had allowed them to make enough money to purchase their own land. Grace talked about growing maize, eggplant and soybean. She also planted sesame. The previous year, the beans were ruined and she had only managed to harvest one bag. In contrast, she had succeeded in harvesting larger quantities of sesame; "Then it happened that sesame was selling at a better price, and so I sold each kilogram for 1500 [Ugandan] shillings [approximately £0.30]. I sold one bag and it was able to raise for me enough money to pay for the children's school". The combined sale of maize and sesame had allowed her to send all four children to school. She additionally talked about using her two oxen to cultivate other people's land, which provided a further source of income. This "props my back [supports me]", she explained.

Kandel (2016, p. 275) underlines that "In rural sub-Saharan Africa, the value of land cannot be overstated. It forms the basis for livelihoods that include (and combine) agriculture, pastoralism, fishing, and hunting and gathering". While this significance came through in many of the interviews, so too—as Grace's interview exemplifies—did the "practical manner in which knowing is performed" (Anderson, 2000, p. 118), and the connectivity between people and land as an expression of sentient ecology. This relationship, in turn, was helping Grace to rebuild and move on with her life. Dwelling on the past, she maintained, served no purpose; "it is said that too much thinking can bring illness to the body. Worries can sometimes bring death to your body". It was therefore necessary to "let go" of the past, and her performativity of "knowing"—which required a healthy body—was a way of doing that.

5 | CONCLUSION AND WIDER IMPLICATIONS

In 2016, the signing of a peace agreement between Colombia's government and the FARC guerrillas officially ended more than 50 years of armed conflict in the country. One of the outcomes of this peace agreement was the establishment of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP), as the judicial element of a Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition. To date, the JEP has issued five resolutions in which it recognizes territory as a victim of Colombia's armed conflict (Huneeus & Rueda Sáiz, 2021). These are highly innovative developments that recognize "human–environment connections" (Cooke et al., 2016, p. 832) and, thus, embrace a deeper conceptualization of harm that extends to "the disruption of socio-ecological relations, such as forms of subsistence farming and other cultural practices, as well as disruption of the spiritual world" (Huneeus & Rueda Sáiz, 2021, p. 211).

If war and armed conflict can substantially disturb these relations, this article has shown that rupture is not the entire story. Utilizing the idea of sentient ecology—which Anderson developed in the context of his research with Evenki hunters in Arctic Siberia—as a framework for exploring the stories of victims–/survivors of CRSV in BiH, Colombia and Uganda, it has analyzed the concept as a social-ecological relationship that was supporting the interviewees in dealing with their experiences and getting on with their lives. In so doing, this research has posited a linkage between sentient ecology and resilience.

While not actually connecting the two concepts, some scholars have nevertheless discussed sentience in relation to resilience—and in particular urban resilience (see, for example, Deal et al. 2017, p. 30, 41; Hollnagel, 2014, p. 224, 225). Going a step further, this article posits that the concept of sentient ecology provides a novel framework for thinking about the relationship between the social and the ecological within SES—and how they communicate with each other. Within existing scholarship, SES are theorized as complex adaptive systems (Folke et al., 2005, p. 443) that "involve great numbers of parts undergoing a kaleidoscopic array of simultaneous interactions…" (Holland, 1992, p. 19). Exploring the sentient dimensions of these interactions shifts the emphasis away from broad system behavior—which by itself is too abstract when thinking about the everyday lives of individuals who

have experienced conflict and violence—and toward everyday social-ecological connectivities. Sentient ecology offers a more "grounded" perspective on what resilience looks like—and on how sentience vis-à-vis the ecological can translate into everyday social expressions of resilience. Fundamentally, if resilience "has the potential to become a bridging concept between the natural and the social sciences and stimulate interdisciplinary dialogues and collaborations" (Davoudi, 2012, p. 306), sentient ecology is itself a potential bridging concept between the social and ecological.

Thinking about resilience within a sentient ecology frame reinforces the argument made at the outset that resilience is not about putting the onus on individuals to deal with whatever life throws at them and diminishing the responsibilities of governments and states. It is, rather, about the multiple connectivities between individuals and their social ecologies, which means recognizing "the bidirectional nature of influence in living systems" (Masten, 2001, p. 230) and, by extension, "the diverse capacities of matter (non-human and [post]human) to affect and be affected" (Fox & Alldred, 2020, p. 280). It is submitted, therefore, that what sentient ecology more broadly highlights is the importance of developing resilience research—and in particular research on SES—in new posthumanist directions. Significantly, resilience scholars to date have given very little attention to posthumanism; and those who have engaged with the concept have been largely critical of it (see, for example, Chandler, 2014; Wakefield et al., 2021).

While acknowledging that posthumanism spans a very broad spectrum (Braidotti, 2018, p. 206), this article embraces the argument that "human beings are one of many components that make up our world, and that they cannot be understood apart from the wider relational assemblages, and the specific historical processes, of which they are part" (Crellin & Harris, 2021, p. 473). Part of Chandler's (2014, p. 198) critique of posthumanism is that these assemblages themselves "are held to have real agency, rather than knowledgeable human subjects", but this arguably creates a false dichotomy. Barad's (2003, p. 817) work on posthumanism and new materialism underlines "agential intra-actions" through which phenomena are produced, and the crucial point is that SES themselves can be conceptualized as complex relational assemblages that reflect agential intra-actions (of which sentient ecology is one example). This, in turn, illuminates the scope for new interdisciplinary research on resilience that explores these intra-actions, including between socio-psychological and social-ecological dynamics. As Barad (2003, p. 817) notes, "Boundaries do not sit still".

In short, posthumanist ways of thinking about resilience can potentially make a significant contribution to the field. Cudworth and Hobden's (2013, p. 449) argument that "A posthuman international relations will be attuned to the possibilities of a fuller range of actors and constraints in any given context" is no less pertinent to the study of resilience. Specifically with regard to CRSV, what this article has ultimately demonstrated through its discussion of sentient ecology is that posthumanism means, inter alia, thinking about "the aliveness, agency and co-participation of 'things'" (Tickner & Querejazu, 2021, p. 397) in the experiences of victims–/survivors and their neglected stories of resilience.

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ENDNOTES

1 This article uses the terminology of victims−/survivors, reflecting the fact that some of the participants in this research identified more with the term "victims" while others primarily identified with the term "survivors". Some of them, moreover, identified with both.

2 As a brief terminological note, Western (1982, p. 183) distinguishes between the environment and the ecological processes that take place within it. This article uses the term social ecologies to refer to "formal and informal social networks" (Ungar, 2013, p. 256), including families, communities, NGOs and land. These social ecologies, in turn, exist within and form part of a wider environment.

3 Other studies have examined resilience in the context of sexual violence in general, but not specifically sexual violence in conflict (see, for example, Catabay et al., 2019; Kaiser & Sinanan, 2020; Moletsane & Theron, 2017).

4 Zraly et al. (2013, p. 415), for example, define maternal resilience as "the capacity to overcome adverse mothering experiences". Their primarily psychological approach to resilience is further reflected in their argument that "The Rwandan women in the study were stunningly resilient and creative in the wake of unfathomable violence" (Zraly et al., 2013, p. 435). Koos' approach to resilience, in the context of his work on Sierra Leone, is largely socio-psychological. Giving very little attention to the wealth of extant scholarship on resilience, he talks about "the resilience mechanism" (Koos, 2018, p. 201), which he does not fully define, and links this to his hypothesis that "The exposure to CRSV potentially inflicts stigma and shame on CRSV victims and their families. To reduce stigma and avert social exclusion, they will use countermeasures that manifest in higher levels of prosocial behavior" (Koos, 2018, p. 204).

5 The author (who is Principal Investigator), two postdoctoral researchers, several in-country organizations and two independent psychologists in BiH and Colombia respectively were involved in applying the questionnaires.

6 Ruptures can, in some cases, cause significant turbulence within SES. Discussing forced cultural transformations, for example, Crane (2010) argues that "such localized cultural ruptures have the potential to spread upward through 'revolution,' upturning social–ecological systems more broadly".

7 "During a back loop", Holling (2004) argued, "unexpected interactions can occur among previously separate properties that can then nucleate an inherently novel and unexpected focus for future good or ill in the next cycle".

8 No actual names are used in this research.

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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World society and field theory: The infiltration of development into humanitarianism

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Abstract

Differentiated modern society is commonly viewed as
an aggregation of various fields, yet the question of
their boundaries is often a silent one. This article builds
on this lacuna to argue that cultural globalization should
be acknowledged and added to the equation. Drawing
from two distinct branches of the sociology of knowl-
edge, Bourdieusian field theory and Meyer's world soci-
ety, an integrative approach is presented here. It rests on
three propositions: scriptwriting is related to fields; script
may be diffused into other fields; and a global taken for
granted can emerge. With an eye toward the humanitarian-
development nexus, the article examines the United
Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (established in
1950). Utilizing archival materials, changes the organiza-
tion underwent, and the transfer of knowledge from the
development field are documented. The article argues that
resistance to the diffusion of social knowledge may occur,
but some shared understanding is nonetheless gained.

KEYWORDS
development, diffusion, field theory, humanitarianism, world
society

1 | INTRODUCTION

Just a few weeks prior to the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), Doctors Without Borders (MSF) dramatically pulled out. Arguing that "the summit has become a fig-leaf of good intentions," in its statement MSF (2016) primarily opposed the "incorporation of humanitarian assistance into a broader development and resilience agenda." These words disclose the dominancy of a differentiation perspective that understands humanitarianism and development as distinct fields. Admittedly, each has its own genealogy, temporality, and objectives. Cultural heritage and ethos prevail, primarily the reduction of suffering for the former and the elevation of poverty for the latter. Yet, as the following shows, the boundaries are both slippery and contested.

In recent decades new forms of intervention, combining development, humanitarianism, and state-building (Dunn, 2012) have been expanding. Researchers documented the effect of local (Sande Lie, 2017) and international (Gabiam, 2012) politics on the transformation of humanitarian action into development aid. In fact, the humanitarian-development nexus received formal acknowledgment by UN resolution 46/182 (1991). For humanitarians, however, this is a highly contentious topic. Drawing strong symbolic boundaries, practitioners fearing the politicization of the humanitarian environment have negatively dubbed this shift as "new humanitarianism" (Fox, 2001). But does the intrusion of development knowledge to the humanitarian field truly form a novelty? How should we interpret these knowledge dynamics?

Using the case of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), this article shows that such blurring of boundaries is *not a new* occurrence. Founded in 1950 to mitigate the European refugee problem following World War II, today UNHCR is among the largest humanitarian organizations, and is deeply rooted within the humanitarian field. As such, it is influenced by the logic of the field and can be expected to follow it. Tracing historical shifts of the organization since its establishment, I examine the gradual extension of development knowledge into the UNHCR, conceptualized as the first (1960s) and second (1980s) stages of development. Important earlier work emphasized the split nature of humanitarianism (Barnett, 2011) or applied field theory to account for agents' tendency to safeguard their field from external influences (Krause, 2014; Savelsberg, 2015). But these approaches often hold humanitarianism to be static and fail to address the unraveling of change.

Addressing this gap, I suggest an approach that draws on two levels. From a meso perspective, the overlooked issue of change and transformation of fields' boundaries (Gorski, 2013; Liu, 2021) serves as one conceptual leg. From a macro position, I adapt world society theory (Meyer et al., 1997) to illuminate knowledge institutionalization, which engenders the second part of the argument. I suggest that changes within UNHCR do not transpire in isolation. Rather, they are influenced by the global diffusion of "social knowledge" (Camic, Gross and Lamont, 2011, pp. 3–4). Yet, the latter is not a sweeping surge, and dissidence is evident. Therefore, acknowledging and addressing this tension enriches the world society perspective in cases of contingent diffusion (Pope and Meyer, 2016).

To document these meso-macro knowledge dynamics (Savelsberg, 1994), I conduct a historical ethnography on UNHCR archival materials. My investigation focuses upon patterns of intrusion of external segments of social knowledge that originated from the field of development. First, relevant literature on field theory and world society theory will be reviewed separately. Next, I propose an integrative approach to examine the ties between fields and scripts and the question of a field's purity vis-à-vis the effects of global culture. Before moving to the empirical case, I provide a brief overview of development and humanitarianism. The analysis reveals that recent conflicts over the interlacing of knowledge from two fields are not the first. Since the 1960s, and explicitly during the 1980s, development-driven knowledge found its way into the core of UNHCR and its humanitarian activity. With their partial-adaptation-partial-rejection, these waves left a mark. Thus, instead of asking what the points of distinction are, as a differentiated perspective would dictate, I investigate similarities. Doing so benefits world society theory by integrating meso processes to explain resistance and variations, while contributing to field theory by conceptualizing the exchange of knowledge as a path toward change.

2 | THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 | Thinking integratively

The basic empirical puzzle probes the question: Why does the humanitarian-development nexus keep resurfacing as a novelty? Humanitarians, after all, may simply embrace development practices and integrate them into their work. Yet why are they pushing back, and why would they do so again and again?

The general sociological issue of fields' autonomy explains part of their rejection. From a Bourdieusian perspective, agents attempting to limit access and maintain "a monopoly" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 100) over their field's capital are wary of external influences regarded as "pollution" (Krause, 2014; Savelsberg, 2015). To an extreme, Bourdieu (2005, p. 40) proposes that "falling into undifferentiatedness … means losing existence." Notably, this rebuff can initiate change. With the death of a field being a radical possibility, even if an external unwanted influence is blocked (Bourdieu, 1988, 2005), some internal movements could be eventuated.

The issue of autonomy signifies that fields do not stand in isolation. Whereas relations between fields form a "blind spot" (Liu, 2021) in Bourdieu's theory, a close reading shows that the multiplicity of fields and levels, and the transfer of social knowledge and practice across them (Camic, 2013), are drivers of change. Specifically, their boundaries are prone to change, that is, leakage or expansion of one field into another (Gorski, 2013).[1]

Perhaps the empirical question is an issue of ongoing engagement between humanitarians and development personal, representatives of two different fields that became connected. This cross-boundary alliance, however, is highly contested (Krause, 2014; Savelsberg, 2015), and agents often oppose it for the aforementioned reasons. It also implies a more direct interaction, along with the notion that a concrete policy had been exchanged (in the style envisioned by political scientists; e.g., Volden et al., 2008), which was not necessarily the case. An alternative approach can be the broader circulation of ideas. From field theory perspective, ideas may circulate, losing their original context as they travel, to be re-interpreted according to the field of reception (Bourdieu, 1999). Field theory pays little attention, however, to the conditions of ideas' actual circulation, the mechanisms of globalization.

A theoretical program that directly addresses the global dynamics of ideas and norms is world society theory. This perspective views world society as an expanded and decentralized institutional order on a global scale with multiple actors and levels (Boyle, 2002; Drori et al., 2003; Meyer et al., 1997). In terms of its structure, it is comprised mainly of numerous organizations, treaties, policies, and epistemic communities of professionals and specialists (Hironaka, 2014; Meyer, 2010). The focus is on cultural meanings of institutions—such as the modern legal system (Boyle & Meyer, 1998), rationalization (Meyer et al., 1987), and capitalism (Jepperson & Meyer, 2007)—and their worldwide dissemination.

World society theorists argue for an institutional structuration that influences the full spectrum of the social, leading to highly structured actors—states (Meyer et al., 1997), formal organizations (Meyer & Bromley, 2013), and individuals (Meyer & Jepperson, 2000)—through the spread of ready-made institutional scripts or models. Hence, global culture offers guidance to actors on "how to do the correct things" (Meyer, 2009, p. 50) for a wide range of issues. In effect, and not without variation, the result is a world "filled with shared understandings of nature, humans, and society" (Meyer, 2009, p. 37).

World society theorists also study encounters and negotiations over global norms (Boyle et al., 2015; Pope & Meyer, 2016). Adding to this body of scholarship and similar to Wimmer (2021), I engage with the cultural particularities that affect the ongoing adaptation and rejection of scripted knowledge in the case of contingent diffusion, which is "conditioned by characteristics of the local setting itself" (Pope & Meyer, 2016, p. 293).

To formulate the issue differently, I am interested in the institutionalization of culture upon its variations. Whereas the recently introduced domains theory is highly complex, as Wimmer (2021) justly acknowledged, I too suggest thinking integratively, while limiting my view. Alongside the transnational, the nation-state, and the level of individuals (the three common levels that world society theory refers to), I propose that fields should be

included. This will enrich the study of global knowledge and field dynamics. Moreover, it will provide a more accurate account of the structure of world society and the conditions leading to varying reception of global culture.

A brief genealogy of neo-institutionalism, world society, and their relations to Bourdieu's work helps to explain my positionality. The *neo* in neo-institutionalism was prompted by Meyer and his collaborators since the 1970s (e.g., Meyer & Rowan, 1977; for a review see Jepperson, 2002), with a focus on the institutional forces at hand, mainly in formal organizations. In its early renascence, it was assumed that institutions are positioned within a uniformed environment, which led to the concepts of "societal sectors" (Scott & Meyer, 1991) and "organizational fields" (DiMaggio, 1991). Indeed, calls to re-incorporate culture (Friedland & Alford, 1991) contributed to a more diversified view that seeks to be attentive to variations and the interplay between contesting social forces and institutions. Thus, the turn to field-level conceptualization served to posit organizational analysis as relational (Scott, 2008). In this respect, it has embraced a similar relational spirit as did Bourdieu. Likewise, the concept of institutional logic emerged, in conversation with Bourdieu's logic of practice (Friedland, 2009).

The point to be made is that since the early 1990s, this body of work branched into organizational institutionalism (e.g., Greenwood et al., 2008) and sociological institutionalism (Meyer, 2009). The latter's phenomenological take on institutions holds a broad understanding of culture and explains the ways institutions construct society: the rise of the nation-state, of organizations, and of individuals. Put differently, it evolved into the study of world society, the theoretical conglomerate this article fits within.

Here, engagements with Bourdieu's theory are nearly in absentia. When Wang (2016) juxtaposed neo-institutionalism with field theory, comparing how these two theories tackle the issue of structure and similarity, the reference was to the more organizational stream of the theory. World society scholars themselves have turned away from the "organizational field" concept, which was seen to hold "realist conceptions of the actor" (Meyer, 2010, p. 4). Early references to the way institutions live within actors via Bourdieu's concept of habitus (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991) were silenced. As the theory matured, it became possible to grasp the differentiation of social theory. Calls to investigate the two traditions together (Gorski, 2013) were largely unanswered (c.f., Ferguson, 2021).

Indeed, setting these two theoretical traditions into a conversation is nontrivial. For example, each emphasizes a different level of the social. Bourdieu's theory often operates under a methodological nationalism standpoint, whereas world society is a cultural globalization theory *par excellence*. Relatedly, Bourdieusian field theory rests on a strongly differentiated viewpoint (Lahire, 2015), whereas world society theory argues that the contemporary world sees a rise in shared understandings.[2]

None the less, both theories share a common ontological stance. Whereas Bourdieu (1993) points to the structuring-structure dialectic quality of fields, world society theory emphasizes the structuring of actors according to their context (Meyer, 2010). It acknowledges the dialectic involved: in the long run, actors also create relations (Hwang et al., 2019). Hence, these theoretical research programmes are united by their shared objection to rational actor and functionalist approaches, while embracing the basic spirit of the sociology of knowledge and a constitutive stance.

In recent years, researchers who follow Bourdieu introduced the concept of global or transnational fields, to refer to social configurations that share similar logic and capital, while transcending national boundaries (Buchholz, 2016; Go & Krause, 2016). In this way, they call attention to specific arenas of relatively autonomous social activity. Thus, while traditionally the two theories were attentive to different levels, this gap seems more bridgeable today. Put together, when it comes to the essential way these theories understand the social world, a common dominator emerges. Bearing in mind that what I propose is not an all-encompassing "theoreticist theory" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 110)—that is, a theory for its own sake—I want to offer a few promising directions.

Scripts and fields. As scriptwriting "is a historical-cultural drama" (Meyer, 2009, p. 42), it is contextual. And even if loosely defined, fields are a primary source of social-contextualization, that is, of institutionalized knowledge (Savelsberg, 1994). Whereas intra-organizational scriptwriting was explained as the result of concrete interests (Kentikelenis & Seabrooke, 2017), it is also funneled by the roles and conditions of the fields in which it

is embedded (Lim, 2021). Even when conflicting frames prevent scripts from becoming institutionalized (Boyle et al., 2015), tracing their origins brings us back to specific fields. Therefore, scripts are written within fields and—given their bias toward homogeneity—they are prone to reflect orthodoxy over heterodoxy.

Scripts that cross boundaries. The norms and actions promoted by world society spread to states through the influence of altruistic "others" who have special legitimacy (Meyer, 2000), that is, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs). By the same token, institutions operating at the transnational level are exposed to emerging models (Schofer et al., 2012), and to some degree, to domestic influences as well (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). World society also arrives at the individual level (via education, the media, and similar mechanisms), where these globally-circulated norms are been internalized (Hadler, 2017; Pierotti, 2013; Kim, 2020). Importantly, social change is achieved not by a single organization, treaty, or policy. As depicted in Hironaka's (2014) Bee Swarm model, it is the cumulative effect of various factors operating at multiple levels that generate social change.[3]

Thinking via fields contributes yet another layer, as individuals and organizations are located within specific national and global fields.[4] This implies that they are relevant not only in the stage of scriptwriting, but also in the process of reception. Individuals and organizations may internalize knowledge promoted by world society. Yet, different fields dictate their own logic and rules of the game. The result might be "play" and struggle over autonomy, which explains the rejection of external knowledge and the existence of contingent diffusion (Pope & Meyer, 2016).

That which is taken for granted. Alongside opposition, these global how-to-models can also be incorporated and turned into the doxa of a field: a Durkheimian "social fact" that becomes a non-verbal social blind spot, doxa marks the naturalization of the world and the 'taken for granted' (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 164). As the aforementioned implies, such knowledge is not restricted to a single field, and can gain the status of "social ether" (Krücken & Drori, 2009, p. 19). Put differently, shared understandings can be established that are so widely accepted, they are seen as a global doxa (e.g., human rights which are no longer the sole business of law professionals, but rather become part of the basic worldview of much of humanity).

To conclude, an integrative perspective informs us that world society opens a new avenue to conceptualize the flow of knowledge across fields and the alternation of their boundaries. They are likely to be porous and reach further than ever before. This does not abolish contest altogether, but struggle and disagreement will be informed by a deep common culture. Moreover, such synergy allows us to incorporate the global cultural order into a solid analytical framework that is more meso in nature; it bears some resemblance to the notion of domains (Wimmer, 2021). Furthermore, thinking with fields helps to clarify agents' opposition to specific elements of world society, adding further complexity to the actuality of diffusion. In what follows, I explore this possibility through the specific case of UNHCR and the fields of development and humanitarianism.

2.2 | Understanding development

Before examining the gradual shift of UNHCR toward development, a few introductory words are in order. Most commonly, the era of development is associated with the launch of the Marshall Plan and Truman's Point Four Program. It is seen as an American initiative, a call for the international community to unite and solve the problems of the "underdeveloped" regions of the world. Its social roots, however, are deeply ingrained in Western philosophy (Rist, 2008), colonialism (Hodge, 2016) and even Catholicism (Chamedes, 2015). Thus, far from being a manner of *sui generis*, development feeds on numerous social sources.

Starting in the mid-20th century, development took on the form of a *project* (McMichael, 2017). Thus, while more critical positions exist, a poverty-oriented and apolitical view was promoted and institutionalized worldwide by an assembly of IGOs and INGOs (Chabbott, 1999).[5] This *project* of a transnational field (Viterna & Robertson, 2015) has undergone several shifts in orientation, as presented in Table 1. Namely, from placing the

TABLE 1 A timeline of development—A synthesis based on McMichael (2017), Peet and Hartwick (2015), Rist (2008), and Ziai (2016)

	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s
Key paradigm	Marshall Plan and the post-WWII turn	Keynesian economy	Western model's modernization	Basic-needs approach	Neoliberalism	Sustainable development and growth	Millennium development goals	Sustainable development goals
Characteristics	The birth of development. Poverty = risk to both the developed and underdeveloped. Reconstruction.	Economic growth. Addressing poverty by building the state. Technical assistance, measures for economic development.	Economic growth and some attention to the rural poor and basic needs. A turn to education and agriculture.	Raising the poor into the economy. Social justice and equality.	"The lost decade." Economic crisis. Structural adjustment programs. Smaller government and neoliberal reforms.	Good governance, empowerment, grassroots development.	Infrastructure and human capital as a path for economic growth. Capability approach. Refocus on extreme poverty.	Global world—global environment. Poverty as a problem we can solve.
	First development decades: Reducing poverty, yet placing the state at the front.				Turning to neoliberal globalization. From being oblivious to inequality to becoming a participant and empowered grassroots poverty reducer.			

state at the front, since the late 1980s, communities and individuals were gradually emphasized. What remains rather stable is the construction of global poverty as a problem (Ziai, 2016). The developmental idealism (Thornton et al., 2015), a "taken for granted" cultural mode that speaks of progress, increased choice, and a transformative vision of society, also remained stable. This implies long-term action compelled by an ethic of social empowerment and transformation.

2.3 | A brief background of humanitarianism

Humanitarianism is complicated, with centuries-old social roots (Paulmann, 2013; Stamatov, 2013). It is driven by the desire to mitigate emergencies, save lives, and reduce the suffering of distant strangers (Barnett, 2011; Calhoun, 2008). It has both a cultural dimension and a material base (Hoffman & Weiss, 2018). The principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence fit the former and suffuse it with energy, meaning, and purpose. The moving assembly of the "humanitarian international" (de Waal, 1997) fits in with the latter.

Speaking in terms of a field, and given the orthodox position of the International Committee of the Red Cross, these four principles constitute its logic (Dromi, 2020). Its authority, or capital, is the alleviation of suffering (Wilson & Brown, 2009), and different organizations occupy positions according to their "purity and pollution" (Krause, 2014, p. 93). This was also referred to as "schizophrenic humanitarianism" (Hoffman & Weiss, 2018) where "alchemical" (developmental) and "emergency" humanitarianism co-exist (Barnett, 2011). While some organizations gravitate toward the question of "root causes," others align themselves more closely with the field's core principles.

3 | DATA AND METHODS

In this article, I utilize a historical ethnography, "an attempt to elicit organizational structure and culture from documents" (Vaughan, 1996:61), of UNHCR archival materials. This approach, which I regard as both a method and a perspective (Blommaert, 2018), allows me to reconstruct UNHCR structure and culture, akin to Burawoy's (2009) archeological revisit. I collected the materials at the organization's archives in Geneva. The backbone of the investigation rests on UNHCR's week-long Executive Committee (ExCom) annual meetings with their associated documentation: opening statements, a summary record, and a summary report of the meetings, as well as supplemental documents that were presented to the committee. Available from the 1950s onward on a biennial basis, these provide a representation of the dynamics at the headquarters level.

The archival materials (approximately 10,000 pages) were imported into NVivo for thematic interpretation. Following the methodological directions outlined by Vaughan, the materials were coded in search of shifts in rhetoric, representation, forms of knowledge, and more. By accentuating references to humanitarianism (e.g., its four principles, the key work of UNHCR, and emergencies) and development (partnering, adaptation of objectives, long-term planning, and so forth), I analyzed the changing dynamics. Inspired by the Bee Swarm model of social change (Hironaka, 2014), I am drawn to microseismic activity. Finally, I do not engage in an all-encompassing field analysis (see Hilgers & Mangez, 2015). Rather, a sociology of knowledge reading of Bourdieu's theory informs that fields constitute culture and knowledge. As UNHCR was structured by its field, I attempt to shed light on the transformations that occurred in the organization, and to extrapolate from them on to the humanitarian field. Thus, I adopt elements from world society theory combined with field-inspired thinking, so as to reflect upon the subsistence of development knowledge within the humanitarian field.

4 | HYDRA HUMANITARIANISM IN UNHCR

A close examination of UNHCR uncovers several positions and their associated logic. Each has grown and been transformed at different times, responding to changing needs and situations. To begin chronologically, international protection is the first mission of the organization, resting at the core of its mandate. Then there is relief, which encompasses material assistance, emergency response, and the general wellbeing and welfare of refugees. Lastly, a frequently overlooked position reflects the general idea of development.

4.1 | International protection meets relief

UNHCR, as its 1950 mandate suggests, "shall assume the function of providing international protection … and of seeking permanent solutions for the problem of refugees."[6] The first section is viewed as the basic target of the organization. According to August Lindt, the High Commissioner at the time, the objective of legal international protection was "to overcome the legal disabilities from which refugees suffer owing to their lack of national protection, and safeguarding their rights and legitimate interests."[7]

To that end, an international endeavor was inaugurated. The organization encouraged states to ratify international instruments such as the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. Serving as a catalyser, UNHCR worked with governments to promote the legal architecture of the international refugee law. On another level, the organization was involved in cases where refugees were present, ready to cooperate with governments and civil society to legally ensure their safeguard.

The second mandated objective of UNHCR is the promotion of permanent solutions for refugees. With European refugees in mind, the ideal solution was repatriation. When this was conceived impossible, then integration and resettlement were the next best option. Here, the physical and social sides of displacements were considered. Specifically, UNHCR's first mission was collaborating with governments to vacate the refugee camps and temporary settlements across Europe. Before this objective had been fully reached, the "Hungarian Refugee Problem" emerged in 1956, with tens of thousands seeking shelter in other European countries. UNHCR was quick to respond, calling governments to act humanely and to take in refugees by quotas.

During the 1960s, relief gradually entered the inner workings of UNHCR, which endorsed other organizations to step in and care for the urgent needs of refugees. With the influx of refugees from Algeria to Tunisia and Morocco, UNHCR supported Red Cross societies to distribute relief. This was a fundamental break from the geographical focal point of UNHCR that was defined by its mandate, Europe. The Good Office policy, a series of General Assembly resolutions that were institutionalized, paved the way for UNHCR to engage with refugee situations elsewhere (Betts et al., 2012).

This global expansion accelerated and was accompanied by a dichotomized rhetoric, distinguishing between "old [European] refugees" and "new refugees." Regarding the latter, many within the organization clung to the view that "quick action and the provision of material assistance" was required.[8] Thus, alongside legal protection, growing attention was devoted to aid. Here, financial expenditure is a useful indicator for gleaning additional insights. In 1963, the sum spent on assistance was $1,400,000.[9] By 1968, expenses on material assistance operations totalled $3,610,072.[10] However, a decade later the amount spent on material assistance was much higher ($105.6 million in 1978).[11] This implies a certain discrepancy. The emphasize on relief had entered the internal conversation of UNHCR; however, it was not immediately followed by significant financial support.

The fact that during the 1960s UNHCR was lacking field capabilities helps to explain this gap. As a non-operational organization, UNHCR "seeks to promote a general understanding of the problems involved and to encourage and enlist support from governments and other organizations."[12] To this end, its representatives were predominantly located in different capitals, and in many countries, there were none. They were often kept busy

negotiating with governments, and were involved in humanitarian diplomacy (Egeland, 2013). The growing attention toward material assistance indicates the advent of a new position—in the Bourdieusian sense of a position in the structure—but it was not yet fully staffed. Faced by the mounting misfortunes of the 1960s, UNHCR fought back not with aid convoys or refugee camps, but with words.

4.2 | The first stage of development

During the 1960s UNHCR sought wider engagement with refugees worldwide, particularly in Africa. Adapting the developed/developing dichotomy, in the minds of UNHCR experts, this expansion required certain adjustments. Specifically, UNHCR assumed a view regarding the living conditions of refugees much in line with the developmental idealism: the nature of minimal services, education, healthcare, and personal income. In the organization's eyes, these were the basic requirements for survival, the lowest bar of welfare. The refugees, however, were located in some of the most rural areas of the continent, and the local conditions failed to meet this perceived bar. The High Commissioner described this tension:

My action ends when the refugees attain in principle the standards of living of the local population. However… experience has shown that this standard is in the developing countries generally insufficient for it to be possible to regard the refugees as being firmly and permanently settled.[13]

The organization found it impossible to revoke operations without initiating radical actions. While the host countries struggled to provide minimal welfare services to their citizens, foreign subjects were given lower priority. UNHCR's solution was simple: to act 'development' and to deliver assistance. However, it was feared that aiding one group while excluding another would lead to resentment. Instead, to advance full integration, a program was established, "from which the refugees would benefit on the same terms as the local population."[14]

This initiative is the *Zonal Development and Integration* approach, promoted in the 1960s in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO; see Crisp, 2001). Under a guiding rationale of channeling assistance toward long-term benefits, not only for refugees, but also the local population in general, its *modus operandi* was to provide technical aid and financial support to both groups in some of the most remote locations in Africa.[15]

What does it all mean? In facing the African conditions, UNHCR demonstrated two tendencies. First, it expressed a development logic, which sees the world through the lens of progress and the transformation of society. This change had been previously associated with Felix Schnyder, the High Commissioner at the time, who situated refugee work as part of a larger UN involvement in Africa (Betts et al., 2012). From a less actor-centric perspective, in the aftermath of World War II, the rationale of development gained ground (Meyer et al., 1975) and countless organizations further contributed to its institutionalization (Chabbott, 1999). Accordingly, the cultural model of the developmental idealism (Thornton et al., 2015) became an integrated part of the global sphere of ideas. It was not just an issue for national policy, but also a social construct internalized by individuals worldwide, including by members of UNHCR.

Second, the organization did not sit still. Under the Zonal Development and Integration approach, UNHCR advanced the provision of substantial technical aid for refugees and nationals alike, arguing that the living conditions in the host countries must improve before permanent solutions could be reached. This approach originated in response to the government of Burundi's plea to assist with programs designed to integrate newly arrived refugees. Identifying the potential for a permanent solution but lacking the implementation knowledge, UNHCR invited the ILO, a leading development organization, to share its technical expertise during the planning and implementation stages.[16] The target population included the refugee settlements and local residents in the surrounding areas. On this basis, specific actions were undertaken to improve economic infrastructure and agricultural production, training activities, school-level education and health services.

This pilot paved the path to additional projects in the region.[17] In all of these initiatives, UNHCR expressed the developmental logic of setting the refugees and the area on course toward micro-economic modernization,

namely, rural development. As such, it mirrored trends within development circles (see Table 1). In its collaboration with the ILO, the UNHCR did not present a brand new, out-of-the-box solution; it adapted an existing one from the available repertoire of potential courses of action.

Unquestionably, UNHCR was chiefly interested in refugees' needs; however, after launching operations in Africa, it relied upon a development-driven conceptualization. Understanding the world not only from a humanitarian perspective but also via a development cultural model, the UNHCR embarked on the Zonal Development and Integration approach. The organization backed these actions suffused with optimistic faith to mobilize change and economic growth, arguing that "the international efforts for assistance to refugees could be regarded as a useful element in the field of international development aid."[18] Following this rationale, refugees were not portrayed as a burden, but rather "a useful addition to the population of the receiving country and an asset to its economic and social development.".[19] In conclusion, the extension into Africa can be seen as a crisis for UNHCR, an event with transformative potential (Koselleck, 2006). Indeed, the organization become more receptive to development knowledge and the boundaries were crossed with the settling of the development rationale within UNHCR.

4.3 | Relief gains dominancy

By the late 1960s, development discourse had become silent in UNHCR records. What prevented development knowledge from gaining a firmer footing in UNHCR upon its humanitarian logic? A formalistic argument would turn to the United Nations' division of labour, wherein the organization was positioned as a mediator that turned to other specialized agencies for their expertise. It is also possible that the capital of the development field did not accompany the newly gained mode of thinking. In other words, UNHCR may have been informed by development knowledge, but the formal ability to act was left in the hands of others. On another level, during the ExCom annual meetings in the 1960s and against the activities in Africa, UNHCR's members and national representatives alike repeatedly emphasized its humanitarian and apolitical principles. That is, they referred to the field's logic, in an act that symbolized the redrawing of boundaries.

At the same time, the relief component in the humanitarian field in general (de Waal, 1997), and within UNHCR specifically, intensified. In the early 1970s the General Assembly appointed the organization responsible for several large-scale missions. Extensive repatriation operations took place in Sudan and the Indian sub-continent. Furthermore, the organization was chosen to coordinate humanitarian operations following the 1974 armed conflict in Cyprus. Field officers were introduced in 1975, generating much closer connections between UNHCR personnel and the local conditions of displacement (Morris, 2008). New emergencies arose toward the end of the 1970s, leading to a massive exodus of refugees (from Afghanistan and Cambodia, to name only two). These needs did not go unnoticed: the total voluntary funds expenditure skyrocketed to approximately $500 million in 1980 (compared with $7.4 million in 1970) and the share devoted to relief stood at 60%. In 1970, in contrast, 83% of the budget was devoted to durable solutions.[20]

In sum, the relief position was institutionalized, providing the organization with another operational base for action, alongside its long-recognized function of international protection. And while UNHCR's actorhood (Meyer & Bromley, 2013) increased, it worked to secure its humanitarian autonomy, a symbolic push against external influences.

4.4 | The second stage of development

The late 1970s and early 1980s brought no shortage of emergencies, such as the Soviet-Afghan War and droughts in the Horn of Africa. Massive movements of refugees were recorded, and the general sense at

headquarters was that "the refugee problem has gained in intensity and complexity."[21] Due to its humanitarian principles, however, UNHCR refused to designate root causes, politics, and conditional structures which lead to refugees' displacement:

Nor can, or should, UNHCR try to tackle any of the so-called "root causes." It is in many cases clear what the cause of a refugee problem is. It is also important that the international community do its utmost to try to remove such causes. But it is not for UNHCR to attempt to solve these problems at their root.[22]

UNHCR was, none the less, unwilling to leave refugees' needs unattended, and attempted to promote durable solutions. Out of this tension, the necessity for enduring efforts and long-term planning became obvious. The interface with development was back on the table.

Before elaborating upon the *refugee aid and development strategy* that dominated in these years, additional contextual background is required to better understand the question of timing. On the international level, since the mid-1970s Western countries began to view asylum as a form of migration, and leaned toward greater restrictions. In refugee policy terms, a shift occurred from resettlement to the containment of refugee movements (Aleinikoff, 1992). At the same time, increasing unrest grew in the Global South, as these countries faced the unequal international distribution of resources. The right to development rhetoric became increasingly dominant among international circles (Whelan, 2015).

National representatives attending the ExCom meeting reflected these two positions. Representatives from the Global North often expressed concerns about the 'problem' of "economic migrants," whereas their colleagues from the Global South emphasized the economic situation in their countries and the need to address root causes (which UNHCR refused to tackle). Hence a push toward development emerged.

From a world society stance, the global institutional arrangement of 'development' matured as the number of international organizations, treaties, conferences, and their resources burgeoned during these years (Swiss, 2018). In other words, there was more 'development'—concepts, language, and social meanings—globally, and it penetrated deeper than ever before into numerous social arenas. This is valid for countries in the Global North and the Global South, as well as for members of the international community, such as the UNHCR. That is not to say that they all become development activists, but that the cultural logic of the developmental idealism further expanded globally.

Put together, these longitudinal processes created a perfect storm, a Bee Swarm that led to the refugee aid and development strategy. In brief, its rationale was to merge development-oriented elements with assistance, so that refugees would integrate socially and economically in the host country.[23] The focus, like the Zonal Development and Integration approach, was on refugee-hosting areas, rather than refugee camps and communities alone. The scope, however, was broader and the strategy should be understood as a wide umbrella. At some point, the budget for the envisioned projects amounted to approximately $362 million, equal to 91% of UNHCR's total global expenditure at the time (Crisp, 2001).

In 1981 and 1984, UNHCR organized conferences to present dozens of potential projects to the donor community. In August 1983 it convened an experts' meeting, with members of numerous development agencies, governmental bodies, and research institutions, to study and advance its refugee aid and development policy. The needs of the host country and its people were made cognizant. It was also argued that "equitable assistance ... will only be possible if support for refugees is development-oriented from the outset."[24] In practical terms, the experts proposed engaging refugees in economic activities as soon as possible and integrating them within developmental initiatives.

Simultaneously, a degree of ambiguity did not go unnoticed by UNHCR seniors: "Where is the frontier between humanitarian assistance to refugees, and development? ... In some situations, the answer is clear-cut. In others, we are on the borderline."[25] Aware of this thin line, UNHCR was reluctant to turn into a development organization. Following a decade of coordination with other United Nations agencies, and fully aware of the advantages of an integrated approach, UNHCR's position was that it "should not assume the role of a development agency, and where developmental initiatives are needed, [its] role should be essentially that of a catalyst and co-ordinator."[26]

From a differentiation perspective, this makes perfect sense as agents of a field strive to deepen the division of labor between their field and others (Savelsberg, 2015), and this case is no different.

Seeking to strike a balance, the UNHCR invited other organizations (both IGOs and NGOs) to step in when development activities were targeted towards the needs of substantial numbers of non-refugees. A Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) chartered the latter with the responsibility to "lead on refugee-related development projects when UNHCR has exhausted its mandate responsibilities."[27] UNHCR also never abandoned its core activities, namely, international protection and relief. Notwithstanding, refugee aid and development is a concept that bore its way deep into the internal grammar of the organization in the 1980s.

During those years, UNHCR searched for new means of cooperation with development actors. For example, together with the government of Pakistan and the World Bank, it launched a project to generate "durable economic assets" (e.g., forestry, irrigation, and road improvement) and provide both refugees and the local population "with an opportunity to work and earn an income."[28] From an outcome-oriented perspective, the need to link refugee aid and development was simple. In the face of cumulative emergencies, this was done "to strengthen the absorptive capacities of host countries and to enhance the refugees" contribution to their host states.'[29] This line of reasoning fits with a containment policy (Aleinikoff, 1992) approach, as the host countries were still a great distance from the Global North.

More importantly, developmental logic reached far beyond just digging wells and paving roads. UNHCR attempted to streamline refugee work with regional development. As articulated in one report, the dominant approach was "to promote durable solutions within a developmental context through the specialized agencies and within the macro-developmental priorities of host countries, so that refugee assistance programs would contribute to the overall development efforts of the host communities."[30] That is, UNHCR's plan was to encourage international investments and initiate regional development schemes. Turning to such solutions points toward development as a central cultural rule, no longer restricted to agents in the development field. Loans and large-scale infrastructure projects were a major development mechanism well into the 1980s (see Table 1). As such, these were the models, the scripted knowledge available to UNHCR, which were promoted where large concentrations of refugees were found. Fundamentally, the result is the "globalization of aid policy" (Swiss, 2018): the convergence of priorities and ways of action. This was not free from struggle, as preserving the humanitarian nature of the organization was a subject of concern. Nevertheless, even while purity was essential, the boundaries were slackened.

5 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this article, I have laid the foundation for an integrative framework that engages world society theory and field theory in a conversation. The theoretical hooks are changes in fields' boundaries and the proposition that awareness to fields' dynamics will contribute to deeper understanding of the differentiated internalization of world culture. Empirically, this article argues that the combination of changing needs and situations, and more importantly, the diffusion and growing dominance of development-driven knowledge, facilitated substantial transformation. Firmly positioned within the humanitarian field, UNHCR gradually embraced some development-driven rationales. This does not imply that it had abandoned its humanitarian principles. Likewise, the elements of international protection and relief are as valid today as they were in the past. Still, the question of development has repeatedly resurfaced.

In fact, the World Humanitarian Summit of 2016 provides the most recent example. The largest international conference of its kind, it devoted considerable attention to the question of moving from delivering aid to ending need. For this to happen, it was argued, it is necessary to "transcend the humanitarian-development divide."[31] Whereas MSF openly opposed this direction, a few months later, the High Commissioner addressed this topic in

his opening statement before the ExCom. He fervently argued that a core direction of a new five-year plan is the "firm commitment to securing the engagement of development actors … [and] to support the inclusion of refugees in national services and development plans."[32]

As this article has demonstrated, the idea behind this new plan is, in effect, old news. Since the 1960s the association with developmental ideas keeps re-emerging from time to time. And yet, developmental plans are presented as novel. Also somewhat speculatively, the above findings support the view that the struggle between different positions within UNHCR—"the motor of change" (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 205)—led to this amnesia. At the end of each take, despite the growing centrality of development knowledge and its recognition by UNHCR, a withdrawal occurs. Seemingly, orthodoxy gets the upper hand.

Looking closer, some developmental idealism is identifiable with the inner workings of the organization along-side humanitarian sentiment. Its rhetoric, and the solutions that it adopted, reflect internal changes from the field of development. This partial-adaptation-partial-rejection is explained by world society mechanisms. First, logic and solutions originating from the field of development were scripted. As this released them from the shackles of their specific field of origin, they become the subject of global diffusion. Eventually, some elements gain the status of global doxa or "social ether" (Krücken & Drori, 2009, p. 19). This is not only about the adaptation of scripted solutions, à la policy isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Swiss, 2018), but to say that humanitarians gradually come to view the world through a developmental perspective. Put differently, alongside the direct engagement with development experts from organizations such as ILO, UNDP, and the World Bank, UNHCR was affected by the growing institutionalization of development as a global cultural logic. Full adaptation did not occur due to its position within the humanitarian field, which dictates a different logic.

From a wider vantage point, it is reasonable to ask whether UNHCR constitutes an exception. One may argue that it does, being embedded within the United Nations institutional configuration, which impinges on its auton-omy. It rests, so to speak, upon a juxtaposition of international currents of aid, and world society theory does attribute a special role to United Nations bodies and similar associations (Schofer et al., 2012). While this may be true, other humanitarian organizations such as CARE and Oxfam have exhibited a similar tendency. They arose as humanitarian organizations during World War II and with time grew to incorporate development activities. While UNHCR is rather implicit about its development orientations, CARE and Oxfam openly embrace this duality.[33]

In fact, despite its "pure" position in the humanitarian field (Krause, 2014), MSF oversaw prolonged missions in the battle against epidemics such as HIV/AIDS in South Africa and tuberculosis in Siberia (Fox, 2014). This is precisely the extension of humanitarianism within development that Atlani-Duault, (2007) pointed out. MSF's re-sponse to the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic serves as the latest example. Operating in the Americas, Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East, the organization provided essential healthcare and accompanied min-istries of health in facing the pandemic.[34] While it can be expected during a public health emergency, working together with governments is highly unusual for humanitarian activity, and lends itself closer to development rationale.

This is not to argue for the complete eradication of differences. Rather, and while I did not present a field analysis *verbatim ac litteratim*, I would like to suggest that these differences in the degree of adaptation of devel-opment knowledge by humanitarian organizations result from their positionality and field-related configurations. Located closer to the "cure" of the field, MSF is implicit about its development-like activities. With their liminal positions, CARE and Oxfam are far more explicit.[35] Yet UNHCR rests somewhere in between these two positions. Therefore, the ongoing intrusion of development knowledge clashes with humanitarian logic, and its representa-tion is seen as novel. The case of UNHCR demonstrates, therefore, the existence of another stake in the humani-tarian field, alongside those previously pointed out by the literature (see Krause, 2014).

Herein lies the more general sociological contribution of this article. The above insights are made possible by looking beyond epistemic divides to incorporate concepts from two distinct traditions of the sociology of knowledge. The deeply constructive assumptions of both theories lay the groundwork for the movement of social knowledge: the dialectic of the theory of practice together with the pivotal role of institutions in the

construction of society. The integrated approach I advocate in this article is, therefore, sensitive to the transnational sphere and global social change. This is not to argue for flattening, but to stress the need to consider the global level and its effect on distinctions. Global institutions and culture are crucial as norms and scripts influence agents embedded not only on the transnational, national, and subnational levels, but also within fields. Although resistance may ensue with the attempt to preserve differentiation (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), some shared understanding is none the less gained (Meyer, 2009). Hence, the change in field boundaries accommodates competition alongside interspersion. This coexistence of multiple logic of practice—the ability of humanitarians to follow their humanitarian logic while also thinking via development knowledge—forms the crux of the matter.

These findings bear implications for world society theory, which sometimes observes unequal diffusion (Pope & Meyer, 2016) and generally pays less attention to the question of re-interpretation of globally diffused knowledge at the different levels. To account for it, researchers often turn to decoupling, which emphasizes the adaptation and implantation divide (e.g., Bromley & Powell, 2012; Swiss & Ilonze, 2021). Yet, the desire for autonomy, and acknowledgment of multiple fields, each with its own rules of the game, provide structural insights on the meso factors involved. To extend the argument, field's positionality can account for the scale of this decoupling, namely, the width of the rift.

In this specific empirical setting, the tension between developmental knowledge—that gains the status of social ether—and local opposition constituted the above-mentioned multiplex. In other cases, perhaps the dynamics would be different, leading to either weaker or stronger rejection. It is reasonable to assume that this is influenced by the degree of independence and dependence of specific fields (Krause, 2018), the hegemonic nature of the external element (Savelsberg, 2021), and as exemplified by MSF, CARE, and Oxfam, by positionality. The point is that acknowledgment of fields' configurations imbues a structural setting to the meso-level institutionalization of world society.

To conclude, the search for the limits of a field is misdirected (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 100), particularly as their influence is much more far-reaching than ever before. Instead, it is the pursuit of overlaps and their rejection that seems to be the most promising approach. To this end, the integration of world society and field theory is particularly useful when considering transnational processes of the diffusion of culture. Understanding and awareness of these multiple levels and possibilities for the transfer of knowledge will help to elucidate the fluxing of boundaries and their transformation across time. It will also assist in explaining the processes that impact variations in the ongoing institutionalization of world society.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST
No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
I have no data which is mine to share. Thus I think not applicable is the right statement.

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ENDNOTES

[1] Recent literature has devoted attention to the spaces between fields. Liu (2021) proposed a Simmelian typology based on the dimensions of heterogeneity and social distance, whereas Eyal pointed to social activities that unfold between fields (Eyal, 2013; see Arrigoni, 2021).

[2] Power, which is fundamental to Bourdieu and is more silent in world society theory, also deserves consideration. Yet, a just treatment is outside the scope of this article. Silence, however, does not equal absenteeism. Rather, in its own way, institutional theory had always been critical (Drori, 2020).

[3] I wish to thank Elizabeth Heger Boyle who in her characteristic generosity directed me to the right literature.

[4] From here onward, while the argument can be extended also to social activities within national fields, the empirics refer to global fields. For the sake of brevity, throughout the article the word "field" is used rather than "global field."

[5] Due to limited space and focus, I cannot fully describe the multidimensional aspects of development. It is sufficient to point out that the flatter reading of development was for many decades the dominant one and was heavily institutionalized. This fact is the main criticism of many scholars (e.g., Escobar, 2012; Ferguson, 1990).

[6] Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Retrieved November 4, 2019 https://www.unhcr.org/3b66c39e1.pdf.

[7] Statement made by the High Commissioner. January 27, 1959, Geneva. p. 2. Report on the first Session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme (hereafter, ExCom report). UNHCR archive, Found 12. A/AC.96/18.

[8] Statement by the Deputy High Commissioner, 14–22 May 1962, Geneva. p. 1. ExCom seventh Session. A/AC.96/170.

[9] All sums are in US dollars and are unadjusted. Summary of data and proposals presented to the committee by the high commissioner, April 20, 1964, Geneva. ExCom 11th session. A/AC.96/A.3.

[10] Summary of information on UNHCR material assistance operations, October 16, 1968, Geneva. ExCom 19th Session. A/AC.96/INF.88.

[11] Report on UNHCR assistance activities in 1977–1978, August 9, 1978, Geneva. ExCom 29th Session. A/AC.96/553.

[12] See note 10.

[13] Opening statement by the High Commissioner, 16–24 May 1966, Geneva p. 9. ExCom 15th Session. A/AC.96/334 Appendix I.

[14] Statement by the High Commissioner, 18–25 May 1964, Geneva. p. 7. ExCom 11th Session. A/AC.96/248/Corr.1. Appendix.

[15] 1964 Program—new projects, April 13, 1964, Geneva. ExCom 11th Session. A/AC.96/236.

[16] Goetz, N. Toward self sufficiency and integration: an historical evaluation of assistance programs for Rwandese refugees in Burundi, 1962–1965. March 2003, Geneva. UNHCR, Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit.; The settlement of Rwanda refugees in the Congo and Burundi, a program of integration and zonal development. 1967, Geneva. ILO. 67B09/78.

[17] See note 16. p. 3.

[18] Report on new refugee situations, March 12, 1962, Geneva. p. 2. A/AC.96/158.

[19] Statement by the High Commissioner, May 16, 1966, Geneva. p. 6. ExCom 15th Session. A/AC.96/334 Appendix I.

[20] Unfortunately, division of expenses was not recorded in a systematic way by the organization. It is available for some years and not for others. Statement by the Director of Assistance, October 1984. ExCom 35th Session.

[21] Statement by the High Commissioner, October 6, 1980, Geneva. p. 1. ExCom 31st Session. A/AC.96/588 Annex

[22] Statement by the High Commissioner, October 11, 1982, Geneva. p. 5. ExCom 33rd Session. A/AC.96/614 Annex.

[23] Statement by the High Commissioner, October 12, 1981, Geneva. ExCom 32nd Session.

[24] Refugee aid and development, September 12, 1983, Geneva. p. 3. Underline in the original. ExCom 34th Session. A/AC.96/627 Annex I.

[25] See note 24. p. 2.

[26] Refugee aid and development, August 28, 1984, Geneva. p. 2. ExCom 35th Session. A/AC.96/645.

[27] UNHCR activities financed by voluntary funds: Report for 1985–86 and proposed programs and budget for 1987, August 7, 1986, Geneva. p. 11. A/AC.96/677(Part I).

[28] Report on UNHCR assistance activities in 1983–1984, August 1, 1984, Geneva. p. x. ExCom 35th Session. A/AC.96/639.

[29] Statement by the High Commissioner, October 3, 1988, Geneva. p. 7. ExCom 39th Session. A/AC.96/721 Annex I.

[30] See note 28. p. 11.

[31] One Humanity: shared responsibility. February 2, 2016. p. 28. UN General Assembly A/70/709. Retrieved May 2, 2018 https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/822154?ln=en.

[32] High Commissioner's opening statement. October 3, 2016, Geneva. 67th Session, ExCom. Retrieved July 18, 2019 https://www.unhcr.org/admin/hcspeeches/57e52c777/high-commissioners-opening-statement-67th-session-executive-committee-high.html.

[33] This point was covered by Black (1992) and Henry (1999) and can be seen also in the history sections of the organizations' websites. Retrieved 10 September, 2021 https://www.care-international.org/who-we-are-1/cares-history https://www.oxfam.org/en/our-history.

[34] As documented online. Retrieved 11 September, 2021 https://www.msf.org/covid-19-depth.

[35] Was it CARE and Oxfam's liminal position in the outskirts of the field that led to their explicit adaptation of development knowledge? Or did their early and open adoption lead to this liminality? This is a valid question that goes beyond the scope of this article.

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

WILEY

The paradox of local inequality: Meritocratic beliefs in unequal localities

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Abstract

A puzzle has emerged amidst rising inequality: why do
people profess high levels of belief in meritocracy even
as income gains are increasingly concentrated at the top?
In light of contradictory theories and evidence, we un-
dertake the first assessment of the relationship between
local income inequality and meritocratic beliefs outside
the United States, using data from the UK Household
Longitudinal Study. We find that the positive relationship
between country-level income inequality and meritocratic
beliefs identified in the recent literature does not translate
straightforwardly below country level: there is no robust
relationship between local income inequality and merito-
cratic beliefs in England. However, there is a robust—and
somewhat paradoxical—positive association between high
local income inequality and meritocratic beliefs among
those with the lowest incomes. On average, respond-
ents with annual household incomes of £10,000 are five
points more likely (on a 100-point scale) to believe their
hard work will pay off if they live in the most rather than
the least unequal places in England. We also show that this
applies beyond the specific case of meritocratic beliefs:
low-income respondents in unequal places are also nota-
bly more satisfied with their own (low) income than similar

respondents in more equal localities. In line with system justification theory, we argue that belief in meritocracy serves as an important tool of psychological resilience for low-income individuals who regularly come into contact with others more economically fortunate than themselves: though it legitimates their current position at the bottom of the status hierarchy, this belief also offers the promise of future advancement. While this reduces concern about the psychological effects of growing local income inequality on the most economically vulnerable, it also suggests that there is little prospect of demand for systemic economic change emerging from what might have been considered the most likely places.

1 | INTRODUCTION

The concept of meritocracy has walked a winding historical path. Invented as a dystopian satire (Young, 1958), the idea that social status and financial success follow on from individual talent and effort and that people advance on the basis of their merits, has evolved into one of the central underpinnings of Western democracies. In recent times, it has not only become the source of substantial criticism, on the basis that enables the dominant to legitimize their superior position (Bloodworth, 2016; Friedman & Laurison, 2019; Littler, 2017; Markovits, 2020; McNamee & Miller, 2004; Sandel, 2020) but also the source of considerable puzzlement. Why is it that public belief in meritocracy has held steady or indeed increased over time, even as income inequality has grown?

The peculiar relationship between country-level income inequality and meritocratic beliefs is documented by Mijs (2020), who shows that the citizens of countries with higher levels of income inequality—and, per the Great Gatsby curve, lower levels of social mobility (Durlauf & Seshadri, 2018)—are more likely to attribute success to meritocratic factors than the citizens of more equal countries. Mijs (2020) and Mijs and Savage (2020) explain this "paradox of inequality" with reference to higher levels of social and spatial distance in more unequal countries. They argue that higher income inequality reduces opportunities for mixing and interaction across income lines. As a consequence, they maintain, both rich and poor increasingly resort to meritocratic rather than structural explanations of their own situations.

This explanation raises important questions about the relationship between local contexts and meritocratic beliefs. Though a simple extrapolation of Mijs' (2020) findings might suggest that people who live in more unequal localities would hold stronger meritocratic beliefs, his emphasis on the importance of interactions across economic fault lines instead indicates the opposite. Unequal localities are by definition places where residents are more likely to regularly encounter diversity and social otherness, and where it is consequently harder to maintain the perception of deservingness. On this basis, it may well be the case that people in more unequal localities hold weaker meritocratic beliefs.

Existing evidence on this topic is contradictory. Exploring the relationship between local income inequality and meritocratic beliefs in the United States, both Newman et al. (2015) and Solt et al. (2016) identify important

differences in the effect of local income inequality between low and high earners, but in opposite directions. Consistent with the idea that residing in a highly unequal locality tends to increase individual awareness of relative economic status (Festinger, 1954; Runciman, 1966; Wilkinson, 1997), Newman et al. (2015) find that higher levels of local income inequality are associated with polarised belief in meritocracy across income lines: low-income individuals are more likely to reject and high-income individuals more likely to endorse meritocratic ideology if they live in a highly unequal locality. Undertaking a similar analysis but with a larger sample of American respondents, Solt et al. (2016) conclude that the opposite is in fact true: low-income respondents tend to express a stronger belief in the meritocracy if they live in high inequality localities. This, they maintain, offers further evidence of the validity of relative power theory, which holds that higher levels of inequality enable wealthier citizens to reshape the political landscape to their own advantage.

While Newman et al. have subsequently acknowledged two sets of errors[1] in their original analysis, these authors maintain that "the core results of the published article remain unchanged" (2016a, p. 806) when the initial errors are corrected. To test the Mijs' (2020) spatial distance hypothesis and help resolve the Newman-Solt controversy, we therefore undertake the first assessment of the relationship between local income inequality and meritocratic beliefs outside the United States, using data from the UK Household Longitudinal Survey (UKHLS). In doing so, we make three contributions to a broader understanding of this important issue. First, we show that the positive relationship between country-level income inequality and meritocratic beliefs does not translate straightforwardly below country level: there is no robust relationship between local income inequality and the meritocratic beliefs of just under 25,000 UKHLS respondents in England. But second, and in line with Solt et al. (2016), we show that there is a small but robust—and somewhat paradoxical—positive association between local income inequality and meritocratic beliefs among low-income respondents in England. Third, we challenge the relative power theory explanation offered by Solt et al. (2016), since this theory cannot easily explain why low-income respondents living in unequal places are also notably more satisfied with their own (low) income than similar respondents in more equal localities. Instead, we propose a system justification theory explanation, whereby belief in meritocracy serves as an important tool of psychological resilience for low-income respondents who regularly come into contact with others more economically fortunate than themselves (Jost, 2020; Jost et al., 2004; Jost & Banaji, 1994; McCoy et al., 2013). While meritocratic beliefs legitimate their current position at the bottom of the status hierarchy, they also hold out the promise of future advancement.

The nature of the relationship between income inequality and meritocratic beliefs is fundamental to the broader questions of how (and how much) income inequality affects individual well-being (Pickett & Wilkinson, 2010; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2006) and whether such inequality is ultimately self-correcting, via the ballot box (Kelly & Enns, 2010; Scheidel, 2017; Solt et al., 2017). In individual terms, our findings highlight the psychological resilience of the most economically vulnerable members of society in the face of high levels of local income inequality. The paradox of local inequality is that the same resilience potentially contributes to the justification and maintenance of the very order that produces these economic vulnerabilities in the first place.

2 | STATE OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 | The paradox of inequality

Mijs (2020) coins the term "the paradox of inequality" to describe the puzzling trend by which belief in meritocracy tends to be higher in countries with higher levels of income inequality. He compares the relationship between income inequality and beliefs in individuals (i.e., meritocratic) and structural inequality, both between countries and within countries over time. All else being equal, the citizens of the most unequal of the 43 country periods in his sample report meritocratic beliefs that are approximately 12 points higher (on a 100-point scale) than those of the most equal countries.

In the first part of our analysis, we seek to test the explanation of these findings that Mijs (2020) offers, which can be thought of as a two-pronged form of the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1957). First, Mijs (2020, p. 6) states, *what grounds people's beliefs about inequality is their exposure to and interactions with other people across economic fault lines.* In other words, direct contact with, and indirect exposure to, the economic "other" illuminates the structural forces that create and shape material inequalities, while interactions within homogenous economic contexts obfuscate these structural forces and lead people to seek individual explanations of inequality, chief among them meritocracy. Second, he argues that the growth of income inequality has reduced opportunities for interaction (in the firm of direct contact or indirect exposure to signs of poverty or affluence) across economic fault lines, with rich and poor increasingly living their lives in separate spheres. The growth of meritocratic ideology reflects the increasing social and spatial distance between income groups and the fact that, *as the gap grows larger, other people's lives fade out of view* (Mijs, 2020, p. 6).

This emphasis on proximity to the economic other points to the existence of a negative relationship between local income inequality and meritocratic beliefs that may at first seem counterintuitive, given the positive nature of this relationship at the country level. The expectation of a negative relationship reflects the fact that highly unequal localities are, by statistical definition, places that contain more of an economic mix than equal localities. They are consequently places in which residents are more likely to regularly encounter the economic diversity and social otherness that Mijs (2020) argues that it is fundamental to the development of a more structural and less individualistic understanding of inequality.[2] If so, then we expect that people in more unequal localities will hold weaker meritocratic beliefs than those in more equal places. Our first hypothesis (H1) is therefore: *the more unequal a local context, the weaker meritocratic beliefs will be.*

2.2 | Unequal localities: Activated conflict or relative power?

The relationship between local income inequality and meritocracy was already at the center of two prior studies by Newman et al. (2015) and Solt et al. (2016) in the United States. These two sets of authors offer a more nuanced picture, as the effect of local income inequality seems to depend on the position of individuals within the income distribution. However, much remains unclear because these authors advance contradictory theories and reach directly opposing conclusions about the nature and direction of this conditional relationship. The second part of our analysis therefore seeks to resolve this debate by exploring the relationship between individual income, local income inequality, and meritocratic beliefs outside the US context.

2.2.1 | Activated disillusionment and activated loyalty

In common with Mijs (2020), Newman et al. (2015) assume that inequality is experienced most directly on the local level and that local interactions across economic fault lines trigger particular reactions. But whereas the implication from Mijs (2020) is that such interaction will have the same effect on meritocratic beliefs irrespective of individual income, Newman et al. (2015) advance a theory of activated class conflict, which posits differential effects based on individual position within the income distribution.

Activated class conflict theory, which builds on earlier theories of social comparison (Festinger, 1954) and relative deprivation (Runciman, 1966), centers on the idea that *residence in high-inequality contexts, compared to relatively equal contexts, increases the salience of economic comparisons and one's own relative economic position, and thus polarizes public belief in meritocratic ideology across income-based lines* (Newman et al., 2015, p. 327). This is a two-step process: daily confrontation with the economic other in unequal localities induces social comparison and makes everyone more aware of their social status (Alderson & Katz-Gerro, 2016; Cheung & Lucas, 2016; Präg et al., 2014; Walasek & Brown, 2016). When activated, this "situational trigger" then reinforces "latent

opinions" about inequality and transforms them into more explicit rejection or acceptance of meritocracy, depending on whether the individuals in question are at the bottom or the top of the income distribution. According to the activated disillusionment hypothesis, those *at the bottom of a more conspicuous local economic totem pole* (Newman et al., 2015, p. 329) are more likely to reject meritocracy as a means of protecting their self-esteem (Cast & Burke, 2002). Conversely, the "activated loyalty hypothesis" holds that higher-income Americans will be more likely to uphold meritocratic ideology if they live in more unequal contexts. Consistent with evidence that higher status individuals are more likely to see the existing social system as legitimate (Brandt, 2013; Brandt et al., 2020), Newman et al. (2015) argue that greater exposure to inequality increases high earners' awareness of their own privileged position and triggers both system and self-justification processes.

Newman et al. (2015) find considerable support for their activated class conflict theory of meritocratic beliefs among white respondents[3] in four nationally representative Pew surveys conducted between 2005 and 2009. For a sample of 6436 respondents, they find that those with household incomes below $10,000 and above $100,000 are, respectively, 8% points more likely and 6% points less likely to reject meritocracy if they live in the most rather than least unequal US counties. Our second subhypothesis (H2a) refers to this interaction between individual income and the local context: *the more unequal the local context in which low income people reside, the weaker their belief in meritocracy; for high income people, this association is attenuated*.

2.2.2 | Theories of relative power

However, the claims of Newman et al. (2015) have not gone uncontested. Having tried and failed to replicate their findings, Solt et al. (2016) challenge these authors' construction of the dependent variable and their interpretation of the key interaction term. Solt et al. (2016) then undertake a similar analysis with a much larger sample ($N = 35,556$) drawn from the US Religious Landscape Survey (RLS) and reach largely opposite conclusions. They find that low-income respondents living in the most unequal counties are 19% points (± 7) *less* likely to reject meritocracy than similarly low-income people living where inequality is at its lowest observed level. Or formulated differently, low-income respondents tend to express a stronger belief in the meritocracy if they live in high inequality localities. The same shift in local income inequality is associated with a decline in the predicted probability of rejecting meritocracy among individuals with household incomes below $50,000, but there is no relationship above this income threshold. We therefore also test the following counter subhypothesis (H2b): *the more unequal the local context in which low income people live, the stronger their belief in meritocracy; for high income people, this association is attenuated*.

Solt et al. (2016) interpret their results not only as a clear refutation of activated class conflict theory but also as further proof of the validity of relative power theory (Gaventa, 1980; Goodin & Dryzek, 1980; Kelly & Enns, 2010; Ritter & Solt, 2019; Solt, 2008, 2015; Solt et al., 2011). The central idea of relative power theory is that money is a power resource: where income and wealth are more concentrated, so too is the relative power of the rich. In highly unequal localities, Solt et al. (2016) contend that the wealthy are better able to spread self and system justifying values such as meritocracy to less affluent fellow residents, who lack the resources to resist these influences and are consequently more likely to internalize beliefs that justify the status quo. Solt et al. (2016) also complement their explanation with a psychological element: they argue that belief in meritocracy serves as an important source of resilience for the less well-off because it provides *a means of escaping the subjective sense of powerlessness, if not its objective condition* (Gaventa, 1980, p. 17).

2.2.3 | Remaining questions

While all three accounts agree on the importance of local income inequality for meritocratic belief formation, they disagree not only on the expected direction of this relationship but also on the mechanisms involved.

For Mijs and Newman et al. (2015), the level of inequality is important because it shapes the likelihood of contact and interactions across economic fault lines, which are assumed to trigger particular reactions. For Solt et al. (2016), local income inequality is important not because it affects the likelihood of encountering the economic other, but because it affects the degree of power wielded by the wealthy and the ability of the less affluent to resist these influences. By exploring the relationship between local income inequality and belief in the meritocratic ideal in a new country context, we aim to shed light on both the direction of and the mechanisms behind this relationship.

3 | DATA AND METHOD

3.1 | Data

Individual-level data are drawn from Wave 5 of the UK Household Longitudinal Study (University of Essex, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c) which was undertaken over the period 2013–2015. The UKHLS is a longitudinal household survey that has followed individuals aged 16 and above within a nationally representative sample of approximately 40,000 households since 2009. This exemplary annual survey collects a wealth of information across a host of demographic, socioeconomic, and attitudinal domains, as well as data on the residential location of respondents and households within the United Kingdom.[4]

Here, residential location refers to the 317 (2019 boundaries) English unitary authorities, metropolitan boroughs, nonmetropolitan districts, and London boroughs (Local Authority Districts or LAD hereafter) illustrated in Figure A1 in the Appendix. Local Authority Districts are autonomous local government units that are responsible for the provision of a range of facilities and services for the resident population. While LADs vary considerably in area and population size, they closely approximate the US counties used in the analysis by Newman et al. (2015) and Solt et al. (2016) and best capture the scale at which the interactions and exchanges which shape beliefs can be expected to take place. In England, the next available administrative unit below Local Authority Districts would be the 6791 Middle-layer Super Output Areas (MSOAs),[5] but research shows that people typically work, shop, socialize, and send their children to school across a much wider geographical area. That only 11% of UK employees work in the same MSOA that they live in (Fraja et al., 2020) and the average worker commutes 10 miles to work (Department for Transport, 2017) means the great majority of people are exposed to multiple alternative settings beyond the one they live in, at a scale well encapsulated by Local Authority Districts.

We match individual-level location data to administrative data drawn from a range of sources, including the UK Labour Force Survey, Rae and Nyanzu's (2019a, 2019b) *English Atlas of Inequality*, and experimental admin-based household income statistics produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) for the tax year 2015–2016. Due to LAD-level data availability, we restrict our analysis to UKHLS respondents based in England. Following this restriction and listwise deletion, the analytical sample comprises 24,943 respondents in 315 Local Authority Districts in England.

3.2 | Dependent variable

Our dependent variable is derived from a one-off question asked in Wave 5 of the UKHLS, when respondents were asked to express their agreement or disagreement with the following statement: "I have always felt like my hard work would pay off in the end." This question differs from the more general survey items employed as measures of meritocratic beliefs by Mijs (2020), Newman et al. (2015), and Solt et al. (2016) in two respects: in its individual ("I") rather than general ("most people") orientation, and in the timeframe in which returns to hard work

are expected. However, it ultimately captures the same underlying concept: that hard work is (or can be expected to be) rewarded.[7] For ease of interpretation, we follow Larsen (2016) and Mijs (2020) in multiplying responses on the original 0–10 Likert scale by 10 to construct a dependent variable that resembles a percentage, ranging from 0 (strongly disagree) to 100 (strongly agree). In line with previous research in the UK context (Duffy et al., 2021; Snee & Devine, 2018), Figure 1 shows that meritocratic beliefs are notably high across the sample: the mean response is 71.5 and the most common response is 100 (strongly agree).

3.3 | Independent variables

In line with the great majority of research in this field, we measure income inequality at the Local Authority District level using the Gini coefficient of income inequality. The Gini coefficient describes the distribution of income within a particular spatial unit. It ranges from a minimum of 0 to a maximum of 1, whereby 0 would indicate that income is equally shared among all residents of an area and 1 that all income is held by 1 person or household. The United Kingdom is unusual in that the nine Government Office Regions represent the lowest spatial scale for which official ONS Gini data are available. We therefore use unofficial LAD Gini estimates constructed by Rae and Nyanzu (2019a, 2019b)[8] using ONS data on household income from Pay As You Earn (PAYE) and welfare benefits for the tax year 2015–2016.[9] At LAD level, the Gini coefficient ranges from 0.29 in Boston to 0.43 in Kensington and Chelsea, against a LAD-level average of 0.34.

Though evidence suggests that residents are able to detect higher and lower levels of income inequality as measured by the Gini coefficient (Newman et al., 2018), it is also the case that Gini coefficients can be skewed by the presence of a very small number of extremely wealthy individuals, whose presence may not be obvious to the local population as a whole. To test the robustness of our findings, we therefore also compute and employ
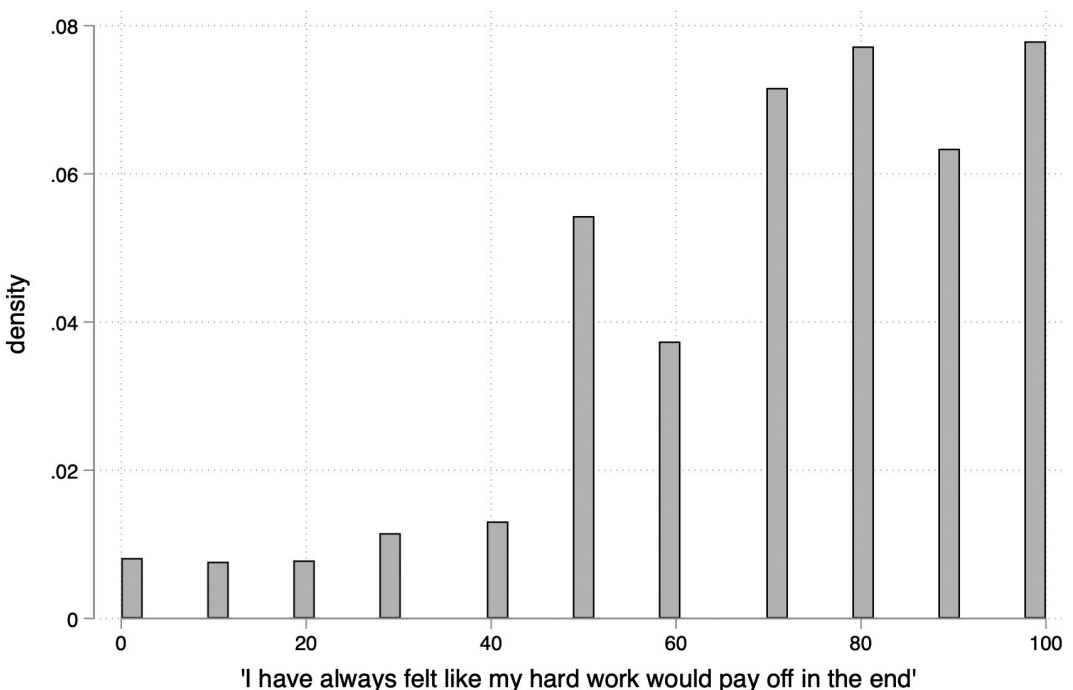

FIGURE 1 Meritocratic beliefs among UKHLS sample (N = 24,943), where 100 = strongly agree.
Source: UKHLS Wave 5; graphical scheme by Bischof (2017)

an alternative 80:20 measure of local income inequality, using ONS experimental admin-based income statistics covering the tax year 2015–2016.[10] The 80:20 metric is a simple ratio of the 80th percentile of net household income (in GBP) within each Local Authority District divided by the 20th percentile, with larger values indicating greater income inequality. Among Local Authority Districts, the 80:20 ratio ranges from 2.02 in Boston to 4.22 in Kensington and Chelsea, against a country-level average of 2.41, and correlates with the Gini coefficient at 0.77 (see Figure A2 in the Appendix).

We follow Newman et al. (2015) and Solt et al. (2016) in incorporating three control variables at the LAD level in order to account for the effects of variation in demographic and socioeconomic conditions across localities. These are the total population of each LAD drawn from ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates (2015); the proportion of residents from ethnic minority backgrounds derived from the 2015 Labour Force Survey; and median net household income in GBP, which is sourced from the same set of experimental ONS income statistics as the 80:20 ratio.

At the individual level, our main independent variable of interest is net annual household income (in thousands) in GBP. Reflecting the approach adopted by Newman et al. (2015) and Solt et al. (2016), we also control for gender, age and age squared, ethnicity, educational attainment, unemployment status, whether respondents belong to a religion, and their political leanings (right, left, other). Since any effect of local income inequality might reasonably be expected to be stronger among longstanding residents who have had more time to notice their surroundings than new arrivals, we additionally control for whether respondents have lived in the same Local Authority District since entering the survey. Descriptive statistics and coding schemas for all LAD and individual-level variables are displayed in Table 1.

3.4 | Method and models

We use linear multilevel models (estimated using the maximum likelihood estimator) to account for the hierarchical structure of our data, whereby individuals are nested in Local Authority Districts. In the first step, we estimate models with all controls in order to establish whether and how much LAD-level income inequality affects meritocratic beliefs, all else being equal. In a second step, we introduce a cross-level interaction between net household income and the LAD Gini coefficient (or 80:20 ratio) to test the hypothesis that the effect of income inequality is conditional on household income and establish the nature and direction of this relationship. All interaction models include a random slope on net household income as advised by Heisig and Schaeffer (2019), and all models are weighted using the cross-sectional Wave 5 weights provided by the UKHLS.

4 | RESULTS

4.1 | Main analysis: Gini coefficient

Model I in Table 2 displays the results of our Step 1 regression model, which do not conform to the expectations of Hypothesis 1. The Gini coefficient has a small positive effect on meritocratic beliefs, but the estimate is imprecise. We therefore cannot reject the null hypothesis that local income inequality has no effect on belief in meritocracy among our sample as a whole.

Model II in Table 2 displays the results of our Step 2 regression model, which yields support for Hypothesis 2b and against Hypothesis 2a in the English context: higher levels of inequality are associated with stronger meritocratic beliefs among low-income respondents. This can be seen in Figure 2, which plots the conditional effect of local income inequality at different observed values of household income. Figure 2 shows that the estimated coefficient of the local Gini coefficient on meritocratic beliefs is positive and statistically

TABLE 1 Descriptive statistics for UKHLS Wave 5 sample

Variable	Coding	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Meritocratic belief		0	100	71.49	23.87
LAD population (000s)		38	1113	246.75	181.12
LAD % ethnic minority population		0.00	64.90	12.96	15.09
LAD median net household income (£ 000s)		19	32	24.02	2.32
LAD Gini coefficient		0.29	0.43	0.34	0.02
LAD 80:20 ratio		2.02	4.22	2.41	0.26
Net household income (£ 000s)		0	1699	37.55	36.51
Sex	0 = female 1 = male	0	1	0.55 0.45	
Age		16	101	48.35	17.84
Age squared		256	10201	2656.22	1794.65
Ethnicity	0 = white 1 = ethnic minority	0	1	0.20 0.80	
Education	0 = non-graduate 1 = graduate	0	1	0.62 0.38	
Employment status	0 = employed or other 1 = unemployed	0	1	0.96 0.04	
Political leanings	1 = left 2 = right 3 = other	1	3	0.43 0.33 0.24	
Religious affiliation	0 = no affiliation 1 = belongs to a religion	0	1	0.50 0.50	
Lives in the same LAD as when entered UKHLS	0 = different LADs 1 = same LAD	0	1	0.10 0.90	

significant for respondents with household incomes below £20,000, a group that comprise approximately 25% of the sample. The estimated coefficient of income inequality is not distinguishable from zero for those with household incomes between £20,000 and £90,000 but becomes negative and statistically significant among respondents with household incomes greater than £90,000, a group that comprises approximately 3.4% of the sample. This suggests that high levels of income inequality are associated with weaker meritocratic beliefs among very high-income respondents.

This pattern can also be seen in Figure 3, which plots the predicted value of meritocratic beliefs among respondents with household incomes of £10,000, £30,000, and £60,000, respectively, values which approximate the 10th, 50th, and 90th percentile of the sample income distribution. Controlling for individual and contextual factors, respondents with household incomes of £10,000 report beliefs of 68 (±1) on the 100-point scale in the most equal localities within England. This rises by 4 points to 72 (±2) in the most unequal localities, a difference that is greater than the average disparity between graduates and non-graduates and those from white and ethnic minority backgrounds, and only slightly less than the difference between respondents who are unemployed and those who are not. Our findings thus support the analysis of Solt et al. (2016) rather than Newman et al. (2015): low-income respondents are more likely to support (or less likely to reject) meritocracy if they live in more unequal localities.

TABLE 2 Linear mixed models of meritocratic beliefs among UKHLS respondents

	LAD GINI		LAD 80:20 RATIO	
	(I)	(II)	(III)	(IV)
Fixed effects				
LAD level				
LAD population (000s)	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001
	(−0.001 – 0.003)	(−0.001 – 0.004)	(−0.001 – 0.003)	(−0.001 – 0.004)
LAD % BAME	−0.031	−0.030	−0.033[*]	−0.031
	(−0.071 – 0.008)	(−0.071 – 0.011)	(−0.073 – 0.006)	(−0.072 – 0.010)
LAD median income (£000s)	−0.153	−0.182[*]	−0.194[*]	−0.223[*]
	(−0.349 – 0.042)	(−0.382 – 0.019)	(−0.425 – 0.036)	(−0.457 – 0.010)
LAD Gini	11.798	45.967[***]		
	(−9.010 – 32.607)	(18.273 – 73.661)		
LAD 80:20 ratio			1.397	3.261[***]
			(−0.651 – 3.445)	(1.044 – 5.479)
Cross-level interaction				
LAD Gini * income		−0.943[***]		
		(−1.472 – −0.414)		
LAD 80:20 ratio * income				−0.049[***]
				(−0.081 – −0.016)
Individual level				
Net household income (£000s)	0.021[**]	0.379[***]	0.021[**]	0.176[***]
	(0.001 – 0.042)	(0.195 – 0.563)	(0.001 – 0.042)	(0.089 – 0.262)
Male	−0.428	−0.505	−0.428	−0.500
	(−1.137 – 0.280)	(−1.207 – 0.197)	(−1.137 – 0.280)	(−1.201 – 0.202)
Age	−0.196[***]	−0.206[***]	−0.196[***]	−0.206[***]
	(−0.304 – −0.088)	(−0.314 – −0.098)	(−0.304 – −0.088)	(−0.314 – −0.098)
Age squared	0.002[***]	0.003[***]	0.002[***]	0.003[***]
	(0.001 – 0.003)	(0.002 – 0.004)	(0.001 – 0.003)	(0.002 – 0.004)
BAME	3.002[***]	3.071[***]	2.996[***]	3.058[***]
	(1.934 – 4.071)	(1.995 – 4.146)	(1.930 – 4.061)	(1.988 – 4.128)
Graduate	2.715[***]	2.364[***]	2.716[***]	2.379[***]
	(1.980 – 3.450)	(1.654 – 3.073)	(1.982 – 3.449)	(1.668 – 3.091)
Unemployed	−4.828[***]	−4.326[***]	−4.841[***]	−4.388[***]
	(−6.706 – −2.951)	(−6.187 – −2.465)	(−6.721 – −2.962)	(−6.256 – −2.521)
Belongs to a religion	1.904[***]	1.839[***]	1.901[***]	1.836[***]
	(1.140 – 2.668)	(1.082 – 2.596)	(1.138 – 2.665)	(1.080 – 2.593)
Political leanings	2.546[***]	2.395[***]	2.544[***]	2.390[***]
	(1.721 – 3.371)	(1.581 – 3.210)	(1.719 – 3.370)	(1.574 – 3.206)
	−0.578	−0.537	−0.582	−0.552
	(−1.493 – 0.337)	(−1.455 – 0.381)	(−1.497 – 0.334)	(−1.471 – 0.368)

TABLE 2 (Continued)

	LAD GINI		LAD 80:20 RATIO	
	(I)	(II)	(III)	(IV)
Lives in the same LAD	−1.561***	−1.719***	−1.566***	−1.716***
	(−2.626 − −0.496)	(−2.789 − −0.650)	(−2.632 − −0.500)	(−2.786 − −0.647)
Constant	72.012***	60.020***	73.643***	68.760***
Random effects				
Income		0.001		0.001
LAD (constant)	1.380	0.751	1.379	0.596
Residual	554.962	552.264	554.946	552.650
Number of respondents	**24,943**	**24,943**	**24,943**	**24,943**
Number of LADs	**315**	**315**	**315**	**315**

Source: UKHLS Wave 5. Confidence intervals in parenthesis.

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

Bold value indicates sample N
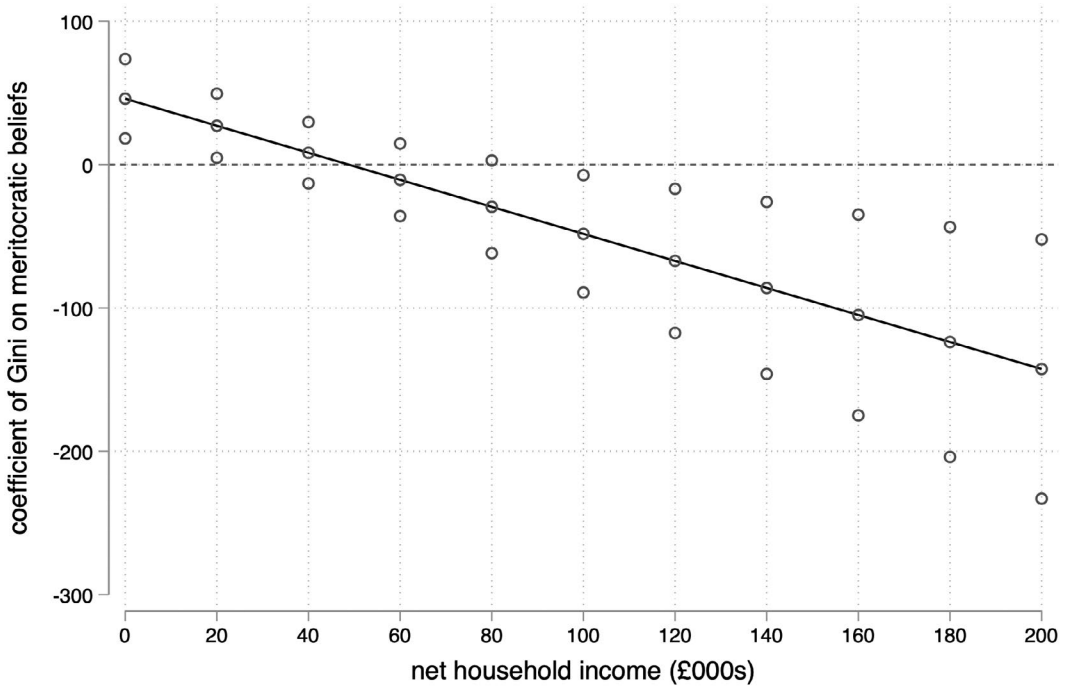
FIGURE 2 Coefficient of local income inequality on meritocratic beliefs by household income

4.2 | Supplementary analysis: 80:20 ratio

Repeating Steps 1 and 2 with the 80:20 ratio of local income inequality rather than the Gini coefficient paints a similar but non-identical picture. Against the expectations of Hypothesis 1, Model III in Table 2 shows that there is also no robust association between local income inequality as measured by the 80:20 ratio and meritocratic
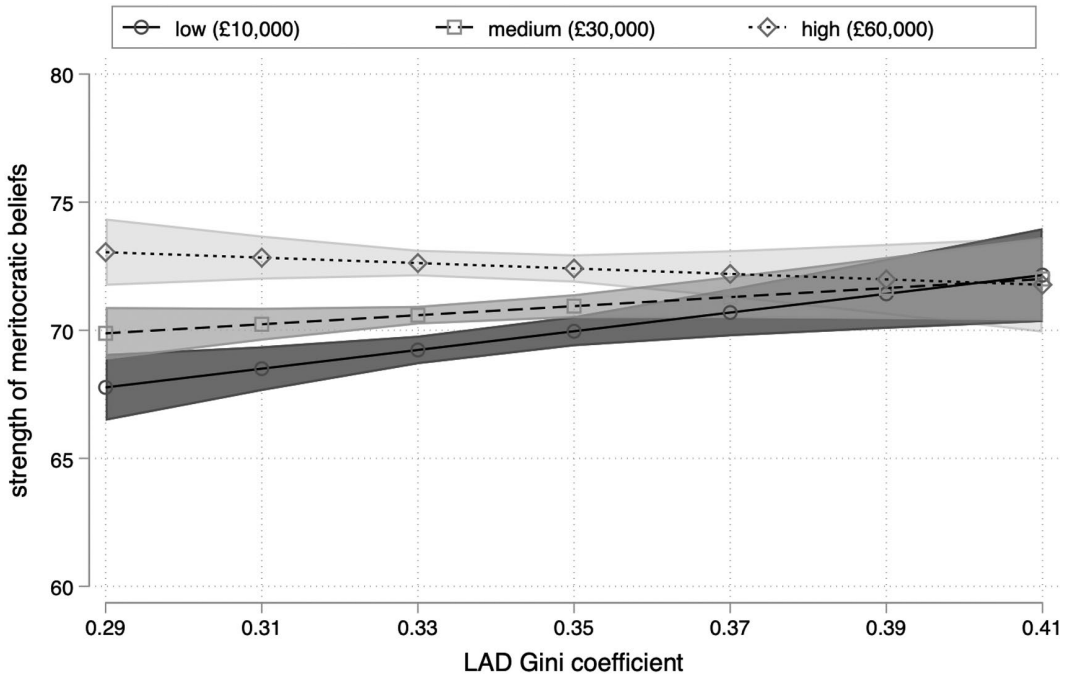
FIGURE 3 Predicted meritocratic beliefs by household income and level of inequality

FIGURE 4 Coefficient of local income inequality on meritocratic beliefs by household income

beliefs, all else being equal. The interaction term introduced in Model IV in Table 2 is again negative, yielding support for Hypothesis H2b and against Hypothesis H2a. This can be seen more clearly in Figures 4 and 5: that this alternative measure of local income inequality produces very similar predictions for low-income (£10,000)

FIGURE 5 Predicted meritocratic beliefs by household income and level of inequality

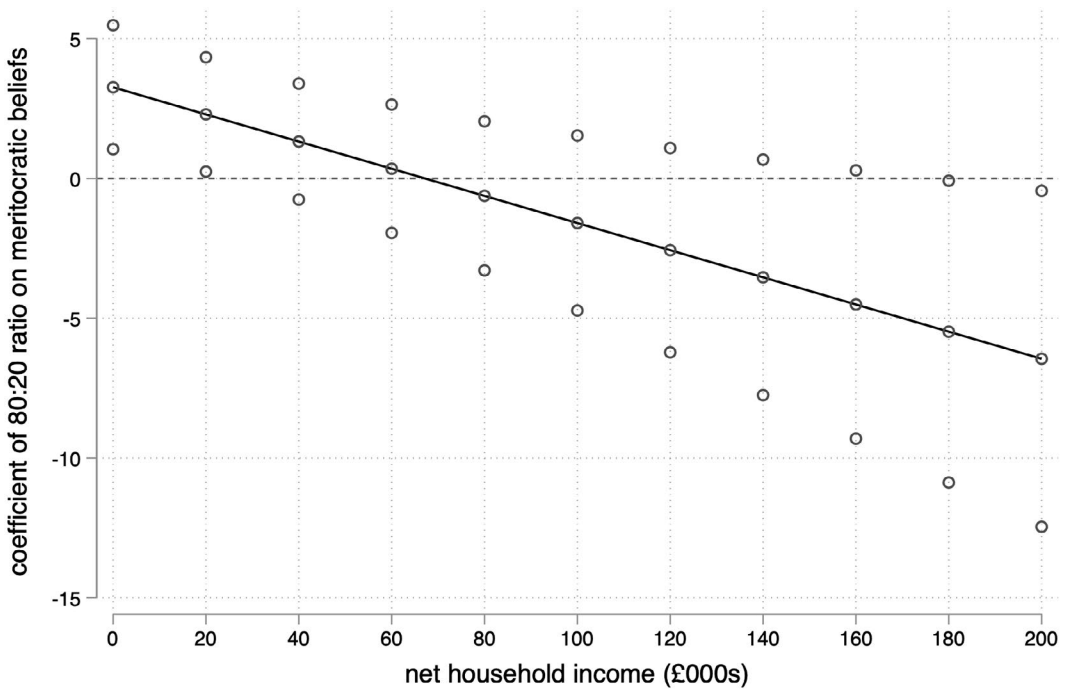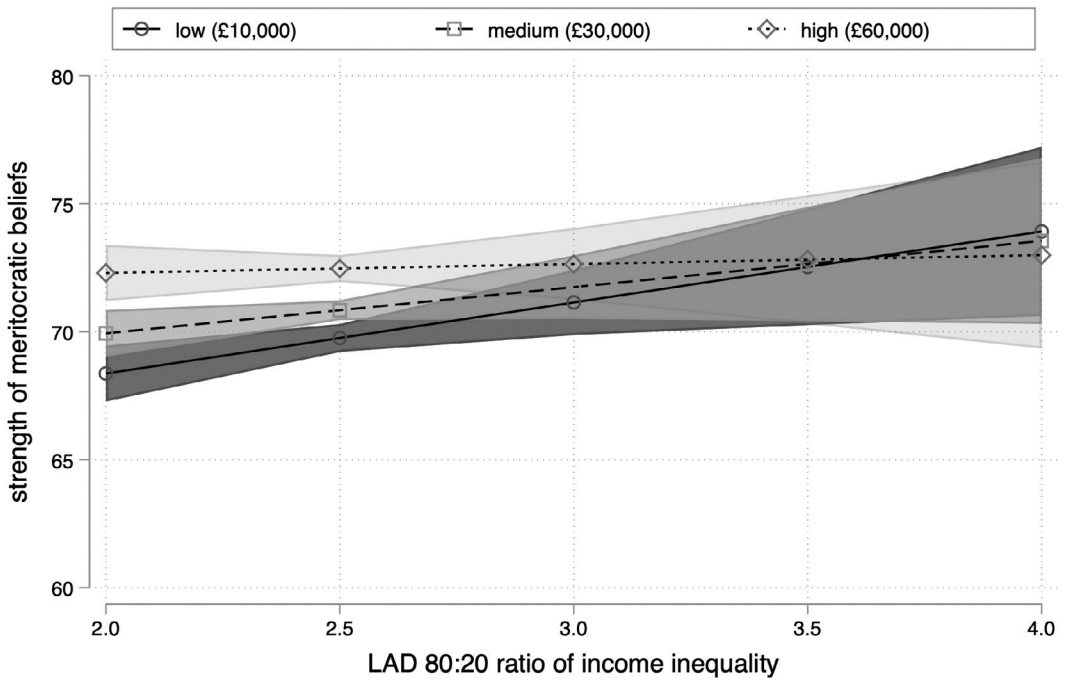respondents reinforces the idea that higher levels of inequality are associated with stronger meritocratic beliefs among those at the bottom of the income distribution.

Where findings using this alternative specification of income inequality differ is in relation to wealthy respondents. Figure 4 shows that the coefficient for the 80:20 ratio only obtains significance among respondents with household incomes greater than £180,000, a group that comprises just 0.5% of the sample. But while this implies that the strength (and robustness) of the apparent negative relationship between income inequality and meritocratic beliefs among the wealthiest individuals is sensitive to the definition of local income inequality, Figures 3 and 5 nonetheless display a common trend. Irrespective of how local income inequality is measured, the robust positive association between inequality and meritocratic beliefs among low-income respondents means that an increase in local income inequality is associated with the convergence of meritocratic beliefs across income lines.

4.3 | Sensitivity analysis

We conduct a number of additional analyses in order to probe the robustness of our findings, the results of which are displayed in the Appendix. Findings are robust to several alternative specifications of household income (Tables A3 and A4 and Figures A3 and A4) and are also unchanged when using a three-level model to account for the household structure of the UKHLS survey (Table A5) and an alternative model which recognizes local variation in the value of absolute net household income (Table A6 and Figures A5 and A6). Findings are also robust to two alternative specifications of the duration of residence in the current Local Authority District[11] that are designed to rule out the possibility that our results are driven by selective migration by people with optimistic tendencies (Table A7).

TABLE 3 Linear mixed models of income satisfaction among UKHLS respondents

	(V)	(VI)
Fixed effects		
LAD level		
LAD population (000s)	0.001	0.001
	(−0.003 – 0.004)	(−0.003 – 0.004)
LAD % BAME	−0.026	−0.017
	(−0.077 – 0.026)	(−0.075 – 0.040)
LAD median income (£000s)	0.069	0.043
	(−0.240 – 0.379)	(−0.292 – 0.377)
LAD inequality (Gini)	17.807	94.176***
	(−10.955 – 46.568)	(53.653 – 134.698)
Cross-level interaction		
LAD Gini * income		−2.322***
		(−3.076 – −1.568)
Individual level		
Net HH income (£000s)	0.093***	1.010***
	(0.037 – 0.148)	(0.749 – 1.272)
Male	0.517	0.257
	(−0.252 – 1.286)	(−0.501 – 1.016)
Age	−1.100***	−1.133***
	(−1.219 – −0.980)	(−1.251 – −1.014)
Age^2	0.012***	0.013***
	(0.011 – 0.013)	(0.012 – 0.014)
BAME	−4.843***	−4.616***
	(−6.369 – −3.317)	(−6.118 – −3.114)
Graduate	5.590***	4.352***
	(4.590 – 6.589)	(3.478 – 5.225)
Unemployed	−13.847***	−12.165***
	(−16.176 – −11.517)	(−14.313 – −10.017)
Belongs to a religion	0.420	0.237
	(−0.480 – 1.320)	(−0.647 – 1.121)
Political leanings	2.755***	2.252***
	(1.755 – 3.756)	(1.293 – 3.211)
	−2.330***	−2.190***
	(−3.404 – −1.256)	(−3.249 – −1.131)
Lives in the same LAD	0.045	−0.444
	(−1.561 – 1.652)	(−2.057 – 1.168)
Constant	65.603***	36.372***
Random effects		
Income		0.004

TABLE 3 (Continued)

	(V)	(VI)
LAD (constant)	5.245	4.111
Residual	747.563	729.406
Number of respondents	**24,936**	**24,936**
Number of LADs	**315**	**315**

Source: UKHLS Wave 5. Confidence intervals in parenthesis.

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

Bold value indicates sample N.
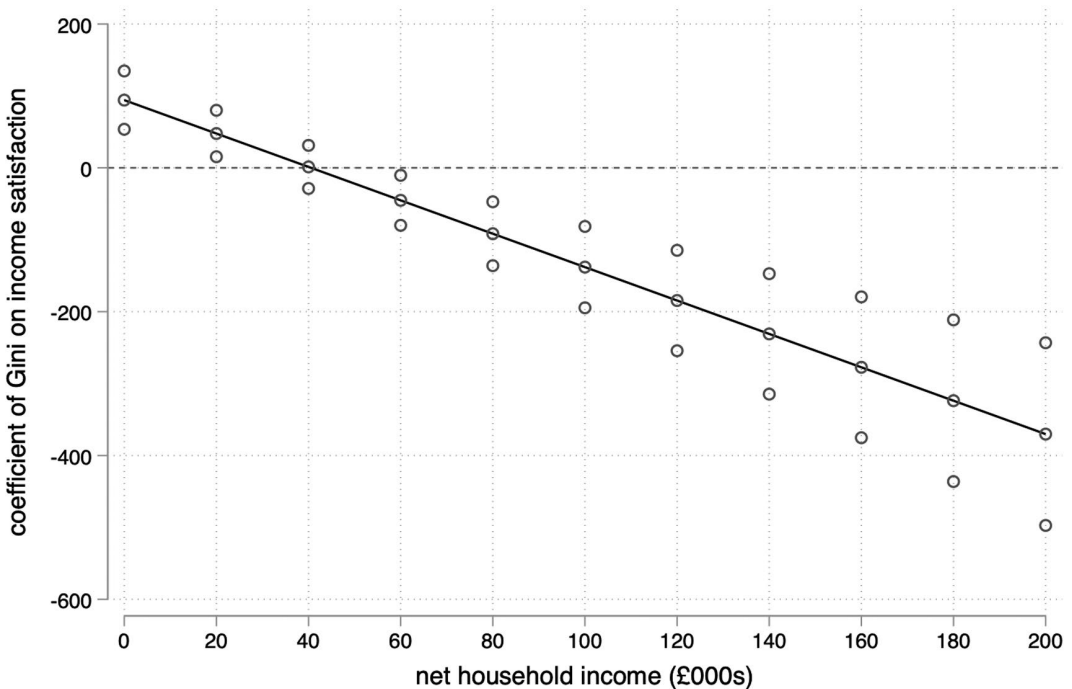
FIGURE 6 Coefficient of local income inequality on income satisfaction by household income

Since more unequal localities tend to be more prosperous localities (Rae & Nyanzu, 2019a) and the Gini co-efficient and median household income correlate at 0.56 at the LAD level, we also undertake additional analysis to try and ascertain whether it is exposure to inequality rather than exposure to affluence that really drives our results. We do this by interacting individual household income with LAD median household income rather than the LAD Gini coefficient: results (Table A6 and Figures A7 and A8 in the Appendix) show that there is no robust interaction between individual income and area wealth, controlling for the effect of the LAD Gini coefficient. We take this to mean that it is exposure to economic contrasts that play the more important role in producing the paradox of local inequality, though the correlation between area wealth and inequality is such that it is impossible to fully disentangle these effects.

Our conclusions therefore remain as before: local income inequality does not have a robust effect on the meritocratic beliefs of the sample as a whole, but there is a small but robust positive association between daily exposure to high levels of local income inequality and meritocratic beliefs among low-income respondents.
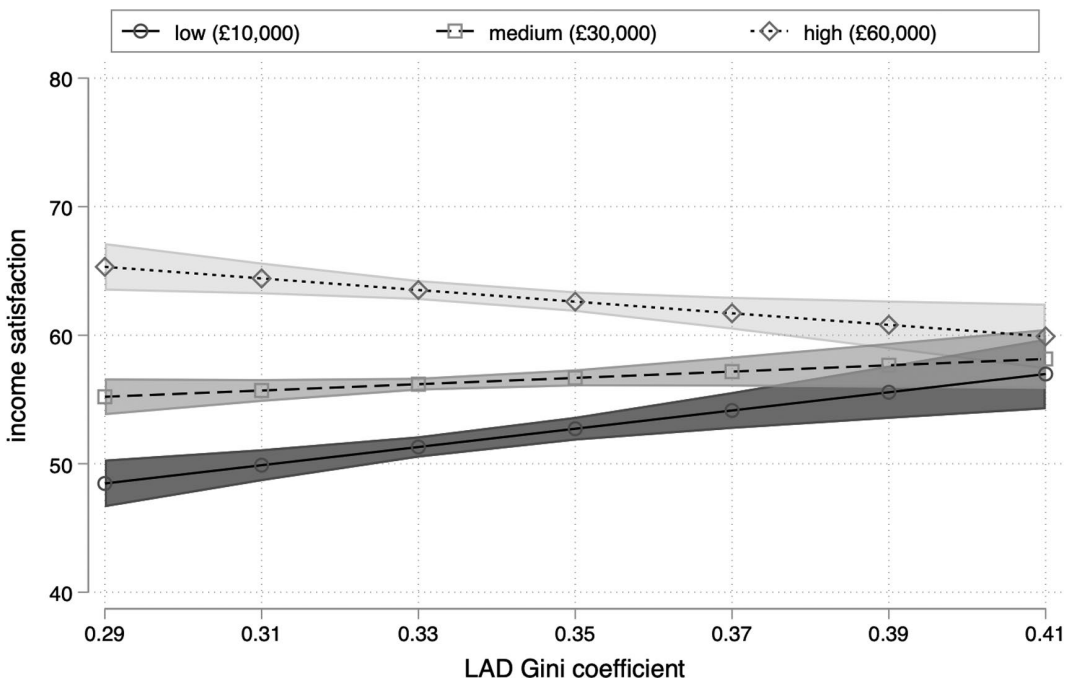
FIGURE 7 Predicted income satisfaction by household income and level of inequality

5 | DISCUSSION

Two sets of implications emerge from our analysis. First, the fact that local income inequality does not have a robust main effect on belief in meritocracy in England casts doubt on the social and spatial distancing explanation of the "paradox of (national) inequality" proposed by Mijs (2020). This explanation stresses the importance of interaction with and exposure to the economic other for illuminating the structural sources of inequality. Such interaction (be it in the form of direct contact or indirect exposure to symbols of poverty and affluence) is likely to be more frequent in unequal localities, which suggests that there should be an inverse relationship between local income inequality and the strength of individual meritocratic beliefs. That we cannot identify such a relationship in England—at least at the scale of Local Authority Districts—indicates that the net effect of contact and interaction across economic fault lines is not the illusion-shattering one Mijs (2020) proposes.

This finding also means we should only cautiously use explanations that see belief in meritocracy as a conscious and explicit type of knowledge. Attitudes toward social status, social value, and individual merit are not purely cognitive and conscious phenomenon. These attitudes are not merely the result of the diffusion of information and the knowledge about theories of inequality. They probably also involve a sociopsychological comparison and justification dynamic. Principles of equality and fairness are likely to be embedded in how people perceive the social structure, how they situate themselves within social structures, and what prospect of future improvement they perceive to be realistic. More generally, this finding raises questions for studies comparing belief in meritocracy over time and between countries. If these meritocratic beliefs cannot be explained by patterns of spatial and social distancing, then we need to develop convincing alternative explanations.

Second, the fact that we largely replicate Solt et al.'s (2016) findings provides further indication that the theory of activated class conflict proposed by Newman et al. (2015) is flawed. In common with Solt et al. (2016), we find a small but robust positive association between daily exposure to higher levels of local income inequality and meritocratic beliefs among low-income respondents in England. This association holds irrespective of whether local income inequality is measured via the standard Gini coefficient or our alternative 80:20 measure. Findings

for wealthier individuals are more mixed, but the upshot of the positive effect of income inequality among low-income respondents and the negative or noneffect among high-income individuals is that the meritocratic beliefs tend to converge across income lines, as local-income inequality rises.

Is the relative power theory explanation of this paradox of local inequality adequate? Since the lead author (Solt, 2014; Solt et al., 2011) has previously argued in cross-national research that *greater inequality provides richer individuals with the motive and the means to disseminate religion more widely throughout their societies* (2011, pp. 447–448), the application of relative power theory to meritocratic beliefs can be seen as a straightforward substitution in two respects. First, meritocracy for religion, which is also held to be a system justifying tool of social control for the wealthy and a source of comfort for the poor. Second, of the local for the national, with the wealthy having more power to spread beneficial ideologies in highly unequal localities.

While there are some interesting parallels between meritocratic and religious belief systems in terms of the promise of future reward, the substitution of the local for the nation is more problematic. At the national level, it is at least plausible that elite capture of media and political channels facilitates the promulgation of meritocratic ideology. However, the channels of control and mechanisms of diffusion at the local level are rather less obvious and are left entirely unspecified by Solt et al. (2016). This raises the question of whether high levels of local income inequality really *provides higher-income people with more resources to spread their views in the public sphere while depriving poorer people to a greater degree of the resources needed to resist these efforts* (Solt et al., 2016, p. 2) or whether the contact and interaction-based mechanism proposed by Mijs (2020) and Newman et al. (2015) are rather more plausible.

Leaning strongly toward the interaction and exposure mechanism, we propose a system justification theory-based explanation of the paradox of local inequality (Jost, 2020; Jost et al., 2004; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost & Hunyady, 2003). System justification theory maintains that people have an inherent subconscious need *to imbue the status quo with legitimacy and to see it as good, fair, natural, desirable* (Jost et al., 2004, p. 887), irrespective of whether the status quo is personally advantageous or disadvantageous. For those at the bottom of the status hierarchy, this theory is usually applied in a defensive sense, with accounts emphasizing the palliative function of the system justifying ideologies such as meritocracy. However, we are inclined toward the more positive slant offered by McCoy et al. (2013, p. 308), who observe that *belief in meritocracy may pose a benefit to the self-esteem of members of low status groups because it is consistent with the perception that advancement is possible.* For low-income respondents, who regularly see and/or interact with the economic other, we maintain that meritocratic ideology serves a dual function. Though it legitimates their current position at the bottom of the status hierarchy, it also offers the promise of future advancement, thereby transforming "have nots" into "'soon to haves" (McCoy et al., 2013).

We attempt to substantiate this claim by undertaking an additional analysis of the relationship between local income inequality (measured as the Gini coefficient) and a concept that can offer insight into the validity of the future advancement hypothesis: income satisfaction. Intuitively, one would expect income satisfaction among low-income respondents to decline with rising income inequality and exposure to the more affluent; if it does not, then we take this as evidence for the future advancement hypothesis. To enhance comparability with our measure of meritocratic beliefs, we first rescale the original 7-point Likert response scale to a 0–100 score, where 0 denotes completely dissatisfied and 100 completely satisfied. We then run additional linear multilevel models of income satisfaction, using exactly the same set of covariates employed in our analysis of meritocratic beliefs.

In line with the future advancement hypothesis, findings (displayed in Table 3 and Figures 6 and 7) are remarkably similar to those we obtain for meritocratic beliefs. Local income inequality has no main effect on income satisfaction, but Model VI shows that there is a robust positive association between local income inequality and the income satisfaction of respondents at the bottom of the income distribution. All else being equal, respondents with household incomes of £10,000 report income satisfaction of 48 ($\pm$2) on a 100-point scale in the most equal localities within England, rising to 57 ($\pm$3), respectively, in the most unequal localities.

Although a full test of the paradox of local inequality would require longitudinal data, the fact that low-income respondents in highly unequal localities tend to express notably higher levels of satisfaction with their own (low) income, as well as stronger meritocratic beliefs suggests that these beliefs may well be turned toward the future.

For the most economically vulnerable members of society, it is at least plausible that regular direct and indirect contact with others "who have made it," coupled with the higher levels of economic dynamism in more unequal localities (Lee et al., 2016), strengthens belief in the possibility of overcoming the present economic situation with hard work. We hope that it be will possible to test this hypothesis more fully in the future.

5.1 | Gaps and remaining questions

Though our findings closely align with those of Solt et al. (2016) in the United States, there remain a number of unanswered questions. First, it is not clear whether the paradox of local inequality is widespread or specific to these two countries or the Anglosphere more generally. The United Kingdom is relatively similar to the United States in terms of its Anglo-Saxon capitalist model, liberal welfare state regime, and more individualistic cultural scripts (Andersen et al., 2021), traits also shared by Australia, Canada, Ireland, and New Zealand. Future research could usefully investigate whether the same seemingly paradoxical pattern emerges in more and less similar settings. This would help shed light on the generalisability of our findings and the mechanisms underlying the trends identified in the US and the UK.

Second, there is the question of the precise scale at which the effects of local income inequality play out and which dimension or dimensions of local inequality are most formative. We follow Newman et al. (2015) and Solt et al. (2016) in selecting local government districts as our analytical unit and the Gini coefficient as our main measure of income inequality in order to increase the comparability of our findings, but both decisions have shortcomings. The use of administrative units that do not reflect real social or economic geography is likely to be a particularly problematic in the case of people who live on or close to a unit border and those who commute long distances: these individuals may well be influenced by neighboring areas in a way our modeling strategy (and that of previous authors) does not account for. Furthermore, similar local Gini coefficients (or 80:20 ratios) can reflect different overall income distributions and spatial concentrations of poverty and affluence. It may be that living in a highly unequal locality in which pockets of advantage and disadvantage are highly spatially concentrated makes inequality more salient than living in one in which rich and poor live side-by-side, with important consequences for how individuals construct their understanding of inequality and their own position in society (Bottero, 2019). Further research is needed to understand both spheres of inequality influence and the role of different spatial segregation dynamics within these spheres of influence.

Third, it is not clear how the local environment interacts with other sources of information about inequality and opportunity. People acquire (often contradictory) information from multiple sources and life domains, including friends and family, news media, and even public entertainment (Kim, 2021). Our understanding of the relative role of the local environment vis-à-vis these other sources of information is currently very limited.

6 | CONCLUSIONS

In this article, we contribute to a recent debate by undertaking the first assessment of the relationship between local income inequality and meritocratic beliefs outside the United States, using data from the UK Household Longitudinal Study. We find that the positive relationship between country-level income inequality and meritocratic beliefs identified by Mijs (2020) does not translate straightforwardly below country level: there is no meaningful association between LAD-level income inequality and meritocratic beliefs in England across the sample as a whole. But there is a robust—and somewhat paradoxical—positive relationship between high local income inequality and meritocratic beliefs among a specific subset of the population: those with the lowest incomes. We interpret this curious finding as evidence that belief in meritocracy can serve as an important tool of psychological resilience for low-income individuals who regularly come into contact—directly or indirectly—with others who are better off than they are. Though such contact may highlight an individual's current lowly position in the income distribution, it can also make escape via upward income mobility more conceivable and plausible.

In combination, our results have far-reaching implications for a collective understanding of how income inequality affects individual well-being and whether such inequality is self-correcting. If higher levels of local income inequality did depress belief in the core premise of the western democratic system—either among the population as a whole or among the most economically vulnerable—then two things would follow. While there would be reasons to worry about the psychological effects of high levels of local income inequality, we could also expect greater bottom-up demand for redistribution to emerge from unequal localities and self-correction processes to kick in. But since we find no general association, and since living in places of higher income inequality is actually associated with higher levels of meritocratic belief (and income satisfaction) among those who are most economically vulnerable within England, the converse holds. There is less reason to worry about the unequal psychological effects of income inequality but there is also little prospect of system correction. Low-income respondents are unlikely to embark on political action intended to overthrow the unequal status quo if they endorse meritocratic ideology with the same fervor as their much wealthier counterparts.

In order to corroborate—or refute—this interpretation of the spatial and social distribution of belief in meritocracy, future research should dig deeper into how belief in meritocracy is linked to other attitudes, dispositions, and values. For instance, do low-income individuals and families in highly unequal areas have a distinctive orientation toward the future? Is their belief integrated into a typical configuration of dispositions or attitudes? But as highlighted above, researchers must also dig deeper into the meaning of living in an unequal context: what does it mean to individuals, and what are the features of these unequal contexts in terms of neighborhood networks, local public spheres, and social interaction more generally?

REPLICATION STATEMENT

Replication Stata syntax, which includes links to the individual and LAD-level data employed in the analysis have been archived at: https://osf.io/svwn2/.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data subject to third-party restrictions.

The individual-level UKHS data that support the findings of this study are available from the UK Data Archive (SN 6614; SN 6666, SN 6931). Restrictions apply to the availability of these data, which were used under license for this study. LADAUTHOR: As per journal style, please provide missing Acknowledgements section.-level data sources are documented and linked to in the article text as well as in the replication syntax described below.

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ENDNOTES

[1] The errors documented by Newman et al. relate to the analysis of the nonwhite sample (Newman et al., 2016a) and the use of an R package that is no longer supported (Newman et al., 2016b), but they claim that their results remain unchanged once these errors have been corrected. Solt et al. (2016) state in a footnote, "Newman et al. were offered the opportunity to respond to this article in print … but declined to do so."

[2] The meaning of inequalities and the meaning of an individual's social position is always constructed relative to others (Bottero, 2019). Therefore, what matters for individual attitudes to meritocracy might be not only the very local context but also the larger regional context in which this local context is embedded.

[3] According to Newman et al. (2015), African Americans are less sanguine about the existence of economic opportunities, have different sensitivities concerning their personal economic situation and local economic conditions.

[4] For confidentiality reasons, locality data are not made publicly available but are accessible via a UK Data Archive Special Licence.

[5] The 6791 English Middle-layer Super Output Areas (MSOAs) are small statistical units notionally defined as areas with populations of 4000 households and 7500 residents.

[6] Mijs (2020) uses responses to the question, "Please tick one box for each of [the following] to show how important you think it is for getting ahead in life …" (a) hard work"; Newman et al. (2015) employ responses to items such as, "Hard work offers little guarantee of success" and "Success in life is pretty much determined by forces outside our control"; while Solt et al. (2016) use responses to the items, "Most people who want to get ahead can make it if they're willing to work hard" and "Hard work and determination are no guarantee of success for most people." We anticipate that the individual orientation of our dependent variable renders it more vulnerable to optimism bias ("I will succeed, even though others will not") but maintain that individual and societal perceptions are likely to be very closely correlated.

[7] The item we use as our dependent variable (originally named *delay10*) is asked at the end of a battery of survey items about delayed gratification in Wave 5 of UKHLS. To ensure that responses are not affected by anchoring bias, we cross-check the correlations between our dependent variable and the other nine delayed gratification items. Results, displayed in Tables A1 and A2 in the Appendix, show that none of the other items correlate strongly with the item we use as our dependent variable (or with each other), which reduces concerns about the influence of the preceding delayed gratification items.

[8] Atlas of Inequality (Rae & Nyanzu, 2019a, 2019b) data are available from https://github.com/alasdairrae/alasdairrae.github.io/tree/master/atlasofinequality/data.

[9] The Gini coefficient is usually constructed based on individual rather than household income. We use household-based Gini estimates based on availability and our use of household income data.

[10] ONS Admin-based income statistics, England and Wales: tax year ending 2016; data are available from https://bit.ly/3rCqF7v.

[11] These are variously (a) a binary variable, which takes value 1 if respondents are deemed to be living in the same place they were born in if they live in a Local Authority District that corresponds to their given place of birth, and 0 otherwise (see Lee et al., 2018 for more details on variable construction) and (b) a continuous indicator of the number of years respondents have been living at their current address.

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APPENDIX A

1) LAD Units and Metrics

FIGURE A1 The 317 English Local Authority Districts (2019 boundaries). *Source*: Wikipedia user XrysD, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=10131879
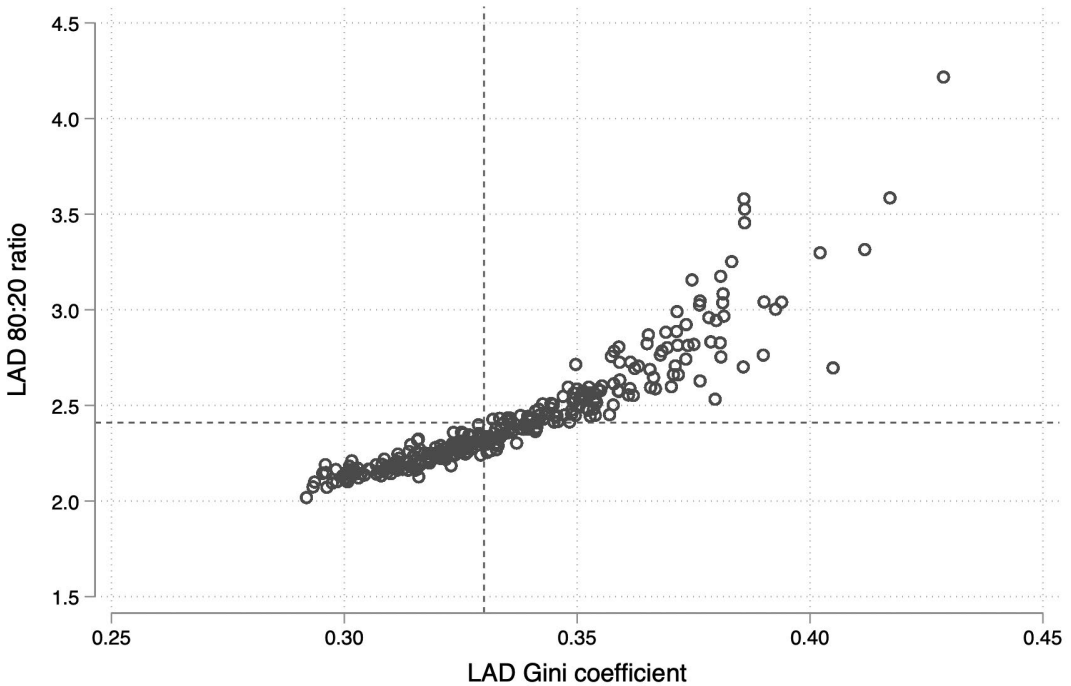
FIGURE A2   Comparing Local Authority District income inequality metrics

2) Dependent Variable

Our dependent variable (*delay10*, "I have always felt like my hard work would pay off in the end") is part of a one-off module about delayed gratification in Wave 5 of Understanding Society, which also solicits responses to items such as "I would have a hard time sticking with a special, healthy diet" and "I cannot motivate myself to accomplish long-term goals."

Since *delay10* is the last of the 10 survey items posed to respondents, we check the correlations between our dependent variable and the other delayed gratification survey items to ensure that responses to our dependent variable do not suffer from substantial anchoring bias. The correlations displayed in Tables A1 and A2 show that the other items do not correlate strongly with *delay10* responses or with each other. That only one of the items

TABLE A1   Correlations of UKHLS Wave 5 delayed gratification items with our dependent variable

Delay10	I have always believed my hard work will pay off in the end	1.000
Delay1	I would have a hard time sticking with a special, healthy diet	−0.054
Delay2	I try to spend money wisely	0.230
Delay3	I have given up physical pleasure or comfort to reach my goals	0.060
Delay4	I try to consider how my actions will affect other people in the long term	0.251
Delay5	I cannot be trusted with money	−0.099
Delay6	I do not consider how behavior affects other people	−0.058
Delay7	I cannot motivate myself to accomplish long-term goals	−0.195
Delay8	I have always tried to eat healthy because it pays off in the long run.	0.316
Delay9	When faced with a physically demanding chore, I always tried to put off doing it	−0.090

Bold value indicates sample N

TABLE A2 UKHLS Wave 5 delayed gratification module—survey item correlations

	Delay10	Delay1	Delay2	Delay3	Delay4	Delay5	Delay6	Delay7	Delay8	Delay9
Delay10	**1.000**									
Delay1	−0.054	**1.000**								
Delay2	0.230	−0.002	**1.000**							
Delay3	0.060	0.103	0.093	**1.000**						
Delay4	0.251	0.013	0.314	0.092	**1.000**					
Delay5	−0.099	0.119	−0.257	0.059	−0.152	**1.000**				
Delay6	−0.058	0.095	−0.098	0.067	−0.236	0.268	**1.000**			
Delay7	−0.195	0.203	−0.101	0.043	−0.105	0.260	0.276	**1.000**		
Delay8	0.316	−0.239	0.262	0.025	0.205	−0.094	−0.041	−0.097	**1.000**	
Delay9	−0.090	0.183	−0.076	0.075	−0.058	0.186	0.160	0.307	−0.069	**1.000**

Bold value indicates sample N

(*delay8*, "I have always tried to eat healthy because it pays off in the long run") correlates with our dependent variable at above 0.3 reduces concerns about conceptual overlap and construct validity.

3) Sensitivity Analysis

We conduct a number of additional analyses in order to probe the robustness of our findings. First, to ensure that results are not sensitive to the specification of household income, we test a number of alternative income measures including equivalized disposable income (using OECD equivalization weights), logged net household income, net household income categories, and net household income deciles. For all four additional specifications of household income, results (reported in Tables A3 and A4) are substantively very similar to our chosen measure, that of raw net annual household income.

In all cases, Table A3 shows that local income inequality (measured via the Gini coefficient) does not have a robust main effect on meritocratic beliefs: there is a small positive association but this is not significant at conventional statistical thresholds. However, the introduction of an interaction term between the local Gini coefficient and the four alternative measures of income in Table A4 again yields support for the conditional effects hypothesis. For all four additional specifications of household income, the interaction term between income and inequality is robust and negative and Figure A3 shows the coefficient of Gini on income is positive and robust among low-income respondents across specifications, indicating that low-income respondents are consistently more likely to hold stronger meritocratic beliefs if they live in more unequal areas. Findings among high-income respondents are again somewhat varied, but Figure A4 shows that the trend of convergence across income groups with higher levels of inequality is consistent across the different specifications of household income.

Second, to account for the household structure of the UKHLS survey and the possible clustering of responses among individuals in the same households, we employ a three-level model in which individuals are embedded first in households and then in Local Authority Districts. Since results (reported in Table A5) are substantively identical to those we obtain with a two-level model, and since the mean number of observations per household is just 1.5, we select the two-level model on the basis of parsimony.

Third, we specify an alternative model in which we explicitly recognise that identical household income does not necessarily mean identical relative status or affluence (Ogorzalek et al., 2020), owing to variation in the income distribution and costs of living across localities in England. By subtracting respondents' net household income from LAD median household income, dropping the LAD median income variable from our model and interacting local income inequality with the gap (positive or negative) between LAD median and net household income, we explore how local income inequality affects the meritocratic beliefs of respondents with incomes substantially below or above the local median. Findings, reported in Table A6, Figures A5 and A6 mirror our main results:

TABLE A3 Testing alternative income specifications: main effect of income inequality

	(1) Equivalized disposable income (£000)	(2) Log net household income	(3) Household income categories	(4) Household income deciles (national)
Fixed effects				
LAD level				
LAD population (000s)	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001
	(−0.001 – 0.003)	(−0.001 – 0.003)	(−0.001 – 0.003)	(−0.001 – 0.003)
LAD % BAME	−0.030	−0.031	−0.035[*]	−0.033
	(−0.070 – 0.009)	(−0.071 – 0.009)	(−0.075 – 0.004)	(−0.073 – 0.007)
LAD median Income (£000s)	−0.139	−0.154	−0.203[**]	−0.198[**]
	(−0.334 – 0.056)	(−0.350 – 0.042)	(−0.400 – −0.006)	(−0.393 – −0.003)
LAD Gini	11.534	13.179	10.123	12.115
	(−9.144 – 32.212)	(−7.673 – 34.032)	(−10.890 – 31.137)	(−8.741 – 32.970)
Cross-level interaction				
LAD inequality * income				
Individual level				
Income measure	0.031[*]	1.077[***]	0.826[***]	0.599[***]
	(−0.001 – 0.063)	(0.611 – 1.543)	(0.649 – 1.002)	(0.464 – 0.735)
Male	−0.409	−0.443	−0.541	−0.553
	(−1.112 – 0.294)	(−1.147 – 0.260)	(−1.247 – 0.165)	(−1.259 – 0.153)
Age	−0.200[***]	−0.201[***]	−0.210[***]	−0.220[***]
	(−0.308 – −0.092)	(−0.310 – −0.093)	(−0.318 – −0.102)	(−0.329 – −0.112)
Age^2	0.002[***]	0.002[***]	0.003[***]	0.003[***]
	(0.001 – 0.003)	(0.001 – 0.004)	(0.002 – 0.004)	(0.002 – 0.004)
BAME	3.002[***]	3.015[***]	3.160[***]	3.100[***]
	(1.938 – 4.065)	(1.937 – 4.093)	(2.076 – 4.244)	(2.019 – 4.182)
Graduate	2.719[***]	2.622[***]	2.210[***]	2.235[***]
	(1.985 – 3.453)	(1.902 – 3.342)	(1.498 – 2.923)	(1.528 – 2.941)
Unemployed	−4.899[***]	−4.425[***]	−4.086[***]	−3.904[***]
	(−6.765 – −3.033)	(−6.303 – −2.548)	(−5.957 – −2.215)	(−5.788 – −2.020)
Belongs to a religion	1.943[***]	1.868[***]	1.813[***]	1.798[***]
	(1.185 – 2.701)	(1.105 – 2.632)	(1.053 – 2.574)	(1.035 – 2.561)
Political leanings	2.567[***]	2.536[***]	2.332[***]	2.365[***]
	(1.745 – 3.388)	(1.720 – 3.352)	(1.515 – 3.148)	(1.546 – 3.184)
	−0.588	−0.569	−0.496	−0.493
	(−1.502 – 0.326)	(−1.485 – 0.347)	(−1.420 – 0.428)	(−1.415 – 0.429)
Lives in the same LAD	−1.450[***]	−1.684[***]	−1.784[***]	−1.831[***]
	(−2.516 – −0.385)	(−2.751 – −0.617)	(−2.853 – −0.716)	(−2.901 – −0.761)
Constant	72.024[***]	68.878[***]	71.535[***]	70.577[***]

TABLE A3 (Continued)

	(1) Equivalized disposable income (£000)	(2) Log net household income	(3) Household income categories	(4) Household income deciles (national)
Random effects				
Income				
LAD (constant)	1.380	1.369	1.325	1.347
Residual	555.245	554.948	553.206	553.401
Number of respondents	**24,943**	**24,943**	**24,943**	**24,943**
Number of LADs	**315**	**315**	**315**	**315**

Source: UKHLS Wave 5. Confidence intervals in parenthesis.

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

Bold value indicates sample N

respondents with household incomes substantially below the local median tend to profess stronger meritocratic beliefs if they live in more unequal areas.

Fourth, we run additional analysis to test whether our results are driven by selective migration to more unequal Local Authority Districts by highly motivated individuals with more optimistic or ambitious dispositions, a possibility that could render the association between local income inequality and meritocratic beliefs among low-income respondents spurious. While our main analysis includes a control for whether or not respondents have lived in the same Local Authority Distinct since entering UKHLS, this variable only captures recent geographical mobility and is therefore of limited usefulness, especially for new UKHLS entrants.

We address this in two ways. In a first step, we use coding developed by Lee et al. (2018) to construct an alternative binary measure of lifetime geographical immobility, where 1 denotes that UKHLS respondents lives in the same place in which they were born at the time of the survey and 0 denotes that they have moved elsewhere at some point during the life course. This variable is also imperfect because the age at which respondents who moved away from their place of birth is unknown. We therefore also construct a second continuous variable using data from UKHLS (and its predecessor the British Household Panel Study) based on when respondents moved to their current address. This continuous indicator of the number of years respondents have been living at their current address (which ranges from 0 to a maximum of 84 years) is also imperfect, since the majority of residential moves within England are across a small geographical distance (Coulter & Ham, 2013; Coulter et al., 2016; Langella & Manning, 2019). However, the fact that results of analysis using these alternative specifications of immobility in Table A7 produces almost identical results reduces concerns about the effects of selective migration before respondents entered the UKHLS survey.

Fifth, we run additional analysis in order to try establish that it is exposure to inequality that drives our results. As *The English Atlas of Inequality* highlights, unequal localities also tend to be more prosperous localities: "… the most unequal locations are also the wealthiest, and many of the least unequal are in fact relatively poor from a household income point of view" (Rae & Nyanzu, 2019a, p. 30). This is reflected in our LAD-level data (Figures A7), where the Gini measure of income inequality and median household income correlate at 0.56.

To try and ascertain that it is exposure to inequality that really drives our results, we run analysis in which we interact individual household income with LAD median household income, rather than with the Gini coefficient. We report results of the two interactions side-by-side in Table A8 to facilitate comparison between the two and illustrate results of the LAD median income interaction in Figures A8 and A9. On the basis that there is an interaction effect for the LAD Gini coefficient but not LAD median income, we conclude that it is exposure to contrasts that plays the critical role in the paradox of local inequality.

TABLE A4 Testing alternative income specifications: conditional effect of income inequality

	(1) Equivalized disposable income (£000s)	(2) Log net household income	(3) Household income categories	(4) Household income deciles (national)
Fixed effects				
LAD level				
LAD population (000s)	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001
	(−0.001 – 0.004)	(−0.001 – 0.003)	(−0.001 – 0.004)	(−0.001 – 0.004)
LAD % BAME	−0.031	−0.030	−0.034	−0.032
	(−0.071 – 0.010)	(−0.070 – 0.010)	(−0.074 – 0.007)	(−0.072 – 0.009)
LAD median Income (£000s)	−0.169*	−0.154	−0.199**	−0.201**
	(−0.369 – 0.031)	(−0.349 – 0.041)	(−0.396 – −0.002)	(−0.398 – −0.004)
LAD Gini	46.136***	75.801***	44.071***	46.050**
	(18.687 – 73.584)	(21.956 – 129.645)	(10.770 – 77.371)	(8.496 – 83.604)
Cross-level interaction				
LAD Gini * income	−1.688***	−18.517**	−8.129**	−5.444**
	(−2.655 – −0.721)	(−33.290 – −3.744)	(−14.834 – −1.424)	(−10.623 – −0.266)
Individual level				
Income measure	0.670***	7.406***	3.601***	2.429***
	(0.332 – 1.009)	(2.269 – 12.544)	(1.295 – 5.907)	(0.668 – 4.190)
Male	−0.461	−0.459	−0.550	−0.556
	(−1.162 – 0.241)	(−1.161 – 0.244)	(−1.255 – 0.155)	(−1.260 – 0.149)
Age	−0.216***	−0.202***	−0.210***	−0.220***
	(−0.324 – −0.108)	(−0.310 – −0.093)	(−0.318 – −0.101)	(−0.329 – −0.111)
Age²	0.003***	0.002***	0.003***	0.003***
	(0.001 – 0.004)	(0.001 – 0.004)	(0.002 – 0.004)	(0.002 – 0.004)
BAME	3.121***	2.992***	3.136***	3.084***
	(2.042 – 4.200)	(1.914 – 4.070)	(2.053 – 4.219)	(2.004 – 4.164)

TABLE A4 (Continued)

	(1) Equivalized disposable income (£000s)	(2) Log net household income	(3) Household income categories	(4) Household income deciles (national)
Graduate	2.328***	2.606***	2.198***	2.242***
	(1.613 – 3.042)	(1.888 – 3.325)	(1.487 – 2.909)	(1.538 – 2.947)
Unemployed	-4.412***	-4.383***	-4.047***	-3.909***
	(-6.257 – -2.567)	(-6.265 – -2.502)	(-5.916 – -2.177)	(-5.795 – -2.023)
Belongs to a religion	1.919***	1.866***	1.808***	1.791***
	(1.165 – 2.673)	(1.103 – 2.630)	(1.049 – 2.568)	(1.031 – 2.552)
Political leanings	2.425***	2.542***	2.332***	2.360***
	(1.613 – 3.237)	(1.728 – 3.357)	(1.515 – 3.148)	(1.545 – 3.174)
	-0.534	-0.549	-0.484	-0.490
	(-1.449 – 0.382)	(-1.466 – 0.367)	(-1.407 – 0.439)	(-1.408 – 0.427)
Lives in the same LAD	-1.412**	-1.699***	-1.816***	-1.854***
	(-2.486 – -0.337)	(-2.767 – -0.630)	(-2.884 – -0.749)	(-2.924 – -0.785)
Constant	60.152***	47.500***	59.877***	59.290***
Random effects				
Income	0.002	0.001	0.020	0.001
LAD (constant)	0.680	1.355	1.051	0.914
Residual	553.153	554.766	552.879	552.691
Number of respondents	**24,943**	**24,943**	**24,943**	**24,943**
Number of LADs	**315**	**315**	**315**	**315**

Source: UKHLS Wave 5. Confidence intervals in parenthesis.

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

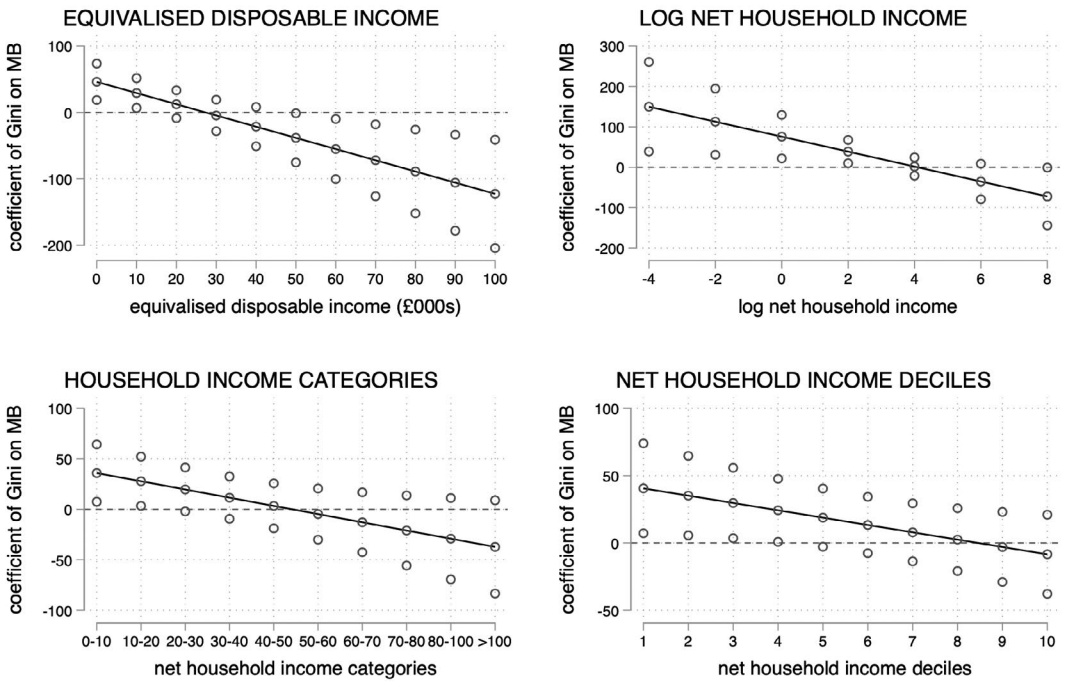Bold value indicates sample N

FIGURE A3   Coefficients of local income inequality on meritocratic beliefs by household income—alternative household income specifications
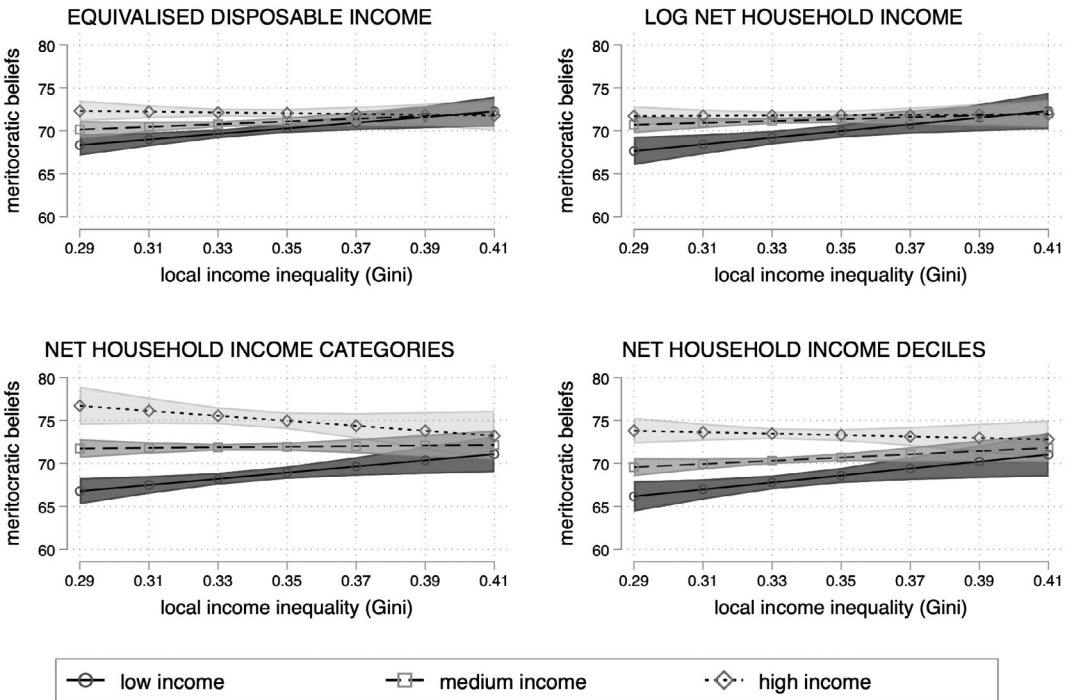

FIGURE A4   Predicted meritocratic beliefs by household income and level of income inequality—alternative household income specifications

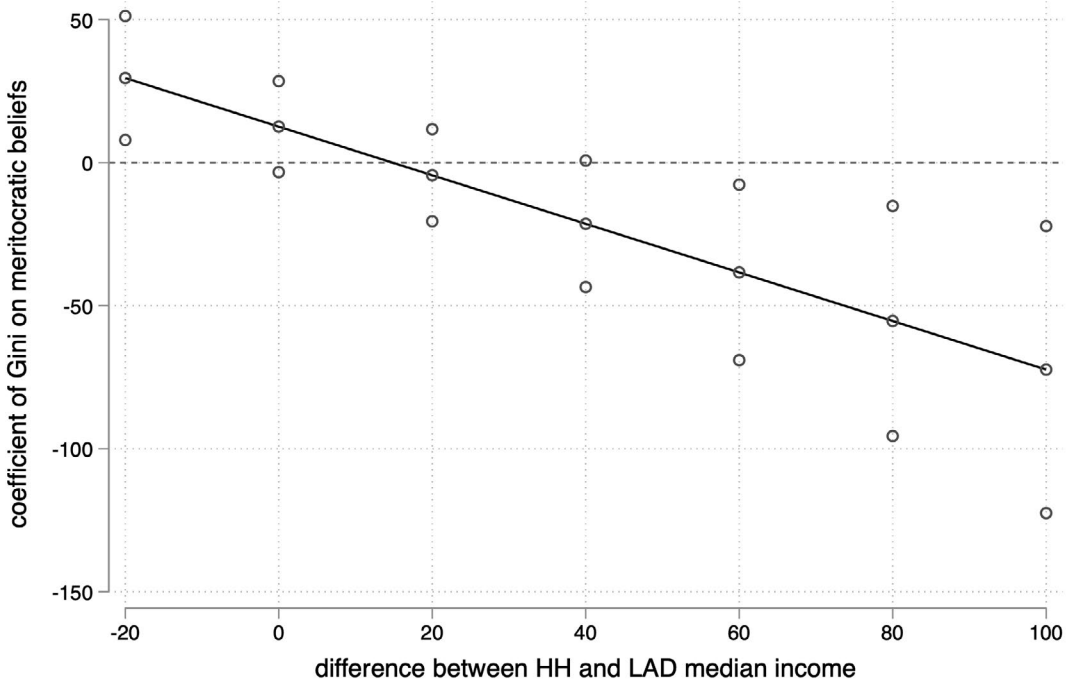**FIGURE A5** Coefficients of local income inequality on meritocratic beliefs by the gap between household and median LAD income
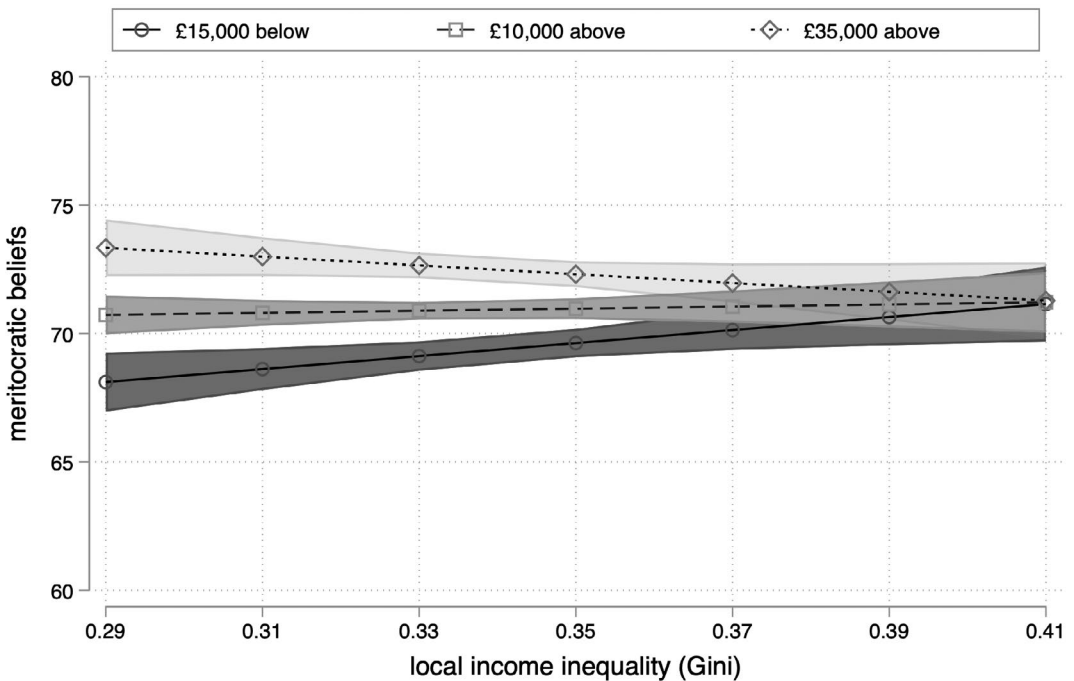

FIGURE A6 Predicted meritocratic beliefs by the gap between household and LAD median income and level of inequality

TABLE A5 Three-level linear mixed model of meritocratic beliefs

	LAD GINI	
	(1)	(2)
Fixed effects		
LAD level		
LAD population (000s)	0.001	0.001
	(−0.001 – 0.003)	(−0.001 – 0.003)
LAD % BAME	−0.028	−0.026
	(−0.066 – 0.009)	(−0.064 – 0.012)
LAD median Income (£000s)	−0.134	−0.142
	(−0.323 – 0.056)	(−0.331 – 0.048)
LAD inequality measure	7.843	43.156***
	(−12.599 – 28.284)	(16.751 – 69.560)
Cross-level interaction		
LAD inequality * income		−1.024***
		(−1.505 – −0.542)
Individual level		
	0.027***	0.401***
	(0.007 – 0.047)	(0.232 – 0.571)
Male	−0.432	−0.474
	(−1.124 – 0.259)	(−1.162 – 0.213)
Age	−0.169***	−0.180***
	(−0.275 – −0.064)	(−0.285 – −0.074)
Age^2	0.002***	0.002***
	(0.001 – 0.003)	(0.001 – 0.003)
BAME	3.139***	3.146***
	(2.078 – 4.200)	(2.083 – 4.210)
Graduate	2.493***	2.284***
	(1.758 – 3.229)	(1.567 – 3.002)
Unemployed	−4.351***	−4.061***
	(−6.218 – −2.485)	(−5.910 – −2.211)
Belongs to a religion	1.992***	1.950***
	(1.241 – 2.742)	(1.202 – 2.697)
Political leanings	2.486***	2.400***
	(1.694 – 3.277)	(1.614 – 3.187)
	−1.006**	−0.974**
	(−1.858 – −0.153)	(−1.829 – −0.118)
Lives in the same LAD	−1.306**	−1.390**
	(−2.359 – −0.253)	(−2.451 – −0.329)
Constant	71.908***	59.444***
Random effects		

TABLE A5 (Continued)

	LAD GINI	
	(1)	(2)
Income		0.001
LAD	0.001	0.001
HH	152.732	152.815
Residual	400.615	400.844
Number of respondents	**24,943**	**24,943**
Number of households	**16,226**	**16,226**
Number of LADs	**315**	**315**

TABLE A6 Alternative model of meritocratic beliefs—cluster-mean centered household income

	LAD GINI	
	(1)	(2)
Fixed effects		
LAD level		
LAD population (000s)	0.002	0.002
	(−0.001 − 0.004)	(−0.001 − 0.004)
LAD % BAME	−0.021	−0.020
	(−0.055 − 0.014)	(−0.055 − 0.015)
LAD median income (£000s)		
LAD inequality (Gini)	2.644	12.582
	(−12.591 − 17.878)	(−3.317 − 28.481)
Cross-level interaction		
LAD Gini * income gap		−0.849***
		(−1.377 − −0.321)
Individual level		
Income gap, (vs. LAD median income)	0.021**	0.351***
	(0.001 − 0.042)	(0.167 − 0.535)
Male	−0.427	−0.513
	(−1.136 − 0.282)	(−1.215 − 0.189)
Age	−0.197***	−0.208***
	(−0.305 − −0.089)	(−0.316 − −0.100)
Age^2	0.002***	0.003***
	(0.001 − 0.003)	(0.002 − 0.004)
BAME	2.998***	3.080***
	(1.933 − 4.064)	(2.006 − 4.154)
Graduate	2.705***	2.307***
	(1.971 − 3.439)	(1.597 − 3.017)
Unemployed	−4.832***	−4.304***
	(−6.710 − −2.954)	(−6.166 − −2.442)
Belongs to a religion	1.901***	1.832***
	(1.136 − 2.665)	(1.075 − 2.590)
Political leanings	2.533***	2.366***
	(1.708 − 3.358)	(1.551 − 3.181)
	−0.580	−0.536
	(−1.495 − 0.335)	(−1.454 − 0.382)
Lives in the same LAD	−1.533***	−1.698***
	(−2.600 − −0.467)	(−2.765 − −0.631)
Constant	71.692***	68.108***
Random effects		

TABLE A6   (Continued)

	LAD GINI	
	(1)	(2)
Income gap		0.001
LAD (constant)	1.402	1.293
Residual	554.197	552.150
Number of respondents	**24,943**	**24,943**
Number of LADs	**315**	**315**

Source: UKHLS Wave 5. Confidence intervals in parenthesis.

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

TABLE A7 Linear mixed model of meritocratic beliefs—alternative immobility indicators

	LIFETIME IMMOBILITY		YEARS AT CURRENT ADDRESS	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Fixed effects				
LAD level				
LAD population (000s)	0.002[*]	0.002[*]	0.001	0.001
	(−0.000 – 0.004)	(−0.000 – 0.004)	(−0.001 – 0.003)	(−0.002 – 0.004)
LAD % BAME	−0.043[*]	−0.042[*]	−0.032	−0.028
	(−0.091 – 0.005)	(−0.091 – 0.007)	(−0.074 – 0.011)	(−0.072 – 0.016)
LAD median income	−0.099	−0.119	−0.115	−0.138
	(−0.320 – 0.121)	(−0.344 – 0.105)	(−0.334 – 0.104)	(−0.360 – 0.085)
LAD inequality (Gini)	11.153	39.013[**]	13.347	46.662[***]
	(−13.693 – 36.000)	(6.328 – 71.697)	(−11.711 – 38.404)	(16.712 – 76.612)
Cross-Level Interaction				
LAD Gini * Income		−0.774[***]		−0.945[***]
		(−1.330 – −0.218)		(−1.482 – −0.407)
Individual level				
Net household income (£000s)	0.027[**]	0.326[***]	0.023[**]	0.382[***]
	(0.004 – 0.050)	(0.133 – 0.519)	(0.002 – 0.044)	(0.195 – 0.570)
Male	−0.378	−0.467	−0.284	−0.367
	(−1.108 – 0.351)	(−1.189 – 0.254)	(−1.046 – 0.478)	(−1.122 – 0.387)
Age	−0.185[***]	−0.195[***]	−0.206[***]	−0.222[***]
	(−0.301 – −0.069)	(−0.311 – −0.079)	(−0.324 – −0.087)	(−0.339 – −0.104)
Age^2	0.002[***]	0.002[***]	0.002[***]	0.003[***]
	(0.001 – 0.003)	(0.001 – 0.004)	(0.001 – 0.004)	(0.002 – 0.004)
BAME	2.222[***]	2.208[***]	2.830[***]	2.883[***]
	(0.718 – 3.726)	(0.705 – 3.710)	(1.765 – 3.895)	(1.819 – 3.947)
Graduate	2.365[***]	2.028[***]	2.626[***]	2.272[***]
	(1.580 – 3.150)	(1.265 – 2.791)	(1.871 – 3.382)	(1.535 – 3.009)
Unemployed	−5.254[***]	−4.726[***]	−4.839[***]	−4.317[***]
	(−7.297 – −3.210)	(−6.742 – −2.711)	(−6.792 – −2.886)	(−6.252 – −2.381)
Belongs to a religion	2.131[***]	2.078[***]	2.032[***]	1.969[***]
	(1.354 – 2.909)	(1.306 – 2.850)	(1.274 – 2.791)	(1.217 – 2.720)
Political leanings	2.655[***]	2.532[***]	2.532[***]	2.385[***]
	(1.799 – 3.511)	(1.678 – 3.386)	(1.679 – 3.385)	(1.542 – 3.228)
	−0.564	−0.520	−0.792[*]	−0.735
	(−1.567 – 0.438)	(−1.524 – 0.485)	(−1.726 – 0.141)	(−1.671 – 0.201)
Alt immobility indicator	−0.071	−0.020	−0.007	−0.011
	(−0.909 – 0.767)	(−0.857 – 0.817)	(−0.041 – 0.028)	(−0.046 – 0.023)
Constant	68.965[***]	58.734[***]	69.635[***]	57.790[***]
Random effects				

TABLE A7 (Continued)

	LIFETIME IMMOBILITY		YEARS AT CURRENT ADDRESS	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Income		0.001		0.001
LAD (constant)	2.135	1.406	2.012	1.072
Residual	553.431	551.187	551.429	548.935
Number of respondents	21,019	21,019	22,826	22,826
Number of LADs	315	315	315	315

Source: UKHLS Wave 5. Confidence intervals in parenthesis.

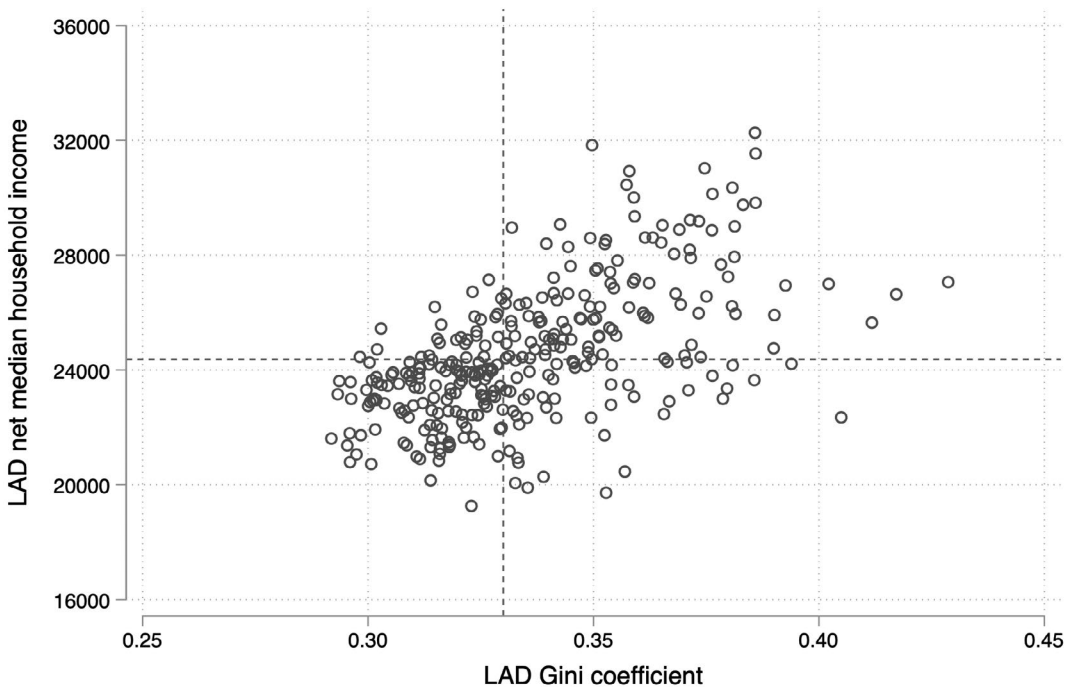***p < .001; **p < .01; *p < .05.

FIGURE A7 Relationship between LAD inequality and median household income

TABLE A8 Probing the effects of LAD inequality versus income by household income

Fixed effects	(1) LAD Gini	(2) LAD median income
LAD-level		
LAD population (000s)	0.001	0.001
	(−0.001 − 0.004)	(−0.001 − 0.004)
LAD % BAME	−0.030	−0.029
	(−0.071 − 0.011)	(−0.070 − 0.013)
LAD median income (£000s)	−0.182*	−0.056
	(−0.382 − 0.019)	(−0.324 − 0.211)
LAD inequality (Gini)	45.967***	14.103
	(18.273 − 73.661)	(−7.365 − 35.571)
Cross-level interaction		
LAD variable * income	−0.943***	−0.004
	(−1.472 − −0.414)	(−0.008 − 0.001)
Individual-level		
Net household income (£000s)	0.379***	0.142**
	(0.195 − 0.563)	(0.027 − 0.257)
Male	−0.505	−0.493
	(−1.207 − 0.197)	(−1.195 − 0.209)
Age	−0.206***	−0.205***
	(−0.314 − −0.098)	(−0.313 − −0.097)
Age^2	0.003***	0.003***
	(0.002 − 0.004)	(0.001 − 0.004)
BAME	3.071***	3.073***
	(1.995 − 4.146)	(2.000 − 4.146)
Graduate	2.364***	2.397***
	(1.654 − 3.073)	(1.681 − 3.113)
Unemployed	−4.326***	−4.393***
	(−6.187 − −2.465)	(−6.258 − −2.527)
Belongs to a religion	1.839***	1.846***
	(1.082 − 2.596)	(1.088 − 2.604)
Political leanings	2.395***	2.395***
	(1.581 − 3.210)	(1.579 − 3.212)
	−0.537	−0.565
	(−1.455 − 0.381)	(−1.482 − 0.353)
Lives in the same LAD	−1.719***	−1.705***
	(−2.789 − −0.650)	(−2.774 − −0.635)
Constant	60.020***	67.904***
Random effects		

TABLE A8 (Continued)

Fixed effects	(1) LAD Gini	(2) LAD median income
Income	0.001	0.001
LAD (constant)	0.751	0.537
Residual	552.264	552.649
Number of respondents	24,943	24,943
Number of LADs	315	315

Source: UKHLS Wave 5. Confidence intervals in parenthesis.
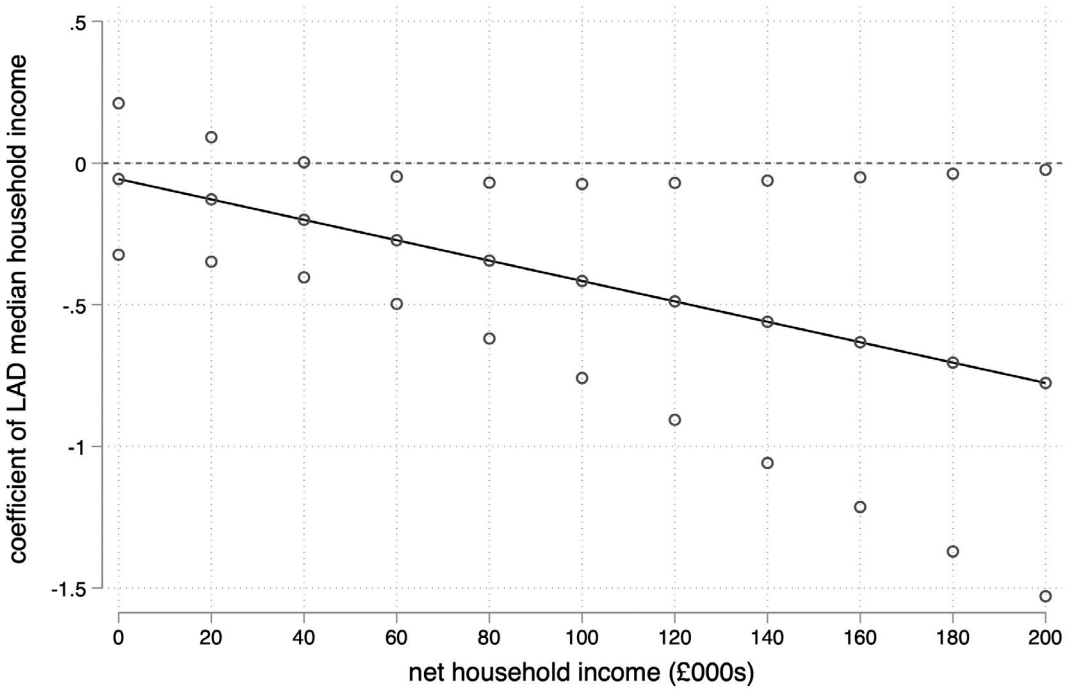
***p < .001; **p < .01; *p < .05.

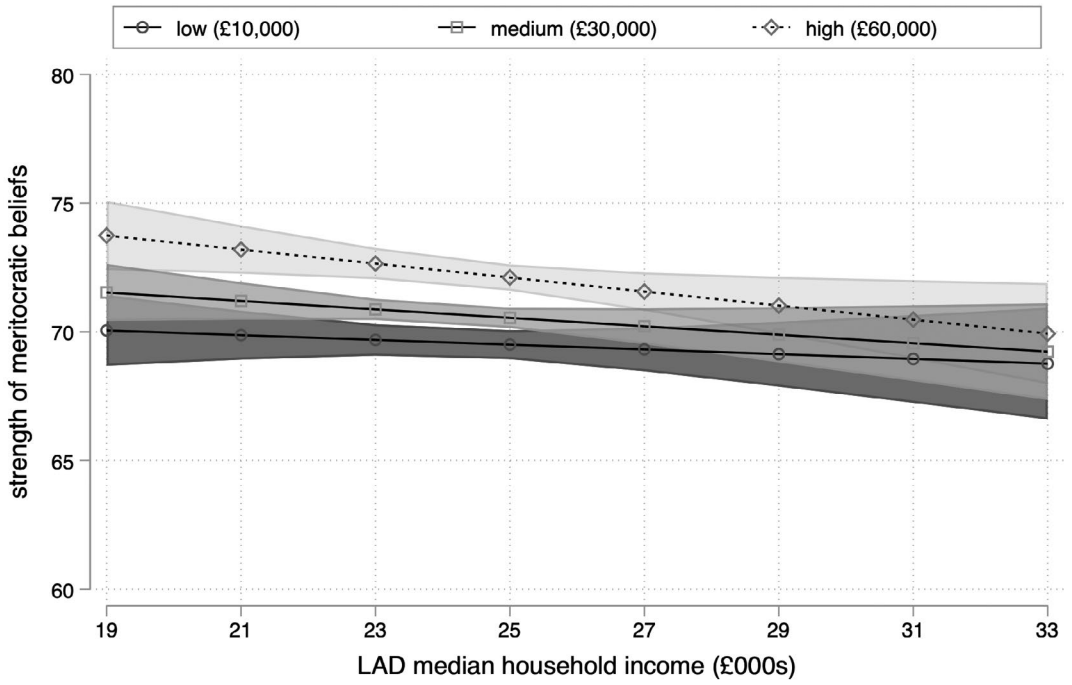**FIGURE A8** Coefficients of LAD median income on meritocratic beliefs by household income

FIGURE A9 Predicted meritocratic beliefs by household income and LAD median income