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EDITORIAL

Editorial: Journal of Cultural Analysis and Social Change

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Keywords: cultural analysis, social change, culture

Journal of Cultural Analysis and Social Change (JCASC) is an international, interdisciplinary peer-reviewed and open access journal. It has emerged from the ashes of the short-lived *European Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, which only published a few articles. When I heard that there was an opportunity to launch a new journal, I had not been thinking of taking on an Editorship. However, I sensed a great opportunity. I changed the title of the journal, recomposed the Editorial Board and re-wrote the journal's Aims and Scope. The new journal provides a chance to publish and promote excellent cultural analysis from a range of perspectives. While institutional constraints mean that many journals have a predominantly national focus, I saw this journal's open access platform as a means of opening up critical discourse, debate and discussion to an international readership and encouraging article submissions from around the world. The Editorial Board of this journal now consists of over forty members from sixteen different countries. In the first few months of the journal's existence, we have had submissions from twenty one countries.

JCASC welcomes innovative and original conceptual and empirical research drawn from a number of disciplines including sociology, social theory, cultural studies, history, cultural anthropology, gender studies and media studies. The expertise on the Editorial Board reflects these core areas. Rather than attempting to identify specific contributions the journal can make to each of these fields, I will make a few general points about its focus. The conception of culture that the journal adopts is necessarily broad. It encompasses culture in its restrictive and more general senses, with its focus on the arts and popular culture, *and* culture as a way of life (Williams, 1981). It welcomes research on the political economy of culture industries but also analysis that takes cultural autonomy as its starting point and considers culture to be an independent variable (Rasul and Proffitt, 2017; Alexander, 2003). JCASC is attentive to research that treats culture as a resource and examines the institutional structures, 'diversity deficits' and power dynamics within the various regions of each cultural field (Bourdieu, 1993; Squires, 2017). At the same time, the journal does not shy away from considering normative questions of value, whether ethical or aesthetic (Stewart, 2012, 2017; Wolff, 2006, 2008). Alongside scholarship on the arts and popular culture, the journal foregrounds work on culture in its broader sense, including research on values, beliefs, ideas, practices, symbolic boundaries, identities and modes of being and belonging, whether those of the dominant or dominated, majority cultures or diasporic groups. It explores the fate of those on the fringes of the global order, those occupying liminal spaces, forced to be on the move and adapt to new contexts in our increasingly polarized, disjunctive global order (Appadurai, 1990; Erel, 2010; Sayad, 2004). It asks who has the authority to attribute value and considers the ways in which this can be contested (Skeggs, 2004; Lawler, 2005). At a more philosophical level, it allows for critical scrutiny of the tension between our subjectivity and the totality of knowledge, the *objective culture* that towers above us as individuals and from which we can only draw so much (Simmel, 2004[1900]). The journal welcomes research that deals with culture and meaning, focusing on key existential questions with which we are confronted in these uncertain times. Along these lines, as John Carroll (2008, p. 4) puts it, culture 'is those myths,

stories, images, rhythms, and conversations that voice the eternal and difficult truths on which deep knowing, and therefore wellbeing, is dependent’.

The journal is oriented towards (but not limited to) research on social change, thus imbuing it with a political dimension and purpose. By providing a forum for critical dialogue, it is the intention of this journal to encourage cultural analysis that challenges the ideological fashions and injustices of the day and in doing so, contributes to wider debates and helps to stimulate new and progressive forms of social engagement. Rather than wishing away complexity, it seeks to put forward nuanced, historically-sensitive research that considers the complex transformations that have framed our lives (Inglis, 2014). It asks why things are as they are and how they might be different. Our times are beset with a sense of insecurity caused in great part by global inequality, the polarization of wealth and life chances, and a neglect of environmental issues. Technological innovations continue to transform our experiences of culture and the ways in which it is created, communicated, reproduced and reconstituted. Meanwhile, it seems that many mainstream commentators are confident that their view of the world is the sensible, correct view and that anything else is ‘ideological’. This journal seeks to challenge such complacency and endeavours to open up a space within which alternative ways of viewing the world can be formulated and developed. It will provide a forum within which to facilitate dialogue and debate conducted with the spirit of trans-border solidarity. JCASC can play a role in cross-cultural communication and also as a means of defence against the violence of exclusionary politics and the consequences of neoliberalism. With its emphasis on imaginative work with a critical focus, the *Journal of Cultural Analysis and Social Change* seeks to open up debate and discussion across borders and disciplines.

This first issue has come together rather quickly. The journal launched in January 2018 and this issue was published in early August 2018. The peer-review process is swifter at this journal than at most, but nevertheless, it was a rush to get the first batch of articles ready. It is great to see that the first issue starts as we wish to proceed: it features six original and innovative articles; two of these are extended pieces. While there is no unifying theme connecting the articles, each one speaks, in some way or other, to the journal’s Aims and Scope.

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Editor-in-Chief

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An Examination of the Noken and Indigenous Cultural Identity: Voices of Papuan Women

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ABSTRACT

Noken is an essential tool/bag/clothing in the lives of Indigenous people of West Papua, which is made from knitting thin strips of wood primarily from the Gnetum Gneumon tree. Raw materials required to make noken have become scarce due to massive deforestation. An analysis of the noken lends itself to a useful understanding of the link between economic development initiatives in the Merauke Regency of West Papua and shifting cultural identity among Indigenous Papuans. Drawing on the Women, Culture and Development (WCD) approach, this qualitative study examines interviews from Papuan women in order to understand how the noken resonates with Indigenous Papuans, and how perceptions of noken and their accessibility have changed. The findings reveal that a combination of factors contribute to dwindling noken supplies, which adversely impact Papuans' ability to produce and reproduce their culture. This paper argues that Papuan women possess an unwritten specialized knowledge that is of increased value in a shifting social context and holds new meaning in response to competing influences of non-Papuans.

Keywords: cultural identity, West Papua, indigenous women, Noken, resistant knowledge

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1960s, Indigenous Papuans have undergone a massive transition due to the loss of their native lands to intensive agriculture and other development schemes (Hadiprayitno, 2015; Stott, 2011). This transition resulted in very limited gains in the lives of Indigenous people of West Papua (Stott, 2011) and is underexplored in academic research. As reported by the Forest Peoples Programs (2013), economic development has both marginalized and alienated the Indigenous people through the lack of employment opportunities (Stott, 2011), scarcity of traditional foods (Wardis, 2014), and a diminishing presence in spaces once traditionally Indigenous (Free Peoples Program, 2013). In addition to providing their basic needs such as food, raw materials, water, and medicines, the forest represents their cultural identity (Free Peoples Program, 2013).

Using the Noken, an important cultural item/tool, this article examines the impact of economic development projects on Papuans' capacity to transmit longstanding cultural practices. We situate cultural practices as forms of knowledge that are unique to Papuan culture and communally known as knowledge (Berkes et al., 2000; Ikoja-Odongo, 2009; Smith 2012). Thus, it is a complex process that involves Papuans' intimate connection and experiences with the forest and the local environment. To discuss traditional knowledge and customs, we deploy the following definition of traditional ecological knowledge.

Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) represents:

a cumulative body of knowledge, practice, and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment. (Berkes et al. 2000, p. 1252).

Data from interviews with Papuan women provide insight into Papuan identity, voice, and marginalization. Insight into complex power dynamics associated with a transition into a market economy also shed light on aspects of coloniality. When discussing traditional cultural practices, the participants deployed four discursive themes: diminishing access to raw materials/forest, weakening social networks, shifting cultural values, and weakening transmission of cultural traditions/skills.

West Papua: A Province of Indonesia

West Papua is a province of Indonesia located east of Indonesia. It shares an eastern border with Papua New Guinea, and is surrounded by the Arafura Sea to the west, and the Pacific Ocean. A hidden paradise, West Papua is currently facing arduous changes that are largely unknown to most of the world. Indonesia's link to West Papua dates back to the 1800s. In 1826, Indonesian nationalists were able to successfully claim all sprawling territories of the Dutch East Indies for just one successor state (Banivanua-Mar, 2008; King, 2004; Lawson, 2016; Stott, 2011). Between the years 1949 and 1962, the remaining Dutch East Indies, including West Papua, formally became Indonesia (Lawson, 2016; Stott, 2011). Indonesia's presence in West Papua expanded rapidly during the 1960s. Justification for this expansion and eventual rule over West Papua was the claim to raise the living standards of the ethnically distinct 'primitive' Papuans (Stott 2011, p. 1). This process pushed native Papuans to develop a sense of a common Papuan identity in opposition to Indonesia's sovereignty over West Papua (Stott, 2011). For this reason, Indigenous peoples in this paper are exclusively referred to as Papuans. Thus, West Papua's complex history as a former Dutch colony and its status as a territory of Indonesia warrants a certain sensitivity when discussing concerns related to Papuans.

Modernity, Loss of Native Lands, and Traditions

Modernization in the Global South has been realized through various types of development programs and schemes (Ginting and Pye, 2013; King, 2004; Stott, 2011). Aggressive implementation of economic development programs facilitated the Javanisation (Javanese cultural domination) of West Papua—a process involving the economic and social transitions that accompanied this settlement and exploited the Indigenous occupants' use of customary systems for verifying land ownership (Banivanua-Mar, 2008; King, 2004). For example, customary practices for documenting land rights left Papuan's ancestral lands vulnerable to manipulation that ultimately led to massive losses of Indigenous land (Banivanua-Mar, 2008; Free Peoples Program, 2013). It has been long acknowledged that separating indigenous people from their land is a feature of colonization (Cooper, 2012; Mignolo, 2012; Smith, 2012). Smith (2012) states that this separation occurred in many forms: the forced division of land into individualize titles, seizure of land for "acts of rebellion" and through redefining land as "waste land" or "empty land" (p. 71). Similarly, Papuan state government was able to claim Indigenous lands to further industrial and agricultural development (Ginting and Pye, 2013; Free Peoples Program, 2013). This process classified millions of hectares of Indigenous land as *empty land* (Ginting and Pye, 2013). After which, multinational organizations laid claim to or simply grabbed massive Indigenous land areas to convert into industry (Forest Peoples Program 2013; Ginting and Pye, 2013; King, 2004). Under the pretext of "development," many natural forest ecosystems, essential to the survival of the Indigenous people, were destroyed by deforestation. Not only did this process dispossess Papuans of their native lands, it also ushered in a market economy.

Massive deforestation of native lands severely disrupted Papuans' way of life (Forest Peoples Program, 2013; Hadiprayitno, 2015). When the Indigenous people handed over their lands as part of participation in the economic development, a process described by some researchers as more of a "land grab" (see Ginting and Pye, 2013; Hadiprayitno, 2015), the Indigenous people were profoundly affected. Native lands were considered the wealth Papuans passed down to their children. The negative implications associated with this loss, are still largely unknown and unexamined from the perspective of the Indigenous people. Features of this process, however, are akin to historical forms of Western imperialism and colonization (King, 2004). Modernity, as described by Mignolo (2012), is synonymous with capitalism. "The idea of people not being able to get by without Europe's theoretical or culture achievements is one of the most definitive tenets of modernity" (Maldonado-Torres, 2004, p. 32). Accordingly, "coloniality is the underbelly or dark side of modernity" (Cooper, 2012, p. 66). Distinct from colonization, which implies something historical and structural, coloniality infers an ongoing process that is both fluid and dynamic. Moreover, coloniality is the modern model of power "that links together racial formation and knowledge production" (Maldonado-Torress 2004, p. 39 as cited in Cooper, 2012).

As stated earlier, Papuans see themselves as racially and ethnically distinct from all other regions in Indonesia and identify more with other Melanesian populations, than with Asians (Lawson, 2016; Stott, 2011). Long before being absorbed by Indonesia, West Papua considered themselves part of the Pacific Islands' regional community and Melanesia, which includes New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji and New Caledonia (Blades, 2014). Despite wide diversity, Melanesians share a cultural bond. In addition to similar foods, cultivation techniques, economy and religion, Melanesia shares a tribal plan that consists of residential groupings with several small villages or local clusters (Blades, 2014). Even within West Papua there are more than 200 local tribes with their own unique languages that vary considerably across regions (Haryanto et al., 2017; King, 2004). Still there are some commonalities among them. The consumption of traditional foods such as sago and kumara (sweet potatoes) is an example of a shared tradition severely impacted by massive deforestation, which has been discussed to some degree in the literature (Blades, 2014; Kanem and Norris, 2016; Stott 2011). One of the lesser known, yet vital Papuan traditions, is the use of the multifunction tool—or net like bag—called noken.

Very little research exists on the noken in West Papua and most of it is found in Indonesian publications. Ulumuddin's (2013) discussion of the noken is one of the most recent accounts that provide general information regarding its cultural significance and its various uses in West Papua. Papuan women make noken by knitting twine/yarn produced from different kinds of tree bark—mainly from the Gnetum Gnemon tree—and the skin of wild orchids (Dekme, 2015). In some areas of West Papua, noken are used as a bag, as female clothing, and as head coverings (Ulumuddin, 2013). Each region has its specific type and function for noken. For instance, the Dani tribe call noken, *Jum, Ese* for the Asmat tribe, and *Inoken* for the Biak tribe (Ulumuddin, 2013). In addition to the variations in names, each region uses different materials to produce them. In Asmat, for example, noken is made from tree bark and leaves, and is always decorated with a variety of seeds and bird feathers. Tribes located in the highlands of West Papua, make noken also from tree bark and wild orchids, but they are less decorative. Apart from their practical functions, noken are almost always used in every traditional ceremony, including engagements, marriages, births, chief inaugurations, and heritage ceremonies (Ulumuddin, 2013).

Noken represent the prosperity of Papuans and are a symbol of their intimate relationship to nature (Marjanto, 2013). Materials used to make these bags are freely taken from the forest without any contamination. Papuans believe that damaged noken can easily return to the land. The noken has a longstanding history in Papuan culture. However, since the implementation of economic development projects, Papuans are finding natural materials, once easily accessible from the forest, more difficult to obtain (CIFOR, 2014; Hadiprayitno, 2015). There has not been an empirical examination of the noken in West Papua that centers the voices of indigenous women. This work addresses this gap by examining the relationship between traditional practices and Papuan cultural identity. It is the purpose of this study to contribute to the scholarship on Papuan women by enhancing our understanding of Papuan women's attitudes toward the noken. Drawing on the voices of Papuan women from the Merauke Regency located in the south of West Papua, this study addresses two questions: How does the noken resonate with Papuan women/community; and have perceptions of noken and its availability changed?

This qualitative case study employs a Women, Culture and Development (WCD) framework to understand the role of the noken in Papuan culture. Such an understanding, especially from the perspective of Papuan women, is necessary to bring awareness in order to develop effective strategies and interventions that draw on the knowledge and creativity of Papuans. Given the centrality of culture in a WCD approach, emphasis is on the nuanced ways Papuan women exercise their agency or the specific ways they exert power and influence within their surroundings. This paper proceeds with a brief discussion of the relationship between economic development programs and land rights in the Merauke Regency. More importantly, this discussion elucidates the relationship between the loss of native lands and cultural practices. The discussion then shifts to an analysis of interviews with four Papuan women and concludes with a discussion of the findings.

DEFORESTATION AND LOSS OF NATIVE LANDS

The Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate

The Merauke Regency is one of the regencies located in the southern part of the Papua province in Indonesia. It has an area of 46,791,63 km² and is bordered to the east by Papua New Guinea (Merauke Statistical Data, 2014). The population of Merauke is nearly 250,000—73,000 of whom are Indigenous to the land (Indonesian Population Census, 2010). The Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate, known as the MIFEE project was implemented by the Indonesian government in 2010 (Hadiprayitno, 2015). The local government of the Merauke Regency in collaboration with the state government set up the MIFEE project to overcome the food and energy crisis in Indonesia. This program allocated over 970,000 hectares for commercial farming such as sugar cane, palm oil, tapioca, corn, and industrial forests (Ginting and Pye, 2013; Hadiprayitno, 2015). When the Indigenous community handed over their land as part of participation in the economic development, they were unaware of the serious

implications for their daily lives. As stated by Borrás et al. (2011), Merauke is seen by powerful transnational and national economic actors ranging from corporations to national governments as ‘empty land’—a site for fuel and food production activities. The construction of public facilities and infrastructure in the rural areas of Merauke, such as housing, schools, bridges, and roads were purportedly implemented to benefit the local community. Such developments appeared to be genuine efforts from the government and companies to increase the community’s wealth and well-being, but were in fact only a strategy to facilitate the implementation of the estate business. Without bridges and roads, trucks and excavators could not gain access into the forest or villages. Moreover, the natural forest products could not be loaded and transported into the city for further processing if the proper infrastructure was not in place.

Selvadurai et al. (2013) explored a similar situation experienced by the Penan natives in Serawak, Malaysia. A palm oil plantation company developed public infrastructures such as bridges, schools and community housing to supposedly improve the living standards of the local indigenous community. By the time the Penan realized their way of life was changing in ways that they could no longer sustain themselves, the company had demolished their forests and converted the land into industrial areas (Selvadurai et al., 2013). The Penan tribe, which had once been nurtured by nature and did not rely on money before modernization, found that the new market economy did not accommodate their traditional knowledge.

Like the Penan tribe, many Papuans rely heavily on the forest for subsistence. Having lived for generations from the land like the Penan, Papuans have also experienced similar challenges that have hindered their way of life (King, 2004; Lawson, 2016). Since the noken is traditionally made from raw materials found in the forest (Dekme, 2015; Ulumuddin, 2013), diminishing native forests possibly impede the Papuans’ ability to produce this traditional bag and inhibit other longstanding cultural practices.

Noken, Papuan Culture and Women

As stated above, noken are used routinely across all Papuan tribes and are made to be both functional and durable (Dekme, 2015). For example, large noken are often used to carry a variety of local products such as vegetables, taro, cassava, kumara, sago, fruits or fire wood (Dekme, 2015; Marjanto, 2013). Smaller noken are used to carry traditional cigarettes, betel nuts, books and the holy bible. Special noken are made to carry babies and pigs (Dekme, 2015). Some tribes consider pigs as an integral part of their life because of their traditional values. Pigs are often used in some cultural rituals such as funerals, engagements, marriages, births, etc. In Tolikara, for example, in the highlands of West Papua, pigs play very important roles in cultural life extending back several generations (Dekme, 2015). Among these tribes, both pigs and babies are valuable and treated equally. Thus, it is common for many tribes to place pigs and babies into the same noken.

Noken also represent the female uterus and fertility (Marjanto, 2013). The elastic nature of the bag looks very small before it is filled, just the same as a female uterus during the various stages of pregnancy (Haryanto et al., 2017). Often made by mature and/or elderly women and in groups, the process of making noken provides a sense of togetherness among the women, as the women prefer to do the knitting in groups instead of working individually. For this reason, if they work together, they can motivate each other to finish the knitting while engaging in discussion (Ulumuddin, 2013). Mature Papuan women are often measured by their ability to knit noken (Marjanto, 2013; Ulumuddin, 2013). Among some tribes located in the highlands of West Papua, possessing the skills to make noken is required for marriage (Marjanto, 2013). Often a woman who is not skilled in the art will not be approached by males, or may not be allowed to marry (Marjanto, 2013). Emphasis on the essential role of the noken in Papuan culture illustrates how it is intricately woven into all facets of their lives. Understanding this complex entanglement requires a framework that accommodates the cultural reproduction aspect of Papuan identity and development.

Analytical framework: Women Culture & Development (WCD)

The first articulations of the Women, Culture and Development (WCD) framework emerged at the end of the twentieth century. Chua, Bhavnani, and Foran’s (2000) seminal article *Women, culture, development: A new paradigm for development studies?* addresses the limited attention paid to culture in development scholarship. In this work the authors provide a broad sketch of the specific ways the “Third World Development Project”, since the 1950s, failed to achieve its primary goal of poverty amelioration. This failure is largely attributed to the overly economic assumptions on the part of development theories and policies which rendered the complexities of Third World lived experiences, particularly women, invisible (Bhavnani, Foran and Kurian, 2003; Bhavnani, Foran, Kurian and Munshi, 2009/2016; Chua, Bhavnani and Foran, 2000). Asante (2009) argues that this immense failure is intrinsic to the design of the Third World *Development Project*. Because the Third World is assumed to be economically impoverished, the dependency of Third World countries is maintained by richer nations through development strategies (Chua, Bhavnani and Foran, 2000). As an appendage of Modernity, which is laden with values of Euro-American culture as culturally dominant and naturally conquering (Asante, 2009), modernization is assumed to be

the desired goal (Chua, Bhavnani and Foran, 2000). From this basis, “development”, by definition, “insidiously works to remove a people from its own contextual terms” (Chua, Bhavnani and Foran, 2000, p. 67).

Another important component linked to the failures of the Third World Development Projects is the way women are viewed (Bhavnani and Bywater, 2009). Viewed as either wives, mothers or as laborers, women’s productive contributions beyond these roles were largely neglected from integration in development approaches. For this reason, Bhavnani and Bywater (2009) argue that while development policies, projects and theories do not necessarily make women entirely invisible, “the ways women are visible within development do not shed light on their lives in all of its wonderful complexity” (p. 62). The elements that configure this complexity are: production and reproduction, lived experiences, and cultures and agency (Bhavnani and Bywater, 2009). Agency, in this sense, refers to conditions of individualization and self-affirmation integral to women’s efforts to exert power and influence within a particular social context (Bakan, 1966).

From this basis, WCD draws from three modes of inquiry: (1) feminist studies, (2) cultural studies, and (3) Third World/ development studies (Chua, Bhavnani and Foran, 2000). Central to the WCD framework is the assertion that women’s lives, identities, practices and representation, form a rich tangle of production and reproduction that cannot be untangled. The WCD proposes a more complex view on the ingredients in this tangle (Bhavnani, Foran and Kurian, 2003; Chua, Bhavnani and Foran, 2000). WCD includes three main tenets:

- (1) Highlights culture as lived experiences, production and reproduction (*e.g.* social reproduction) (Bhavnani, Foran and Kurian, 2003);
- (2) Brings women’s agency to the foreground within the cultural, social, political and economic domains as a means for understanding how inequalities are challenged and reproduced (Bhavnani, Foran and Kurian, 2003; Nandedkar, 2017); and
- (3) Considers the economic but does not place the economic above other aspects of people’s everyday lives. (Bhavnani and Bywater, 2009).

Culture, being an important element of WCD, is defined as lived experiences that are inherent in all relationships (Bhavnani, Foran and Kurian, 2003). Culture offers non-economistic and non-materialistic ways of acknowledging the multiple complexities in women’s lives. It also includes the way knowledge emerges from the way people live their lives and is shifting constantly (Chua, Bhavnani and Foran, 2000). As discussed earlier, the devastating destruction of native lands through economic development projects placed a strain on Indigenous people who have long relied heavily on the forest for many purposes. Thus, it is of critical importance to understand how development projects have influenced the lived realities of Papuan culture. Given how women, noken and the forest are all inextricably linked, the WCD framework is ideal for gaining insight into these complex connections.

METHODS

This study draws from a WCD framework and thus centers the experiences of Papuan women. Special attention is devoted to an examination of their agency, specifically exploring how Papuan women exercise power in their circumstance. Thus, Indigenous women respondents are situated as epistemic agents, uniquely imbued with specialized knowledge of their own realities. Their identity as the original inhabitants of the land comes with lived experiences and an expertise to delineate contemporary issues. As credible experts of their own lived experiences, the voices of Papuan women are prioritized over research about them produced by other groups.

The principal investigator (PI) is a native of West Papua from the Merauke Regency. Her understanding of the culture as an insider/outsider was advantageous to this study because familiarity facilitated trust. A sensitivity to the women and culture, as well as an understanding of multiple languages and local dialects benefitted this study as interviews were conducted in three different languages. Most interviews were in Bahasa Indonesia or translated into Bahasa prior to English translation. Each interview took a significant amount of time. Also, the PI was able to engage in various tasks while conversing with the women. Given the political climate, the ability to blend in and gain trust was paramount.

Respondents

Data for this study are taken from a larger case study evaluation of market women in the Merauke Regency. All except one respondent, a university student, are merchant women who make their living primarily from the market. Given the potential for putting women in danger, participants were not randomly selected. The market coordinator for Indigenous women traders was consulted and thus identified suitable candidates for in-depth interviews—women with at least five years of experience of selling in the market. Of the eight participants from the larger study, only four were Indigenous women and could speak to the history and the meaning of noken in the Papuan community. Participants were provided a recording of consent as well as information about the study translated in

Table 1. Coding Schedule

Themes	Codes
Access to raw materials/Deforestation	Depleting natural supply/deforestation; Gnetum Gnemon tree; distance; transportation and time
Noken/Men	Essential tool (fishing, gardening); ceremonial uses; clothing; expensive; rare; souvenirs; scarce; changing meaning
Women and traditional uses of noken	Conduits of knowledges (processing tree bark, knitting); ceremonial uses; cultural transmission; marginalized
Changing perceptions of noken	Youth; stereotypes/ primitive; unfashionable/unappealing; boarding schools (loss of interest and inability to knit)
Indonesian influence	Synthetic fabrics/material; western/fashionable bags; access to noken; and inappropriate appropriation

Bahasa, Indonesian and English. Given the principal investigator’s status as an insider from the region, some consent was given verbally and recorded in native dialects.

Interview Protocol

Four participants were interviewed face-to-face. However, some participants felt uncomfortable with engaging at the markets, or expressed an uneasiness, because of the need to sell goods. Two interviews took place offsite. Interviews lasted between 50 minutes and roughly 1 hour and 45 minutes. Due to the women’s workloads and daily chores, all but one of the four participants were interviewed while doing tasks in which the PI also participated. While the interview covered a range of topics related to Papuan merchants and negotiating market space, the questions specific to this study included: How does the noken resonate with Papuans and have perceptions of the noken and its availability changed? These questions serve to respond to the project’s hypothesis: The combination of economic development programs and expanding non-Papuan influence have disrupted access to cultural products, such as the noken, which in turn influence cultural practices and ability to transmit culture.

Analysis and Findings

As stated earlier, scholarship regarding Indigenous populations in West Papua is sparse in general. Hardly any research exists regarding the noken, therefore, an inductive analysis was deemed the most appropriate approach for analysing raw data. Data were then analyzed using an open coding procedure. Each interview was coded line-by-line to establish initial themes (Strauss and Corbin 1998). Five major themes emerged (see [Table 1](#)).

Access to Raw Material and Labor Process

Accessing and processing raw material used to make noken emerged as a major theme. Each participant began their accounts with knowledge of the Gnetum Gnemon tree, beginning with its location to how it is processed into yarn. This process was described as a labor-intensive tradition undertaken by Papuan women. Yet, the participants all spoke fondly of this procedure. Possessing this knowledge was considered of great value and a source of pride. This pride was also extended to the noken, especially in describing the noken as an essential tool—used in almost every aspect of Papuan life. Participants’ recollections of noken began as early as childhood memories of being carried in noken slung over their mothers’ backs or describing how women hang noken with their babies inside from tree branches to keep the child out of reach of wild animals while they work from morning to late afternoon. Two participants detailed this process and often referred to noken by their tribal term—*men*. Noken is made from tree bark of the Gnetum Gnemon tree which grows wild in the forest and mountainous area of Boven Digoel Regency. The leaves from Gnetum Gnemon are usually consumed as vegetables, or taken to be sold at the market, while the bark is taken to be dried for further processing. The dried tree bark is what is twisted into very thin yarn, and woven into noken. The women then take the leaves of the Gnetum Gnemon tree to sell at the market. Most women tend to do this work in their free time. Due to the lack of access to the forest for basic needs, many of the women’s priorities have shifted to having to depend more on selling local goods at the market.

Synthetic Materials

The prevalence of synthetic materials as a cheaper alternative to raw material emerged often and always in a disapproving manner or tone. Dometria and Theresia both expressed concern over women having to rely more heavily on synthetic materials because raw materials were too costly or too time consuming to obtain. Deforestation through economic development programs had placed a strain on women’s ability to access raw materials, therefore they turned to synthetic materials, which were more readily available through Indonesian merchants. Because women must travel long distances to the forest, they lacked the time and transportation to travel to places where the Gnetum Gnemon tree still grew widely. Synthetic materials were described as unnatural and lacking durability, but were cheaper substitutes.

Noken: Essential Tool, Cultural Identity, and Women's Work

Two participants discussed specifically the noken in relation to their tribe, the Muyu. The Muyu tribe inhabit an area near the country's border with Papua New Guinea. Noken from this region are called *men*. Two participants, Dometria and Theresia, from this region both expressed how the men is an essential tool used in almost every aspect of the Muyu's day-to-day tasks. Fishing (from rivers and swamps) and hunting are the main livelihoods for the Muyu. Theresia lives in the suburb of Merauke city and stated that noken (or men) represent the cultural identity of the Muyu tribe. As a little girl, she learned how to knit noken from her mother. She emphasized that noken are always identified with Muyu women because Muyu women have a huge responsibility to provide food for their families. Both Dometria and Theresia stated that the Muyu use traditional tools to conduct their daily tasks and men were one of the most important tools.

Women: Laborers, Conduits, and Guardians

Multiple references to women and noken were identified across all the participants' transcripts with women as: (1) possessors of this knowledge, (2) conduits of this knowledge, and (3) primary users of this knowledge. Theresia, however, referenced a special connection between noken/men and Muyu women:

The men (noken) is connected to women because of the domestic roles as family food suppliers. The main function of men is to carry our local products from garden—vegetables, fruits, tubers, and traditional medicines. We [Muyu women] use men to carry our babies when we garden.

As stated earlier, participants often spoke of the work required to make noken, especially from raw materials, as time consuming. However, the work was never described as burdensome. Rather, this knowledge was embraced as a special art form uniquely Papuan. A participant from the Muyu tribe spoke to the unique way Muyu women make noken stating that the Muyu women's way of making noken could not be replicated by Indonesian women or Papuan women from other tribes. Each participant spoke of the noken and the ability to make noken with immense pride.

Labor and Cost

Noken are becoming harder to acquire and thus more expensive. One participant articulated that although noken were a physical representation of Papuan culture, noken were becoming out of reach for many Papuans due to how expensive they had become:

In Merauke Regency, in the South of West Papua, the price of noken is very expensive because of the difficulty in finding raw materials. Raw materials are usually imported from Boven Digoel regencies, which is 450 km away from Merauke city by car. The price of one large-size noken is 300,000 rupiah (NZD \$32), and the small size is around 150,000-200.000 rupiah (NZD \$17-\$22). Most Papuans are not really interested to buy noken because of the price that is quite expensive. They tend to buy modern bags which are cheaper and more attractive.

Larger size men, according to Theresia, are used in several cultural ceremonies. For instance, engagement ceremonies require that a noken is used to collect all of the traditional goods requested by the woman's family. Money and tobacco/traditional cigarettes are usually put in smaller sized noken. Neka, a younger Papuan woman, wore a noken from her head with one small stone placed inside. Wearing the noken in this way, she explained, symbolized her engagement to be married and ensured that she would not be approached by potential suitors.

Inter-generational Changes

Youth, or the younger generation, emerged as a key theme. A strong Indonesian influence at the market has provided the younger generation more access to fashionable or modern apparel. Preferring modern bags to traditional bags, the youth, according to the participants, perceived traditional bags, like the noken, as "primitive." Two of the participants with daughters noted a shift in cultural values towards a growing preference for modern bags/purses. A preference toward more fashionable bags was an issue raised in association with a larger concern of a loss of interest in knitting among the Muyu's younger generation. Many of the young girls from this tribe were losing the ability to knit noken. One mother attributed the loss of this cultural skill to the establishment of boarding schools, which were located long distances from villages. Therefore, young girls must leave their villages and live at the schools. Cultural practices like noken knitting are not included in the school curriculum.

The Transmission of Culture

While education is encouraged for their daughters and the girls in the community, the participants feared that the younger generation were losing their traditional ways. Typically, Papuan women, in groups or one-on-one,

teach their daughters to knit because it is highly regarded as a form of education in terms of equipping girls with essential skills for the future. One participant said, “Woman’s ability to knit noken makes her more desirable for her husband and his family.” Knitting was not described as an oppressive task. Another participant recalled her struggle to spark a passion for knitting in her daughter because she felt she had to compete with the influences of city life and school activities (*e.g.* television, music, friends and school activities). Another participant, who was a university student, recalled being encouraged to knit noken, but lost interest soon after she moved to Marauke to study. Each time she returned to her village, she was reminded of this important skill and felt disappointed because of her inability to contribute to her tribe in this way.

Non-Papuan Influences

An acute awareness of a non-Papuan presence and influences permeated the participants’ discussions. Non-Papuan influences were often associated with stereotypes of primitive, Indonesian merchants and products, and the appropriation of Papuan goods, tools, and foods. One participant recalled an advertisement of Indonesian models wearing a noken inappropriately. Finding it disrespectful, she said the way it was worn changed the meaning of the noken altogether and was evidence that non-Papuans do not know Papuan culture, or respect it.

Seeing noken sold as souvenirs evoked feelings of concern. The same participant mentioned that she found it strange seeing noken sold as souvenirs especially when they are becoming too expensive for Papuans to purchase. She expressed that while noken belong to Papuans, they were losing them to outsiders. Moreover, Papuans are struggling to survive by producing their traditional bags. With access to the forest they could make enough for themselves and to sell. Now many Papuans are having to sell noken along the roadside, at markets and at airports.

Having relied for so long on the forest for basic foods and materials, some Indigenous women (*e.g.* Wamena) knit noken aimed at tourists in order to earn money. Most of the participants stated that the philosophy of noken is lost as these types of exchanges become the norm. The noken is increasingly becoming commodified. The women maintained that preserving the philosophy of the noken was equally as important as preserving the art form and its accessibility for Papuans.

DISCUSSION

The findings revealed that the noken is regarded by Papuans as a material representation of Papuan identity and culture. Participants only discussed economics when expressing dismay at how expensive it had become to travel to retrieve raw materials to make noken, which in turn led to the expensive costs of the traditional bag. Rather, emphasis was placed on the weakening significance of noken in Papuan culture brought on by a multi-exploitative process: marginalization, commercialization, and appropriation. Regarded as a longstanding art form that cannot be disentangled from Papuan identity, the noken was described as a tool that connected the people to the land and to each other. Thus, the skill of noken making was described as a specialized knowledge, a culture, a symbol, an art form, and an essential tool rooted in Papuan identity. This understanding is consistent with the WCD framework thesis that espouses culture as an entanglement that is essential to women’s lived experiences, and disconnected from economic gains. In addition to this understanding, the findings offer new insights into the use of noken as an instrument of resistance in response to marginalization.

For example, diminishing noken supplies were at the forefront of the participants’ articulations of concerns, which they linked to larger structural factors (*e.g.* deforestation and non-Papuan influences). The women described such losses as a threat to Papuan identity that intricately related to the ability of Papuans to maintain their way of living. Rebecca Tsosie (2017), discusses a similar trauma experienced by Native Alaskan communities (p. 361):

Following the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill, several Native Alaskan communities sued Exxon for the destruction of their traditional subsistence way of life caused by the massive oil spill. The federal court described culture as an ‘internal’ state of mind, which could not be destroyed unless a person lost the ‘the will’ to pursue a given way of life. The harm to the Indigenous group was multiplied, disrupting longstanding practices, customs and ceremonies that integrated the people with their environment. The people could not ‘live’ their culture or transmit it to their children because of the destruction of the environment and associated wildlife resources.

This example illustrates the power dynamics regarding who has the power to define culture. In this case, the United States federal court ruling defined culture as something solely from within the people and separate from the environmental resources that had sustained them for generations. Moreover, Native Alaskans were not extended the right to speak as agents of knowledge, but as people passively “having” culture. In the same way, Papuan women raise similar concerns about the future availability of the noken for customs, practices, and ceremonies. More importantly, participants discussed the essential role of Papuan women as conduits of this

knowledge. But like the example, it is not knowledge that is recognized as deserving protection (Tecu, 2017). Therefore, Papuans experience a certain harm that results from their diminishing ability to live out their culture.

Within the context of coloniality, stereotypes have been used to create and reinforce racial hierarchies, especially as they relate to the social construction of Indigenous peoples as “others” (Cooper, 2012; Norris, 2017; Smith, 2012; Tsosie, 2017). Papuan women discussed that their goods compared to those of Indonesian merchants are deemed as “traditional” as opposed to the more modern or Western items sold by Indonesian merchants. The Indonesians brought with them a market economy that has replaced the barter economy that once organically unified Papuan culture. Through this process, a power-elite emerged, whether by default or design, a power imbalance in which Papuans have found themselves at the bottom.

Often deployed to reinforce racial hierarchies, negative stereotypes are intricately linked to the control of knowledge and are a form of racism on which coloniality hinges (Cooper 2012). As Mignolo (2000) and Maldonado-Torres (2004) argue, “through the coloniality of power matrix, the development of a racial classificatory system and the control of knowledge, is pivotal to coloniality” (as cited in Cooper 2012, p. 69). This study reveals that Papuan women do possess a specialized unwritten knowledge that has been relegated to the margins and excluded within broader mainstream society. Cooper (2012) explains this process as an aspect of coloniality wherein Indigenous people are considered to have *culture* as opposed to *knowledge*.

Papuans, especially the women, are unable to compete with foreign labor (Forest Peoples Programme, 2011). Modernity, as experienced by Papuans, has disrupted and destroyed longstanding cultural practices that have sustained Papuans and forced them into a situation of dependency on a foreign way of life. Furthermore, as economic development projects have marginalized and alienated Papuans through the lack of employment opportunities (Stott, 2011), many Papuans are left without proper knowledge and skills in modern agriculture. As a result, Papuans are having to rely more on the market. Adapting to so-called advancements requires new skills and access to decision-making processes that will facilitate access to the necessary knowledge. For the most part, Papuans have been locked out of this process and thus inhibited from achieving economic mobility (Stott, 2011). Furthermore, massive deforestation has made it impossible for many Papuans to return to their traditional ways of sustaining themselves.

The stigma associated with the noken is one example of the marginalization Papuans experience. Noken’s stigmatization as a “traditional” artefact is reinforced through the bags becoming tokenized as a souvenir and disrespectfully appropriated by non-Papuans as a “primitive” type of attire. While the noken has been officially designated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a world cultural heritage (Dekme 2015), Papuan women feel powerless to contest various types of mistreatments. Smith (2012, p. 61) uses the concept of “positional superiority” to describe how the imposition of knowledge and culture were as much a part of imperialism as the extraction of raw materials and the exertion of military strength. This concept also provides insight as to why the inappropriate appropriation of noken have not been charged as an offense against Papuan culture despite Papuan claims of mistreatment. This illuminates Papuans’ strategic position in terms of their distance from social and political power to protect and validate their ways and knowledge.

Competing influences from non-Papuan culture/groups have come to dominate Papuan social settings. Massive deforestation has given rise to distinct forms of marginalization that have constrained Papuan cultural practices. Thus, Papuan knowledge has come to hold new meaning in response to a shifting social context. This paper argues that Papuan knowledge, specifically the noken, is in many ways of increased value. For example, noken knitting was once viewed as a common practice embedded in Papuan culture. Now that this cultural art form is threatened, it has taken on new meanings. Papuans’ use of this knowledge has extended beyond the practice of a cultural art form to the enactment of a resistance knowledge project. Papuan women exercise their agency by resisting negative labels that seek to exclude their cultural practices as knowledge and by embracing their role as conduits of Papuan knowledge.

CONCLUSION

This study addresses the overall silence around the contemporary experiences of Papuan women. It provides insight into the realities of their marginalization through an examination of the noken. Using a Women, Culture and Development framework, this study, reveals that the noken resonates in the consciousness of Papuan women as a longstanding art form integral to Papuan identity. A combination of factors including limited access to raw materials, harmful appropriations and influx of goods sold by non-Papuans have negatively influenced access to, and the perceptions of, the noken. This study argues that this type of damage is rooted within the broader matrix of coloniality. From this perspective, important questions around the control of knowledge, and what constitutes legitimate knowledge deserve further investigation. If interventions are to be established to expose and rectify harmful practices impeding Papuans from living and reproducing their culture, Papuan voices must be elevated to a level of salience wherein their knowledge is accorded respect and legitimacy. It is only from this basis that

effective strategies can be formulated to protect Papuan knowledge, which will in turn safeguard Papuan identity. The intricate ways Papuan customs, environment, and goods are intertwined are essential to the production and reproduction of Papuan identity.

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Between Belonging and Longing: Why do Young Rural-urban Migrants Leave Their Places of Birth, What Do They Leave Behind, and Do They Consider Moving Back?

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ABSTRACT

This study is based on telephone interviews in 2012 with 25 arbitrarily chosen adolescents between 20-27 years who had recently migrated from the rural Danish municipality of Lemvig, supplemented with results from a 2011 survey ($n=120$). Within a theoretical framework of belonging (Cohen, 1982) combined with Bourdieu's (1986) general theory of the economy of practices, the purpose is to shed light on three, interrelated questions: *Why do young rural-urban migrants leave their places of birth, what do they leave behind, and do they consider moving back later in life?* The new empirical contribution is to shed light on the latter, important question, which has been somewhat overlooked within rural studies. In line with previous studies, adolescents' decision to move was often complex, although achieving legitimate cultural (educational) capital in urban areas was crucial. However, most of them still felt a strong emotional attachment – belonging – to their local area, mainly to family, friends, local community and place. In what regards potential return migration, difficulties in getting a good job and thus securing good incomes and social recognition seemed to be the main obstacle for moving back. Hence, many seemed trapped between two 'competing' sets of emotions – security/warmth and personal pride/ambition – that is, between their *belonging* to a specific local field characterized by 'survival' networks (Corbett, 2013) and their *longing* for a non-specific, other place where they could achieve, and capitalize upon, highly state recognized forms of educational and symbolic capital targeted at the national 'field of fields' (cf. Hektner, 1995; Johnson et al., 2005; Bourdieu, 2014). At the macro level, the rural-to-urban migration trend mirrors an unequal distribution of legitimate symbolic capital in space, i.e. the rural-urban power divide, reinforced by a negative discourse of rurality (Winther and Svendsen, 2012).

Keywords: young rural-urban migrants, relocation motives, return migration, belonging, emotions, bourdieueconomics, forms of capital, rural Denmark, discourses of rurality

INTRODUCTION

Young Rural-to-urban Migration

Lemvig municipality in Denmark is categorized as one of the 16 most peripheral rural municipalities in Denmark. The municipality is known for its beautiful natural amenities and, due to its location at both sea and fjord, it markets itself as the land of wild sea water, fluffy hills and quiet fjord water (VisitNordjylland, 2017). Although rich on beautiful nature, cheap houses, peaceful surroundings and strong local communities, the municipality has suffered from a demographic decline during the last couple of decades. Thus, in 1993-2018 the

decline amounts to 16,9 %, in comparison to the national average of the 16 so-called ‘outskirt municipalities’ of 7,4 %. In contrast, the average of all 98 Danish municipalities shows an *increase* of 11,6 % and, in the capital of Copenhagen, of 31,6 % during this period (Municipal Statistics, 2018). A major part of Lemvig outmigrants are young people who, as often, never return to their native places (Svendsen, 2013).

This mirrors an international trend of adolescents moving to urban centres in search for good jobs and educational possibilities, as reported from e.g. Australia (Argent and Walmsley, 2008; Gabriel, 2002), Uganda (Barratt, 2012) and Ethiopia (Bezu and Holden, 2014), the US (Hektner, 1995), UK (Jamieson, 2000; Giddings and Yarwood, 2005), Ireland (Ní Laoire, 2000, 2007); Scotland (Stockdale, 2002a, 2002b; Jones, 1999, Lumb, 1980), Estonia (Nugin, 2014), Norway (Wiborg, 2004), Sweden (Gustafsson, 2001), Iceland (Seyfrit et al., 2010), Poland (White, 2010), Russia (Eastman, 2013), China (Hu, 2012), as well as rural Europe in general (Champion, 2012).

On this background it is understandable that, in the Danish public debate, rural-to-urban migration has for long been seen as a growing problem (see e.g. Ministry of Housing, Urban and Rural Affairs, 2013; Christensen, 2017). This tendency has been reinforced by a municipal reform in 2007, reducing 270 municipalities into 98 and 13 counties into 5 regions and leading to centralization of many public services as primary schools (Svendsen and Sørensen, 2016) and hospitals (Danish Ministry of the Interior and Health, 2005). As a result, new terms have popped up in the debate, such as ‘A and B Denmark’, ‘The skewed Denmark’ (*Det skæve Danmark*) and ‘Broken Denmark’ (*Det knækkede Danmark*). Likewise, we see an increasing popularity of negative terminology for rural Denmark, such as ‘Outskirt-Denmark’ (*Udkantsdanmark*), ‘The peripheral areas’ (*Yderområderne*), ‘Peripheral municipalities’ (*Yderkommuner*) and ‘The Rotten Banana’ (*Den rådne banan*). Particularly, the term ‘Outskirt-Denmark’ has become widespread in the Danish media from 2010 and onwards (Winther and Svendsen, 2012).

The Choice between ‘Old’ and ‘New’ Forms of Capital

A common trait in most of the abovementioned, international studies is that many adolescents have to make a difficult and often painful choice: Should they stay and invest their energy, money and life-time in building up resources in the local area, or should they do so at another place, often from scratch, and leave important resources behind? What however appears less obvious in the literature is that this in fact is a *double choice* for most outmigrating adolescents. Hence, after a certain period of time, they have to decide whether they should remain at the new place (or another place far from home) and use their achieved resources there, or return home to their native place and make use of them there.

In this paper, I will argue that these decisions and considerations best can be analysed by combining *belonging* (Cohen, 1985; Corbett, 2013) within a sociology of emotions (Barbalet, 1998; Bericat, 2016) with more rational – or reasonable – investment strategies in *forms of capital* within economic sociology (Bourdieu, 1986; Waldstrøm and Svendsen, 2008). In all instances, however, emotions play a crucial role when understanding the adolescents’ behaviour. Thus, the *local* setting is associated with a warmth and security that for the adolescents are difficult to ‘sacrifice’, while the extra-local setting is associated with opportunity of upwards social mobility and therefore feelings of ambition, personal pride, high self-esteem and social recognition that stretches beyond the local community.

Hence, translated into the capital theory framework (see also Section 3 for definitions), out-migrating adolescents are leaving behind forms of capital at their native place. These mainly consist in cultural and social capital in the form of useful and, within the local field, capitalizable local knowledge and local networks consisting of family, friends and connections. However, decisions of staying, leaving or returning do not only include considerations of leaving behind a stock of ‘primary’ or ‘childhood’ social capital, but also withdrawal from a specific community and place. Hence, the young outmigrant has to – fully or partially – give up a former identity based on *attachment* to a specific place and social group, something that may be hard to build up at another place. Therefore, building up new capital at the new place will as often imply costs – a trade-off the adolescents can barely escape.

In this way these young people become ‘trapped’ between two sets of ‘competing’ emotions, namely their need of warmth, security and predictability and their ambition to become successful in the eyes of the world. On the one hand stands their *belonging* to a specific socio-space characterized by rich and durable ‘survival’ networks (Corbett, 2013), where capitals are directed towards a local/regional field; on the other hand their *longing* for a non-specific, other place where they can get a career and increase cultural, economic and (highly legitimate) symbolic capital that can be used in the national ‘field of fields’ (cf. Hektner, 1995; Johnson et al., 2005; Bourdieu, 2014).

Although a bit risky, one may expect talented youngsters to go to the big cities in order to accumulate, and harvest from, the most valued and, hence, most prestigious forms of capital – or mostly state legitimized, that is. Such state guaranteed capital can be immediately and universally applied within the *field of fields*, which by Bourdieu (2000: 240) is seen as “the central bank of symbolic capital”, systematically attributing or *not* attributing social recognition to citizens and thereby maintaining relations of (apparent) necessity. As noted by Engler (2003: 6), the state here seems to take over “religion’s pre-modern role as primary agent of consecration” by “legitimizing social

distinction”. And accumulating highly prestigious capital is indeed what many young people do. This allows them, ultimately, to harvest highly valued symbolic capital thanks to their educational capital, titles or, simply, urban dialects and manners – a kind of super symbolic capital.¹ Hence, and as mentioned above, the adolescents’ attraction to the urban metropolises rather than to a quiet country life has *also* something to do with a skewed power balance between the rural and urban population. Not surprisingly, such urban hegemony has led to negative discourses of rurality, further devaluing rural symbolic capital (Halfacree, 1995; Leyshon, 2008; Cruickshank et al., 2009; Winther and Svendsen, 2012; Corbett, 2013; Nilsson and Lundgren, 2015).²

The Three Research Questions

On this background the contribution is not only – in line with previous studies – to give an insight in Danish rural adolescents’ relocation motives and their attachment to their birth place, but also *try to understand their reasons for considering, or not considering, to return to their native place*. Using the case of a Danish outskirts municipality, the purpose of this paper therefore becomes to shed light on the following three, closely interrelated questions:

Why Do Young Rural-urban Migrants Leave Their Places of Birth, What Do They Leave Behind, and Do They Consider Moving Back Later in Life?

Apart from the combined Belonging and ‘Bourdieuconomics’ approach (sociology of emotions ‘married’ to economic sociology), the new empirical contribution is to shed light on the latter, important question, which has been rather overlooked within rural studies. Results are reported from two studies in the municipality of Lemvig, namely a 2011-survey study comprising 120 outmigrants, and a telephone interview study in November 2012 with 25 young, arbitrarily chosen outmigrants between 20-27 years of age.

Outline

After the literature review in Section 2, definitions of theoretical key concepts are presented in Section 3. The study design is further described in Section 4. Section 5 presents main results from the survey. Results from the interviews are then presented in Section 6, leading to a model figure that summarizes the main findings. Finally, Section 7 concludes.

LITERATURE REVIEW: YOUNG RURAL-TO-URBAN MIGRANTS

As mentioned, the literature clearly shows that the concentration of young people in urban areas is a megatrend. Moreover, studies show that most rural adolescents carry with them an attachment to their native place, even though they do not choose to live there (e.g. Glendinning et al., 2008; Leyshon, 2008). This sense of belonging (Cohen, 1982, 1985) often consists of a combination of place attachment and social belonging (Pollini, 2005). In Denmark, several rural-to-urban migration studies have been done (e.g. Svendsen, 2003; Thuesen, 2012; Nørgaard, 2012). However, to my knowledge my study is the first one that focuses on young rural-to-urban migrants’ relocation motives and their considerations about moving back.

To get a sense of the magnitude of the problem, I will first briefly review a couple of studies that have investigated consequences of youth migration for local communities, followed by a review of studies of rural adolescents’ relocation choices or, more specifically, their dilemma between belonging and longing.

The Flight of the Young: Overall Consequences for the Communities

In a more overall perspective, outmigration of adolescents has serious impact on rural communities. For example, a study from Australia (Argent and Walmsley, 2008) sheds light on the consequences for local social networks. Using demographic data from 1976 to 2001, it analyses recent trends in youth (15 to 24 of age) rural-to-urban migration. Combined with a review of existing literature on the Australian case, it finds that huge outmigration among rural adolescents have severe social consequences for the single communities in the form of disruption of local bonds and, hence, social capital being destroyed. This leaves these communities in a vicious circle with dying associational life, economic decline, drain of women and, overall, social fragmentation and isolation (op.cit.: 148).

¹ It seems that the trend is that symbolic capital becomes increasingly connected to urban centres all over the world to the degree that a citizen living in a remote area, as a result of symbolic violence, would be ashamed of admitting to strangers his or her postal code.

² A tendency that can be found in Australia as well (Gabriel, 2002) and, probably, in many other countries as well. This discursive impact on rural-urban relocation patterns has also been explored by Halfacree, who talks about the importance of the “social representation of the rural”, including amenities, relaxation and rich social life – a representation that is as often superseded by discourses celebrating urban life. He also points to Ray Pahl’s term “village-in-the-mind” in promoting migration to rural areas – something that an ‘anti-rural’ discourse might wipe out of people’s and/or youngsters’ heads (Halfacree, 1994: 184, 185).

An example of huge rural-urban exodus can be found in Iceland. In 2007, 70% of all rural adolescents wished to leave their home communities, while only 30% of urban youth in the only urban area of capital Reykjavik wanted to migrate (Seyfrit et al., 2010: 1211). As in the Australian case, rural areas tend to end up in a wicked circle, with loss of jobs and “female flight” (op.cit.: 1212). Furthermore, the study shows that decentralization in the form of the establishment of a large aluminium and hydroelectric plant in a sparsely populated rural area, as part of a regional development policy of getting more jobs to rural areas, did not significantly contribute to counter-act migration of rural youth.

Recently, such processes have been described as shocks that threaten the resilience of the local community (Wilson, 2012). Hence, depopulation may lead to extinction or renewal, understood as change into a new social system that is more socio-economically sustainable.

The Dilemma between Belonging and Longing

Belonging

As mentioned above, many studies show that modern young people find themselves in a dilemma between emotional attachment to their home place (belonging) and a wish to have careers outside the local community (longing).

Cohen’s (1982) classical study based on ethnographic fieldwork in six local communities in the island of Whalsay, the largest of the Shetland islands in Scotland, shows that rural communities are demarcated symbolically by e.g. body language, dialect and culturally specific jokes, forging strong local identities. They feel a belonging, in opposition to hegemonic identities (such as English), to which locals – including many young people – feel alienated and, besides, from which they actively try to distance themselves symbolically and in practice.

According to Cohen, the sense of belonging to a community and having a community identity is transcultural and transhistorical, that is, not only belonging to ‘traditional’ non-western societies. It roots in a continuous “boundary maintenance”, where the symbolical construction of group boundaries “creates a sense of belonging, of identity – and, by the same token, of difference from others” (Cohen, 1985: 53).

Longing

Compared with Cohen’s study, the dilemma between belonging and career is much more dominant in Hektner’s (1995) survey study from three midwestern school districts in the US ($n=918$). In the literature, she finds that the main explanation of why rural adolescents leave is an ambition of upward mobility, however many only make this decision reluctantly (op.cit.: 4). Adolescents do not leave due to strong family and community ties, while many of those with strong place attachment, who leave nevertheless, continue to feel a psychological bond with their home community (ibid.). Her own survey also shows that, among adolescents, an inner struggle is taking place between their inclination to “pursue educational and career goals” and “living close to family” in the local community (op.cit.: 11). The two wishes are described as “two mutually incompatible wishes”, something that may lead to anger, not least among adolescent males (op.cit.: 12). Basically, the choice is between “moving up” socio-economically or lowering educational and career ambitions. In this sense, “moving up” will imply “moving out” (op.cit.: 3, 5).³

Using data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, interviews, focus groups and surveys, Alston (2004) finds that the loss of adolescents in Australian rural communities – and the particularly great loss of young women – is due to push effects such as fewer full-time jobs, especially within the agricultural sector, combined with a shrinking public sector in these areas and that many youngsters find that ‘nothing ever happens’. Together with the wish of further education (pull effect), this contributes to drive youngsters away from their native places, often meaning the “death of country towns” (op.cit.: 303). Many young outmigrants were however still strongly attached to their native places, revealed in statements like “‘I know it’s a bit of a bumhole, but it’s just good!”, “This is my home. [But] you don’t want to be a checkout chick all your life” and “It’s like the next step – you leave school, you go away” (ibid.). Youngsters who did not out-migrate tended to be more vulnerably, risking unemployment and social *déroute* (op.cit.: 310). Alston concludes that providing “real options for rural young people is one of the most effective areas in which to start this support [of rural revitalization]” (op.cit.: 311).

Providing real options for rural young people is one of the most effective areas in which to start this support.

The dilemma is also confirmed in several other, recent studies. For example, a study based on 50 interviews with Norwegian university students reveals that many adolescents born in rural communities feel a strong attachment to “factors such as nature, kinship, social class and lifestyle” (Wiborg, 2004: 429).

³ In this context, Hektner mentions Sargiani *et al.* (1990) who find that – seen from the perspective of the leaver – “the positive wish to stay in the community with family and friends may also become a negative pressure for those who must leave to attain their goals” (Sargiani *et al.*, 1990 cited in Hektner, 1995: 3). Hence, strong local ties can become a hindrance for careers.

Jamieson (2000) conducted 45 interviews with young people in the border region between Scotland and England and found strong attachment to the home area, however dependent on social class. That this attachment roots back in early childhood is shown in a survey study ($n= 4100$) including rural adolescents from Scotland, Norway and Sweden (Kloep et al., 2003). It reveals that stayers have the lowest academic ambitions, however at the same time they hold the lowest mean depression scores (Kloep et al., 2003: 106). This confirms other studies showing that generally, in EU countries, life satisfaction is not lower among the rural population, in fact slightly higher (Sørensen, 2014). Furthermore, in the Kloep et al. (2003) study, 80% of the sample consisted of stayers and returners, who generally had positive perceptions of rural life and felt themselves well integrated in local communities. Only 20% hated rural life and never would choose to live their lives in their rural native places.

Similar to the abovementioned studies, Stockdale's (2002a) study of outmigration from rural Scotland describes rural youth in a dilemma, however few adolescents here have problems with deciding whether to stay or leave. This is due to "the expectation that they would one day leave their home community" (op.cit.: 60). Further key findings from this study that comprises 212 survey respondents and 25 qualitative interviews are that rural adolescents primarily leave for educational and employment reasons, that family and social networks have importance for choice of first destination with students on the whole "following the herd", outmigrants regularly meet with others from their home areas and, finally, the importance of family and social networks tends to gradually decline (op.cit.: 61).⁴

To sum up, we see that most adolescents leave their communities, at least the most resourceful, due to ambitions of achieving cultural (educational) capital and economic capital, that is, good incomes due to educations/forms of knowledge that are highly recognised and valued by the state. They however most often do so reluctantly, knowing that they will lose valuable 'local' social capital, in the form of friends and family, and perhaps also, by them highly valued nature assets. In a way, they have to sacrifice their belonging to a community for the longing for upward social mobility – something that also becomes evident in my study.

THEORY

Making Careers: Achieving Forms of State Legitimized Capital

A General Science of the Economy of Practices

How do people mobilize resources in order to make a career? Within recent economic sociology, scholars have increasingly conceptualized this as people's ability to cultivate, build up and apply forms of capital (Coleman, 1994; Swedberg, 2011). This is in line with Bourdieu's (1979a, 1979b, 1986) seminal idea of a "general science of the economy of practices". This framework has also been used within rural studies (see e.g. Svendsen and Sørensen, 2007; Bosworth and Turner, 2018) and is relevant in the study of young out-migrants by directing focus towards which forms of capital these adolescents value mostly, in an explanation of why they move and whether they consider turning back.

The capital theory – by some termed Bourdieconomics (Svendsen and Svendsen, 2003) – points at the existence of both material and immaterial forms of capital (economic, cultural, social, symbolic), i.e. accumulated human labour that is transferred through history in things or bodies (Bourdieu, 1986: 241). Unlike what economists previously have done, these forms of capital should be analysed at the same level and not, for example, prioritizing/separating economic above/from cultural, social and symbolic. Similar to Polanyi's (1977) ideas that forms of economic integration – reciprocity, market exchange and redistribution – should be studied in a holistic approach as dynamic, time-space dependent and, at the same time, universal configurations, Bourdieu's vision was to "grasp capital and profit in all their forms and to establish the laws whereby the different types of capital (or power, which amounts to the same thing) change into one another" (Bourdieu, 1986: 243).

Field and 'Field of Fields'

Of course, capital does not exist in a vacuum. Rather, the forms of capital are only applicable within specific fields at the micro and macro level (e.g. political, juridical, literary, scientific, a field consisting of a business sector etc.), each following their own specific logics.

Bourdieu proposes an analytical definition of field as "a network, or configuration, of objective relations between positions objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (situs) in the structure of the distribution of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well

⁴ Stockdale's findings are in line with a previous study on young Scottish outmigrants. Jones (1999) reports on similar findings, however she stresses the impact of socialization and individual biographies. This approach can also be found in an Irish study, where conclusions are that motivations lying behind the decision to move away are complex and closely interlinked with a person's life biography and what is socially accepted in a local community (Ni Laoire, 2007).

as their objective relation to other positions” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 72). Hence, individual and group habituses are systematically linked to specific positions in fields in specific time-space contexts, enabling agents to act ‘naturally’ in accordance with the taken-for-given field rules (*doxa*), as well as negotiating, opposing and/or transforming these rules, and those individuals or organizations holding the largest amount of legitimate, field-specific capital being the most powerful agents. In this sense, “*a capital does not exist and function except in relation to a field. It confers a power over the field*” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2007: 101).

At the most general level, Bourdieu talks about the state as a complex *field of fields*, also termed a “field of power” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 56). Prevalingly a nation state, or field of fields, is governed by the political and economic fields and sub-fields and, as mentioned in the introduction, governing social distinction by, in the wordings of Bob Jessop (2015: 33), operating as “‘the central bank of symbolic capital’ in organizing other social fields, such as housing, education, marriage, public opinion, law and the professions”.⁵

When analyzing migration patterns among adolescents, it becomes relevant to include the *local fields*, that is, the local communities to which most adolescents feel a belonging; as well as the *field of fields* in the form of the state of Denmark. In this case, the state ostensibly operates as ‘the central bank of symbolic capital’ by guaranteeing the young outmigrants to the big cities – and especially those going to the universities – what I term ‘*super*’ *symbolic capital*, enabling them to fulfill their career ambitions (longing) and achieve universal social recognition. In the following, I will shortly define the forms of capital pertaining to a field.

Profits: Economic, Cultural, Social and Symbolic Capital

According to Bourdieu, the mutually convertible forms consist of three “fundamental disguises of capital”, namely economic, cultural and social (op.cit.: 243). If recognized within a field as legitimate, all three simultaneously function as symbolic capital, i.e., social recognition (prestige) and, hence, “legitimate competence” within this field (op.cit.: 245). However, at the same time symbolic capital functions to dissimulate power relations (“labor of dissimulation”), that is, euphemization and denial of economic interests (op.cit.: 243). Hence, symbolic capital should also be seen as a capital form *per se*. For example, due to historical socioeconomic conditions and discursive effects, urban identities are today automatically associated with high symbolic capital (power) compared with rural identities as, e.g., revealed in postal codes.

In what regards profits, *economic capital* will be defined as money or money like resources (e.g. stocks and bonds), that is, the most liquid and ‘crude’ form of capital, which – in certain time-space contexts – can be directly convertible to social recognition, i.e. symbolic capital (as is, for example, revealed in many novels, for example Dostoyevsky’s marvellous book, *The Gambler*).

Cultural capital will be understood in Bourdieu’s (op.cit.: 243-244) three-fold way, namely as consisting of invisible, permanent dispositions in the individual person, or habitus (embodied state), of humanly created objects such as books, instruments and machines (objectified state), and as educational qualifications such as academic degrees (institutionalised state). I will however only apply two sub-types of *embodied cultural capital*, namely educational capital, i.e. formal education (cf. economists’ human capital), and ‘primary cultural capital’, i.e. knowledge, norms, ways of behaviour learned informally through childhood and early adolescence.

Finally, by *social capital* is understood “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to (...) membership in a group (...) which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital, a “credential” which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word” (op.cit.: 248-249). Thus, social capital can be seen as a kind of master capital giving access to other people’s resources and, thusly, multiplying a person’s resourcefulness (for example a politician or a leader of a big company). Besides, power based on social capital tend to increase if, in the wordings of Burt (1992), social connections are diverse, non-redundant (in relation to career ambitions) and resourceful, and if the person in question finds himself/herself in powerful positions *between* resourceful networks (structural holes).

Feeling Accepted: Belonging

How do people fulfil their need to feel socially accepted? This dimension must also be included in order to properly understand rural adolescents’ location choices. The interviews indicate that they become very emotional when talking about their places of birth, including nature, friends and family and the local community. As argued by Barbalet (1998: 9) “emotion can be regarded as an outcome or effect of social processes [and is] in principle amenable to sociological examination and explanation”. In this perspective, emotion should be seen as a “social cause” that is necessary to include when explaining “the very fundamentals of social behavior” (ibid.). Hence, the individual (rational) decision process cannot be separated from emotional motivations and effects.

⁵ “At some point, he [Bourdieu] called it the “central bank” of universally accepted circulating “fiduciary” powers or values which, under those characters of officialdom and universality, are presented with the attributes of “divinity” or “nature”, and endows the political activity that founds them with the attributes of a “civil religion”” (Baños, 2017: 2).



Figure 1. Map of Denmark and Lemvig Municipality in the peninsular of Jutland, as well of the four largest cities in Denmark

This is closely related to a more recent research strands like studies within “emotional intelligence” (Goleman, 1996) and “emotional capital” (for a review, see Cottingham, 2016). The latter has, within the Bourdieusian capital framework, been defined as an embodied type of cultural capital, which denotes “one’s trans-situational, emotionbased knowledge, emotion management skills, and feeling capacities, which are both socially emergent and critical to the maintenance of power” (Cottingham, 2016: 454). Hence, emotions can be seen as productive, not least in our work life, as illustrated by the daily practices of nurses, reflecting Bourdieu’s notion of “feel for the game” (op.cit.: 466).

As already argued, in our rural local community context the emotional motivations of young outmigrants can appropriately be summed up in the term *belonging*, which links emotions to social and place attachment. It is here defined in accordance with Cohen (1985: 53) as the symbolical construction of group boundaries, which create “a sense of belonging, of identity – and, by the same token, of difference from others”. In other words, identity is construed in the perceived differences between, for example, rural and urban identities (dialect, body language, norms and values, humour, mentality), something that also became evident in my interview study.

This relativist and constructivist stance somewhat parallels Bourdieu’s notions of habitus and group habitus as well as the concept of emotional capital. However, unlike these concepts that are often linked to social class and work practices, “belonging” is directed to a specific understanding of an individual’s emotional attachment to a specific local community and place rooted in an identity position, which makes the individual capable of perceiving contrasting (competing) identities. The emotional content of belonging should here be seen as an effect of social processes in line with Barbalet, rooted in experiences during childhood and early youth. Moreover, in this light the adolescents’ career ambitions should not be seen as purely ‘rational’, but likewise driven by emotions like personal pride and a wish for a social recognition that reaches outside the local community.

In the following, Bourdieusian capital theory on the one hand is used to account for the ‘profits’ (in the broad sense of the word) that the adolescents hope to achieve by leaving, and where decision-making is closely connected to feelings of pride and extra-local recognition; and on the other hand Cohen’s concept of belonging to assess the significance of their, due to primary cultural capital, attachment to a specific local community and region, including their wish to return.

Table 1. Telephone interviews with young outmigrants from Lemvig Municipality, Denmark, November 2012. List of interview persons

Number/ Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Born in the Municipality?	Employment/ Study	New domicile	Remote- Near*
1. Mie	F	23	Yes	University student	Aarhus	Remote
2. Majken	F	23	Yes	University student	Aarhus	Remote
3. Nikolaj	M	23	Yes	University student	Aarhus	Remote
4. Flemming	M	23	Yes	University student	Aarhus	Remote
5. Kenneth	M	25	Yes	University student	Aarhus	Remote
6. Morten	M	24	Yes	University student	Aarhus	Remote
7. Anders	M	23	Yes	University student	Aarhus	Remote
8. Signe	F	23	Yes	University student	Aalborg	Remote
9. Majbritt	F	25	Yes	University student	Copenhagen	Remote
10. Cecilie	F	25	Yes	Nurse student	Aarhus	Remote
11. Nicoline	F	23	Yes	Physiotherapist student	Aarhus	Remote
12. Stine	F	24	No	Air traffic controller student	Aarhus	Remote
13. Sabrina	F	22	Yes	Business school	Aalborg	Remote
14. Silas	M	24	No	Kindergarten teacher student	Køge	Remote
15. Martin	M	22	Yes	Smith	Holstebro	Near
16. Lasse	M	25	Yes	Smith	Buur	Near
17. Paul	M	23	Yes	Carpenter	Sønder Rind (near)	Near
18. Jacob	M	25	Yes	Carpenter	Holstebro	Near
19. Tobias	M	23	Yes	Carpenter	Holstebro	Near
20. Laura	F	22	Yes	Professional bachelor student	Thyholm	Near
21. Benjamin	M	20	Yes	High school student	Holstebro	Near
22. Jesper	M	22	No	Translator student	Struer	Near
23. Helena	F	20	No	Unemployed	Favrskov	Near
24. Sara	F	25	No	Unemployed	Ringkøbing	Near
25. Palle	M	27	No	Unemployed	Holstebro	Near

* “Near” means a close-by and, in most cases, neighbouring municipality; “Remote” means a municipality far from Lemvig Municipality, all larger university cities (except from Køge).

STUDY DESIGN

Similar to Stockdale’s (2002) study, I have combined a questionnaire survey with a follow-up interview study (telephone interviews) in the municipality of Lemvig in the western part of peninsular Jutland. This is a part of Denmark that is characterized by small population density, few public services and quite bad infrastructure compared with most other regions in Denmark (Figure 1).

Questionnaire Survey

The survey sheds light on why the adolescents leave, as well as what they appreciate in the place where they grew up (most of them being born there as well). The questionnaire was developed jointly by employees at Lemvig Municipality and the author.

The survey was conducted as telephone interviews by a consultancy firm in May 2011 and included migrants who had moved out of the municipality during a period of two years. 120 valid responses were collected. The average age of outmigrants was slightly over 33 years, and the two largest groups were those between 19–24 (44% of the total number) and those between 25–35 (29% of the total number). Thus, near 3 out of 4 outmigrants were young people between 19 and 35, most of them born and grown up in the municipality.

What regards representativeness, the 120 outmigrants constitute near 14% of the average of the total number of relocations 2009–11.⁶ In the following, I will restrict myself to show the results of the two open questions that were relevant to the first research question.

Interviews with Young Rural Outmigrants

The purpose of the 25 interviews with randomly chosen outmigrants between 20–27 years of age was to shed light on both why they have left and whether they considered returning home. The average age was 23,4. Among the 25, there were 14 male interview persons (Table 1).

⁶ It may be added that the sample is relatively representative regarding to both age and gender. Thus, the average number of outmigrants 2006–12 in the 19–24 age group was 39%, compared to 44% in the sample. There is, however, a slight overrepresentation in the 25–35 group. There is a fairly equal share of males and females. Concerning education, most of the respondents have a general secondary education (37%) or are under secondary education (43%). One third grew up in the municipality. Almost 4 out of 10 were living with a partner and only 10% had children.

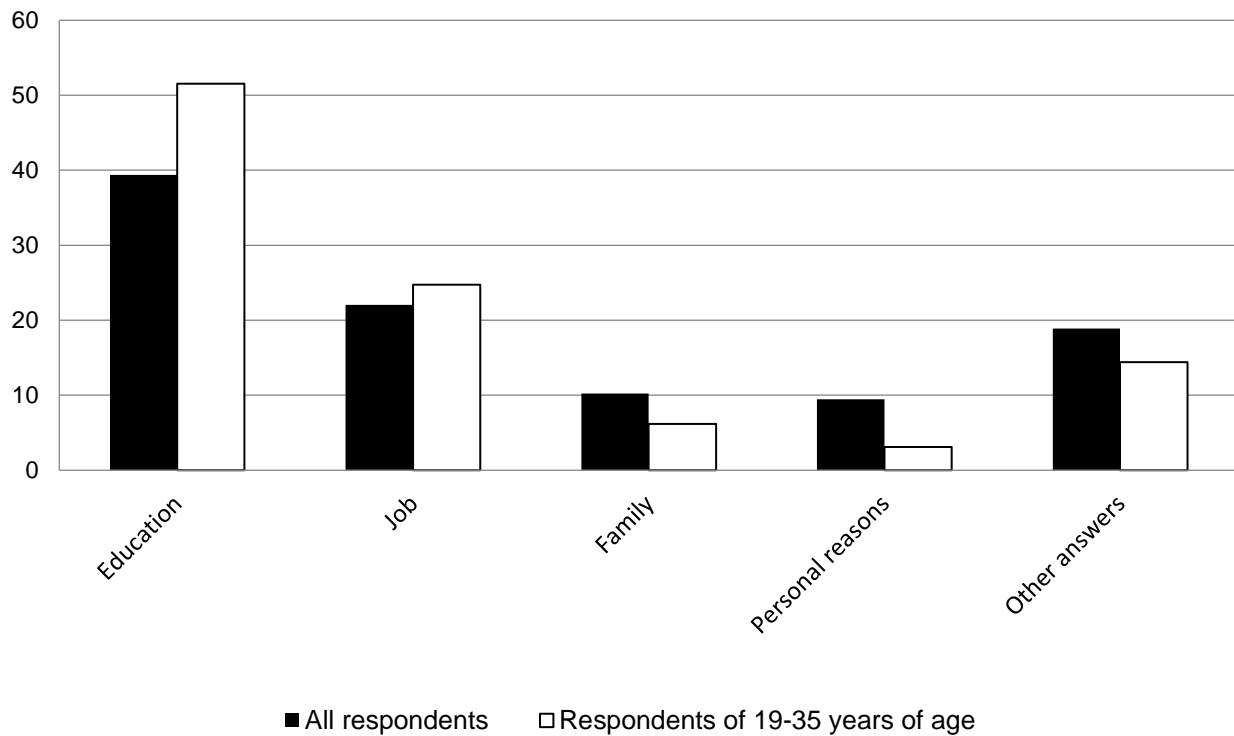


Figure 2. “What is the main reason why you moved to another municipality?” Percentage distribution of 127 answers from 120 outmigrants and 97 answers from 88 outmigrants of 19-35 years of age, 2011

The interviewees can be divided into ‘remote’ and ‘near’ outmigrants. The *near* outmigrants are the 11 adolescents who have moved to municipalities within the region (often neighbouring municipalities), which also means municipalities with no major urban centres. 13 of the 14 *remote* outmigrants are adolescents who have moved to large cities as Aarhus, Aalborg and Copenhagen in order to study, among them 9 are university students, see [Table 1](#).

Although I did not ask them about their family backgrounds, my clear feeling was that they belonged to different social classes – something I also noted in my diary.⁷ Thus, in line with the findings in Hektner (1995), Jones (1999), Stockdale (2002a) and Ni Laoire (2007) there were many signs indicating that the *remote* migrants with the most ambitious educational aspirations came from the most resourceful families, as e.g. expressed in sophisticated language, self-reflection, career considerations and ambitions, long term planning, long, eloquent answers, way of speaking, happy memories from their childhood, positive experience with school and high school, trustfulness, strong social networks and, overall, an optimistic world view, mental surplus and high self-esteem/self-assurance. This stood in contrast to the interviews with the *near* migrants, who exhibited much less enthusiasm (often even shamefulness) and a less optimistic world view, gave short, somewhat crude answers (often with low, husky voices), were more prejudiced and talked with a more pronounced regional dialect.

The interviews showed that these interviewees to a large extent are members of Lemvig networks – similar to the ‘native’ social networks in Scotland described by Stockdale (2002). Out of the 11 *near* outmigrants, we find 5 craftsmen, 3 who undertake short/medium length education, while 3 are unemployed. Besides having less educational ambitions, no *near* migrants were members of Lemvig networks in their new municipality.

All 25 follow-up interviews were conducted in November 2012 with interview guide. These semi-structured interviews lasted 20-30 minutes and were all transcribed. Lists of outmigrants were delivered from Lemvig Municipality. As a tool for analysing the interviews, the software program NVivo was used.

⁷ For example, I wrote on November 11, 2012: “I have noticed that the young students in Aarhus and Copenhagen are easier to access than the youngsters in the nearby area (Holstebro, Struer, Skjern etc.), moreover that they generally are more trusting, eloquent and reflective. Differences in social class? Differences in life styles? Besides, the majority of students [remote outmigrants] stress that those who are ‘left back’ in the municipality have another life style or, rather, life *form* – something like spouse, children, orientated towards local issues. The students want something more with their lives.”

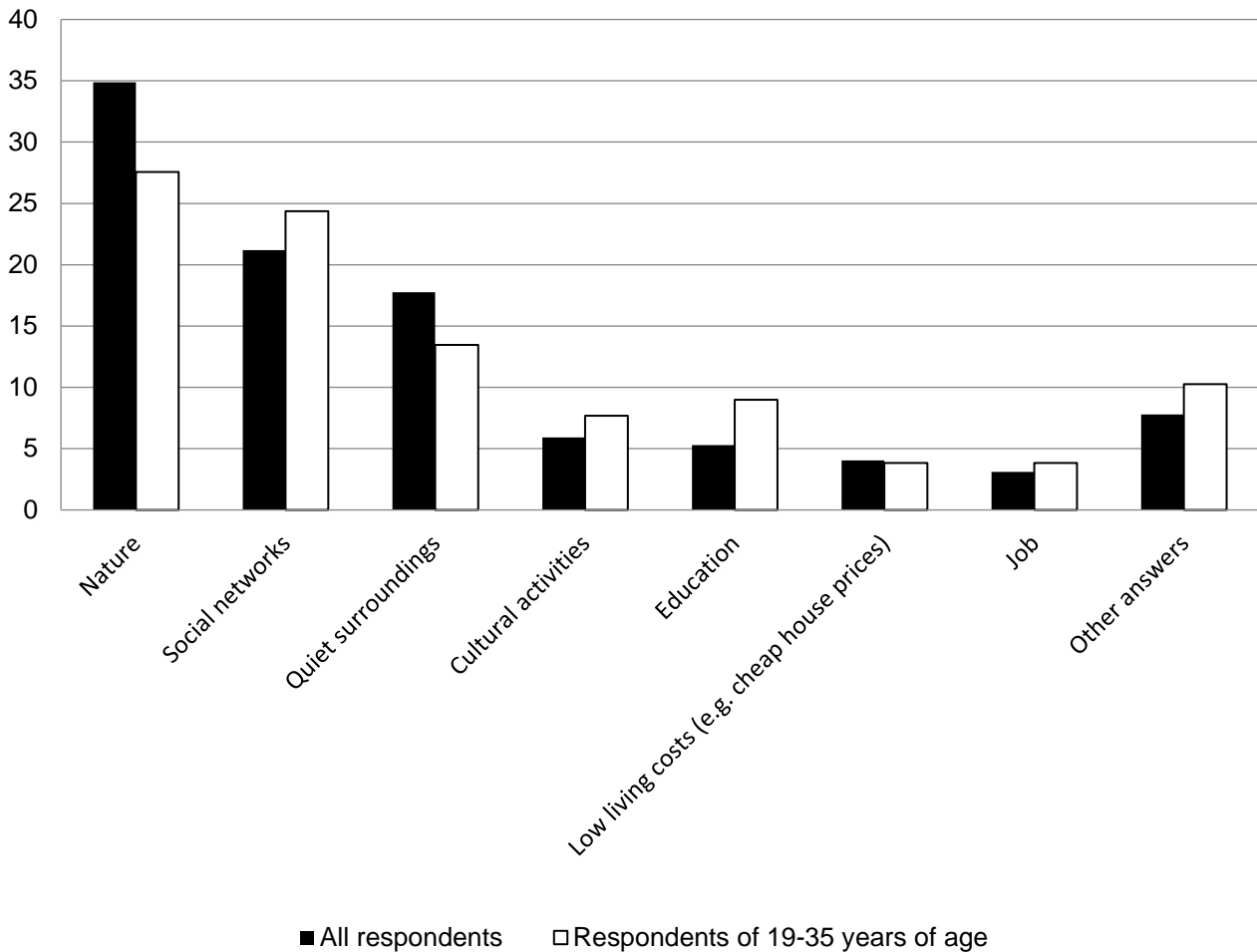


Figure 3. “What did you find most attractive in Lemvig Municipality?” Percentage distribution of 321 answers from *all* 120 outmigrants (total sample) compared with 156 responses from 88 outmigrants of 19-35 years of age, 2011

QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

Reasons for Outmigration: Educational and Economic Capital

Figure 2 shows the answers to an open question about what made people move out of the municipality. The answers were afterwards categorized by the author. We see that a little more than 60% of all answers were distributed on education and work. Moreover, when only selecting the 88 respondents within the 19-35 age group, educational reasons increased to 52% and job reasons to 25%.

Hence, cultural (educational) capital was sought for – not least by adolescent outmigrants – together with jobs and, presumably, improved incomes, that is, economic capital. Social capital, however, in the form of “family” and “personal relations” only played a minor role.

Rural Attractions: Social Capital and Nature

Overall, the survey showed that the 88 young migrants between 19-35 years did not feel bad in their previous municipality. Thus, to the question “To which degree did you feel settled down in Lemvig municipality?”, a little more than 90% answered that they had felt settled down well, while the remaining 10% did not.

Also the youngsters did not find Lemvig Municipality devoid of attractions. Here **Figure 3** shows that it is primarily “nature”, “social networks” (friends, family, acquaintances) and “quiet surroundings” that all 120 outmigrants see as the most important attractions in the municipality. As can be seen, the 88 young outmigrants in the sample are a little bit less appreciative of the municipality’s “nature” and “quiet surroundings” (place amenities), but more appreciative of “social networks”, “Education” and “Cultural activities”, although the latter two categories generally obtained low scores. Also notice that “Job” achieved the lowest score, about 3 percent.

Table 2. Answers from interviews with 25 young outmigrants, divided into 18 main categories, in total 565 words. November 2012. NVivo count

No.	Category	Quality	Number	%
1	Negative mentioning of rural life	Negative	88	15,6
2	Friends	Positive	83	14,7
3	Family, home and childhood	Positive	81	14,3
4	Primary school and college	Negative and positive	50	8,8
5	Job opportunities in Lemvig Municipality	Negative	38	6,7
6	Educational opportunities in Lemvig Municipality	Negative and positive	38	6,7
7	Nature in Lemvig Municipality	Positive	32	5,7
8	Quiet and secure environment in Lemvig Municipality	Positive	22	3,9
9	Local communities and neighbours in Lemvig Municipality	Positive	22	3,9
10	Regional cultural identity	Positive	18	3,2
11	Public transport in Lemvig Municipality	Negative	17	3,0
12	Sports activities in Lemvig Municipality	Negative and positive	17	3,0
13	Cultural activities in Lemvig Municipality	Negative and positive	17	3,0
14	Health service Lemvig Municipality	Negative	13	2,3
15	Housing	Positive	12	2,1
16	Western Jutland	Positive	11	1,9
17	Lemvig town	Positive	3	0,5
18	Negative mentioning of city life	Negative	3	0,5
	<i>In total</i>		565	99,8

Hence, the comparative advantages of a rural area such as Lemvig Municipality seem to be natural amenities as well as strong local communities, rich on dense social networks. Concerning adolescent outmigrants, the overall pattern is that they go for educational and economic capital and skip ‘primary social capital’ in their native places. However, they still feel strongly attached to these areas in terms of social attachment and, not least, place attachment.

INTERVIEWS

In the following I will try to shed further light on young outmigrants’ moving decisions, what they think they have left behind, and whether they consider moving back.

Content Analysis: Still Strong Belonging

To find out what the interviewees mostly spoke about, I have reviewed all the key words in the interviews and categorized them. I have also assessed each category as predominantly positive or negative towards life in a rural municipality as Lemvig, something which might also be impacted by the rather negative discourse of the rural areas in Danish public media in recent years (Winther and Svendsen 2012). **Table 2** shows the results.

As can be seen, top scorer is “negative mentioning of rural life” (more than 15% of all answers), that is, remarks that life here is dull, nothing happens, there are no opportunities here, etc. However, in top 10 then follow prevaillingly positively loaded words about “friends”⁸ (near 15%) as well as “family, home and childhood” (14%). Then follows “primary school and high school” (near 9%, with a mix of positive and negative words), lack of “job opportunities” in a negative sense (near 7%), “educational opportunities” (near 7%, mix of positive and negative words), followed by positive words about “nature” (near 6%), “quiet and secure environment” (near 4%), “local communities” (near 4%) and the “regional, cultural identity”, often expressed as the regional (western Jutland) mentality (little more than 3%).

The count of positively and negatively loaded words within 18 main categories makes it possible to form an overall picture of which perceptions these adolescents (and potential return migrants) have of life in the municipality. It turns out that 28% of all words, distributed on 5 categories, are *prevaillingly negative*. However, despite negative national media coverage, 50% of all words, distributed on 9 categories, are *prevaillingly positive*. This indicates a (still) strong social and place attachment and ‘primary (childhood) social capital’. Finally, the last 22% distributed on 4 categories contain both positively and negatively loaded words. In total, this indicates a fairly positive picture of the municipality/home area and, hence, a potential for return migration.

Longing: Reasons to Move

Not surprisingly, education was mentioned most often (15 times), followed by friends (9), lack of opportunities (7), to get away from home (5), due to the person disliking the municipality (3), due to job (2) and other responses (6).

⁸ This category also includes girlfriends/boyfriends.

Educational Capital

Concerning education, a typical answer came from a 23-year old engineering student in Aarhus, Anders: “Due to education, that’s the most important”. Anders grew up in Bøvling, a small, close knit local community in the municipality, which he still holds dear and is emotionally attached to. However, all his friends have also moved to Aarhus, and now he is meeting with them regularly there. Besides, a couple of interviewees said that they could not get the education they wanted in their home municipality, that is, in this case a push factor.

Social Capital in the ‘Luggage’: The Lemvig Colonies

Second to education, *friends* were mentioned as a major driver. This not least included the Aarhus ‘colonies’, that is, the Lemvig adolescents forming social networks in this city (see [Figure 1](#)). In fact, 10 out of 14 ‘remote’ migrants had become students in Aarhus. This clearly reflects the dominant trend among the Lemvig adolescents who have ambitions of undertaking higher education – in contrast to the seemingly less ambitious and/or resourceful young people who either have remained in the municipality (as was indicated by some of the interviewees) or have moved to neighbouring municipalities where they can find jobs without higher education. Hence, it may not be a coincidence that 3 out of 11 ‘near’ migrants were unemployed at the time of the interview.

As the interviews progressed, it became more and more clear that the ‘immigrant networks’ of Lemvig adolescents in Copenhagen, Aalborg and – not least – Aarhus were extremely important pull factors for new young outmigrants from Lemvig Municipality. It also became clear that these networks both had important social and economic functions. Thus, the adolescents are simply ‘bringing’ their social capital with them to the big university cities, not least friends from childhood and/or high school. This is to say that they start their life here without parents, but *not* from scratch, because very often they bring their oldest and closest friends with them.

No Opportunities to Build up Prestigious Capital

There were also several who would in any case had moved, because they thought there was “too little going on in the municipality” – something that, similar to lack of educational and job opportunities, pushed the young people out of the municipality. That there were too few opportunities for young people in their twenties was a recurring theme in the interviews. This also applies to cultural events. The abovementioned Anders explained: “There is not much for young people to do out there. There are not so many new initiatives, such as concerts. There are not many incentives for young people [to stay there]”. Another outmigrant, Flemming, who studied business economics at Aarhus University, and who was born and raised in the small village of Nissum, put it this way: “I wanted to live in a city to get a few more options. I was a little bit tired of the lack of opportunities – shopping and opportunities to meet new people”.

9 of the 14 ‘remote’ outmigrants mentioned at one point in the interview the lack of opportunities, while this only was the case with 4 of the 11 ‘near’ migrants. Hence, the tendency seemed to be that the most ambitious adolescents were in search for ‘opportunities’ (in the broad sense of the word) far away from home – a longing that appears much stronger than their belonging. This was not least the case in relation to education, wherefore these youngsters went to the largest university cities to build up, and capitalize upon, educational capital.

Thus we see that, for adolescents aiming for *upwards social mobility*, staying home with ‘no opportunities’ is equal to no capital building – or, at least no attainment of educational and social capital highly recognised and valid *outside* the local area within the field of fields, i.e. endowed with prestigious, state legitimized ‘super’ symbolic capital. Hence no development, no perspectives, no aspirations, no opportunities for ambitious, young people in such a rural area. This in stark contrast to what was the case in the old agricultural communities until the mid 1960s, where a prestigious career as often took place within the local area (becoming a prosperous farmer, a chairman of the local or regional agricultural society or farmer’s party etc., see Svendsen and Svendsen 2004).⁹

Forms of Capital Left Behind

Beautiful Nature, Family and Local Communities

When asked about good things in the municipality, *nature* was mentioned 15 times – e.g. the forest Klosterheden, the long North Sea beach, as well as the North Sea fjord. For example, 22-year old Laura from the village of Fabjerg, professional bachelor student in Thyholm, not far away from Lemvig Municipality, praised the forest, sea and fjord and, generally, the “many different, beautiful natural resorts”.

As often, their childhood was closely interlinked to nature, hence the strong longing of the nature of their birth place in accordance with an embodied, primary cultural capital. The already mentioned engineering student in

⁹ Regarding problems with the municipality, three interviewees mentioned that a reason to move away was ‘the local mentality’. One of them, a 22-year old business school student in Aalborg, Jane, was born and raised in the municipality, her parents were however ‘newcomers’. She started the interview by saying: “I don’t like the municipality”. She thought that she had been treated unfairly by the municipal employees. The municipality is “an ass basher” and Lemvig a “shitty town” as she bluntly put it.

Aarhus, Anders from the village of Bøvling, formulated it in this way: “Good things are nature and things like that, then, I lived in the countryside (...) sometimes I miss that. The North Sea and... less smog [laughter]”. Similarly, the beforementioned Flemming from Nissum missed some of the peace and quiet he had experienced in his childhood: “It was a lovely, peaceful area. It wasn’t a place where wild things were going on all the time. Well, that may sometimes be an advantage”.

The interviewees revealed even more emotions when they talked about the *local community*. This included friends for life, they had made in close-knit community villages. 13 times this was mentioned – with terms like “a cosy community”, as Morten, a 24-year old engineering student, describes his home town Lemvig. They often showed feelings of belonging to a particular regional identity, and a pride of that identity as well. Often words like “secure” and “safe” were used. Several interviewees also mentioned the close social solidarity between youngsters that had been built up in the high school in Lemvig. Signe, a 23-year old university student in Aalborg, who was born and grew up in the village of Nissum, came up with this typical statement:

It’s a secure little village [Nissum]. In the beginning [as a child], well, not much was happening, but we all thought it was great (...) I think I, as a child, had a really good social life, rich and easy to overlook (...) And when I went to high school, well I was in a really good class. I know everybody from that time, a really good thing. Socially, I have felt really well.

Villages such as Harboøre, Thyborøn and Bøvling were pointed out as particularly warm, close-knit local communities rich on bonding social capital. For example, asked about what the best thing in the municipality was, Flemming, one of the two engineering students at Aarhus University from Bøvling, exclaimed:

Local solidarity! It just happens that everyone knows each other in Bøvling. There are both advantages and disadvantages connected to that. That everyone knows each other gives you a lot of good contacts. And people really take care of each other.

Ten of the responses referred to friends and family. Several expressed that they missed their family – their parents and siblings. A typical response came from a 23-year old physiotherapist student in Aarhus, Nicoline, who was born and grew up in the village of Thyborøn. She spoke with a pronounced regional dialect and seemed to be profoundly influenced by a regional mentality and the concomitant values: “I think the best thing is that my whole family lives there. They were always so close to me when I grew up. To be so far from them is probably one of the hardest things to endure”. Hence, feelings of warmth and security characterized such answers and it was clearly not easy for the youngsters to ‘sacrifice’ their ‘survival’ networks.

No Native’ Capital: NOTHING Left Behind

As the content analysis testified, most young outmigrants have fairly positive feelings about their native soil, although – as already mentioned – ‘too little happens’, especially when you have surpassed your teens. That this is a really bad thing, increasing longing, was evidenced by 14 responses falling into this category. “There just comes a time when the cultural opportunities are too few”, said Signe, a 23-year old university student in the city of Aalborg. She added that her birth village Nissum is “ghost town number one”. Others pointed at the lack of cultural events such as music concerts.

The last answers relate to criticism of the municipality, including the regional mentality as such. Ten answers can be placed in this category. One is from 23-year old Mie – a woman, who was studying sports at Aarhus University. Mie was born and raised in Lemvig. She is a ‘local patriot’, who is still in close contact with former schoolmates and friends in the municipality. She said the following about living in a small place where everyone knows each other: “It can be a disadvantage if you have made yourself unpopular. The rumour spreads quickly. You can’t just go somewhere else (...) Everybody knows who you are”.

In contrast to fully integrated and ‘homegrown’ adolescents like Mie, stands the business school student in Aalborg, Sabrina. Here we have an example of one who feels that she never has been socially accepted. She told me that, several times during her childhood, she had to change school, because she became “doomed by the rumour” [sic]. She felt stigmatized and almost persecuted in a municipality she vehemently described as an “ass basher” [sic], even to this day. She summarized her critique thusly:

Oh, really, it’s nothing but a small compressed community consisting of cousins. It’s pure inbreeding. Most people are alcoholics and drug addicts (...) There are no activities for young people, therefore they can easily get into crime and drugs. When they are bored, it’s easier to find and rob a supermarket than to find a skateboard ramp.

The problems of drunkenness and crime were also mentioned by two other interviewees, neither of whom grew up in the municipality. For example, Silas had been member of a drinking society during his 6 months’ stay

in the municipality. He stated that: “Lemvig is a town of drunkards. There’s too much drinking. I myself have been a part of that”.

Finally, four mentioned poor public transport. For example, Mie told that she had been very dependent on her parents to drive her around when she was going to visit someone outside Lemvig – ‘taxi driving’ as she formulated it. Some also mentioned cut-downs in public service and job losses, including schools and hospitals. Anders from Bøvling put it like this:

There are so many public institutions that get closed down. This does not make it particularly attractive to be young there. For example, the public school I went to, it has also been closed down. It’s quite limited what has been left since then (...) For example, I went to many clubs as a boy – scouts and things like that. The scouts are gone now. There are fewer activities for young people today.

Considerations of Moving Back

The questions about what they liked and disliked about the municipality led naturally to a question about whether they had considered moving back. Of the 25 interviewees 11 answered yes and 14 no.

In general, it was difficult for them to clearly answer this question, they were searching for words, and most of them seemed emotionally afflicted when asked about this. In my diary (09-11-2012), I wrote: ”It strikes me how personal this question is. I expected it to be a neutral question – easy to answer with either a yes or a no. However, many of them appear somewhat taken aback and confused about this question (which might be understandable), but besides, also surprisingly strongly *emotionally* affected. And I seldom get a clear answer.”

Potential Return Migrants

Longing for the ‘mentality’, community life – and a good job!

Among those who seriously considered returning home was the 23-year old university student from Bøvling, Nikolaj, who was studying physics at Aarhus University:

Nikolaj: *Yes, I would! [like to return to Lemvig Municipality] Now that I live in Aarhus, I clearly perceive a difference in people’s mentality. And also, in the larger cities where people are more reserved and stick more to themselves, I often miss this special relation to the locals. In small villages you have a good relationship with the locals. It’s where you grew up that you know people best.*

Interviewer: *Do you socialize with people from Lemvig Municipality?*

Nikolaj: *Yes, in fact with one of my... actually two of my friends, I’ve gone to school with and been together with since kindergarten. One [of them] is fascinated by city life. The second would like to move back.*

Interviewer: *Do you think you know your old classmates better than your other friends?*

Nikolaj: *Yes, we know each other much better. Besides, we have another jargon, another way to talk and understand each other. My girlfriend, she is also from Western Jutland, she feels more at ease with her friends from her village, because they’re all a little more down to earth.*

Interviewer: *When would you like to move back?*

Nikolaj: *When I got my education and a job, so I can afford to buy a house and a car. House prices are another factor, you’ll get more for your money [in Lemvig Municipality]. I still have friends and acquaintances [there], but most of my network has moved to Aarhus or other cities. My whole family still lives there. Denmark is not that big, so it [geographical distance] has nothing to say.*

The quote contains a number of key themes that go through the interviews, in particular those with the university students: The attachment to the home community, building a social network of old friends from the municipality with whom you feel ‘in tune with’, the strong regional identity, the longing for the family, looking for the right job as a prerequisite for moving back – and the great attention to what your friends decide to do.

Also another Aarhus University student from Bøvling, 23-year old Anders, would consider returning home – *if the right job was there*. Hence, educational capital should *not* be wasted, but converted into economic and symbolic capital. Career in front of belonging: “Well, yes, I’d consider that. If I after having graduating could find a job in the area. It’s mostly my job that will decide”. He adds that most of his Lemvig friends in Aarhus share this opinion.

Apart from stressing the recurrent theme of giving one’s children as good and safe a childhood, the prevalence of a good job also reveals itself in the interview with the already mentioned 23-year old Mie from the town of Lemvig. Her somewhat surprising argument was that the more people crowded together in the big cities, the easier it would be for her to get her dream job in Lemvig:

Mie: *I don’t know [whether I will return], but I’ll not rule it out.*

Interviewer: *Why not?*

Mie: *Because, generally, I remember my childhood as a safe place [sic]. It was a good childhood. Most probably, it will be a good place for one’s kids to grow up. However, it all depends on where you get a job. I myself have good opportunities to get a job*

as a high school teacher [in Lemvig]. The others [Lemvig friends] are thinking in the same way. They think about it as a good place. Nobody says that they'll go back, however neither that they're ruling it out.

Considering moving back – but a little afraid of losing status

Unlike Mie, another young woman, Nicoline from the close-knit community of Thyborøn, studying physiotherapy in Aarhus at the time of the interview, was in no doubt that she would return home. This was especially due to the amount of network resources 'back home' and, in line with Mie's thoughts, the feeling of security:

Nicoline: *Yes! It's primarily because, if I myself am going to have a family, then I'd like to have my own family nearby. That's what I have experienced myself and I greatly appreciate that (...) and then appreciating that my children grow up in a small town – I've enjoyed that myself. I experience that my closest friends are those back from primary school, those who know me best, they're much closer than my Aarhus friends.*

Interviewer: *Do your friends also consider moving back?*

Nicoline: *Yes, but then we talk about all of us moving back – as there might be a downside by moving back...*

Interviewer: *Which downside?... [Silence] Low status?*

Nicoline: *There might be divergent views here. I'll not say that it cannot be accepted [moving home alone]. On the other hand, it's quite nice that we have a few friends who have stayed back home, it's kind of become a gathering place... when we go home for Easter and Christmas.*

Hence, after admitting this 'downside' Nicoline tends to say the unspeakable in her silence and avoidance of the topic – namely that, when outmigrated to a big city, it becomes a little bit disgraceful to return back home, as it implies a loss of a 'locational' symbolic capital, i.e. a social recognition that is attributed to people *solely* due to their having an address in a big city. As was also indicated in many of the other interviews, returning to your rural native soil is most often associated with *not* becoming a 'Danish success' and, hence, evokes emotions like shame, disappointment and defeat.

Bringing Your Friends with You: The Lemvig 'Colonies'

The networks 'brought along' from home – the Lemvig colonies – were mentioned several times in the interviews and gradually became a main theme. The pattern was that the adolescents were not isolated and alienated in the city, because they joined with friends they had known for most of their lives, and these social networks became a kind of substitute for the nuclear family. The oldest and biggest colony was in Aarhus, however colonies were at the time being established in two other university cities, namely in Aalborg and Copenhagen.

A typical representative of the Aarhus colony was the 25-year old nurse student, Cecilie, originally from the village of Thyborøn:

Well, I would not mind moving back to western Jutland. However, I have married one from [the nearby village of] Hvide Sande, then I might end up there (...) The local communities there are something special. If you yourself are going to have children, then there is the opportunity to give them what you got yourself. The thing about having friends from early childhood, and who follow you the rest of your life. And that's why, in Aarhus, we join each other. That's the way it is. Among fellow students, one might find new friends as well. And if it's someone who is really close, then she will be introduced to the others [laughter].

Overall it appeared that the outmigrants from the close-knit, neighbouring communities of Thyborøn and Harboøre were rich on 'ethnic' bonding social capital, both at their native place and their new place. Asked about whether her friends in Aarhus come from Thyborøn, Cecilie answered:

Cecilie: *Well, mostly from Harboøre, about 20 to 25... That's how it is, you don't do anything yourself...*

Interviewer: *What do you mean?*

Cecilie: *Well, that's because, if two [from the home area] are moving to Aarhus, then they'll join as well. We resemble each other, that's why...*

Interviewer: *Would you prefer to socialize with people you know beforehand?*

Cecilie: *Yes, I would. That [Thyborøn] is a village (...) where you find people with the same interests. People who are used to all that about living in a small local community... who care for each other in another way than people do in a big city (...) That's your approach to everything... that you **care**. Those [from Harboøre and Thyborøn], you can easily join with them. In Thyborøn all people know each other. Therefore, you simply have an inner obligation to take care of all the others. At least, that's how I think about it.*

As mentioned, apart from the most popular Aarhus colony (or colonies rightly speaking), an Aalborg and a Copenhagen colony were being established at the time. Majbrit, 25-year old student in public health at the

University of Copenhagen explained that she had preferred to go to Aarhus, because most of her high school friends had moved to that city. And she further explained:

Majbrit: *When I moved over here [to Copenhagen], there were only a couple [of Lemvig outmigrants]. But now there are more and more moving to Copenhagen.*

Interviewer: *Do you mostly meet with old friends from Lemvig Municipality?*

Majbrit: *It's a mix between people from Lemvig and people from my study.*

Interviewer: *Why do you stick to your old friends?*

Majbrit: *Well, there are some old friends, going long back [in childhood]... With the same jargon, the same humour.*

Interviewer: *How do you from Lemvig manage to stick together, how do you communicate?*

Majbrit: *Facebook! Primarily Facebook.*

A similar, new colony was being established in Aalborg, at the northern part of peninsular Jutland, as I was told by the 23-year old Signe, student at Aalborg University.

No Return! Or?..

Regarding the 14 who did not wish to return to the municipality, many emphasized the many opportunities they could only find in larger cities. A typical comment came from the 23-year old carpenter, Tobias, born and grown up in the small village Ferring: "I don't think [I'll return], no. It doesn't mean a thing to me. I just like to live in Holstebro". Another carpenter and 'near' outmigrant, Jacob, who grew up in the village of Gudum and also lived in Holstebro, gave a similar answer: "No, not at all! Well, I think it's just too far from everything! There are not many young people who move away from there (...) I don't have much affiliation there anymore."

Kenneth, 25 years of age and one of the two engineering students from Bøvling, was also very clear-cut in his answer: "Nay, it's wholly unattractive! There are not many attractive jobs. People with higher academic educations would most likely not go to such places. And if you as an employer want to start something up, you'll have problems with recruiting qualified personnel".

About half of the non-returners were less categorical. Many of them would not directly rule out that they would return to their region (western Jutland), although probably not to Lemvig Municipality. One typical statement came from Flemming, grown up in Nissum and at the time of the interview studying business economics at Aarhus University: "I don't know whether it exactly will be back to Lemvig Municipality, however it might well be something similar when I'm going to have family and children... a small village".

Another good example is the aforementioned 23-year old university student in Aalborg, Signe. At the time of the interview she was evidently sad, complaining of her cold concrete apartment in Aalborg – and in general missing nature, family and friends.

Signe: *Uh... yes, well, not exactly... Well, at least I've considered moving to the countryside. But whether it should be Lemvig... Well, it was a good childhood, so in that sense it's a good municipality. But there are those years between 15 and 30 when one definitely doesn't want to stay there.*

Interviewer: *Why have you considered moving to the countryside?*

Signe: *Nature and stuff. It's hard to live without.*

Another typical statement came from 23-year old Majken, who studied medicine at Aarhus university, again showing the dilemma between longing and belonging:

Majken: *I wouldn't leave out that option, for sure. Because I think that, nevertheless, it's a good town [Lemvig]... and there are some initiatives.*

Interviewer: *Do you have friends from Lemvig Municipality?*

Majken: *Yes, half of them are. My best friend comes from Lemvig Municipality.*

Interviewer: *Do you sometimes talk about moving back?*

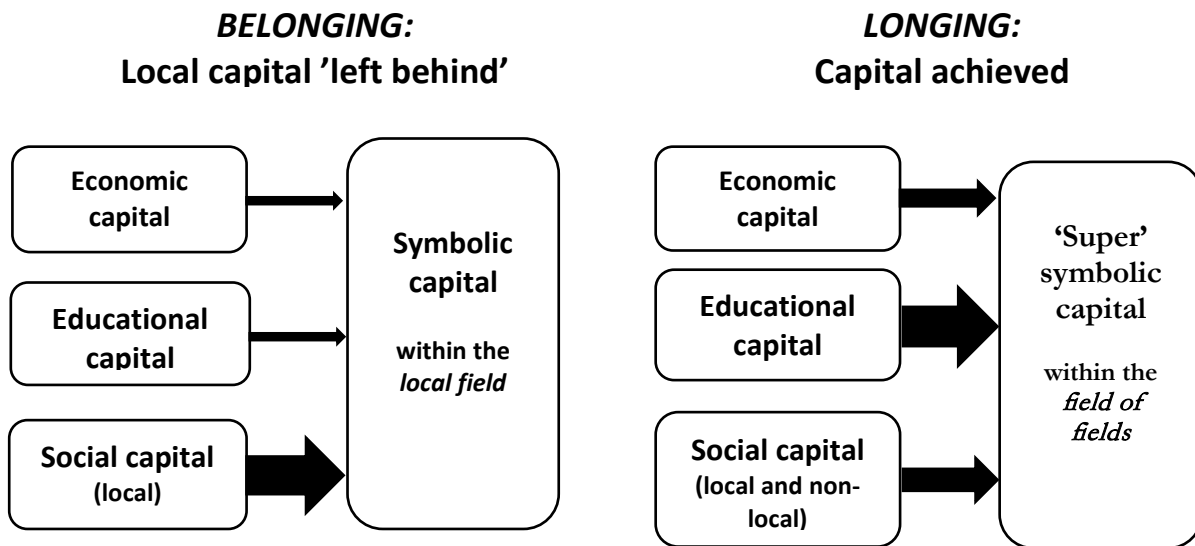
Majken: *No, we don't.*

Hence we see that it is not easy to unite 'primary' cultural capital, educational capital, supra-local and local social capital. Moreover, decisions are often impacted by the possibility of getting a good job and good income (economic capital) on the one hand, and social conformity on the other. The latter includes a concern of losing symbolic capital – that is, simultaneously losing face with people who know you and not succeeding in achieving social upward mobility. This is clearly something that often lurks in the back of the heads of the more ambitious and resourceful adolescents who definitely want to become 'successes' and not 'failures'.

Belonging and Capital Investment Strategies

Two Striking Things

What really came as a big surprise to me during these interviews were essentially two things. First of all, I was simply amazed by their strong *place attachment*, that is attachment to their home areas specifically and their region



Note: The arrows illustrate the degree of convertibility into symbolic capital.

Figure 4. Young rural-to-urban migrants: Local capital 'left behind' and capital achieved (model figure)

(Western Jutland) more generally, including their pride in being from this area. I myself am born and grew up in a place near Lemvig Municipality (the small town of Vinderup, close to Holstebro), also Mid Western Jutland – something that I openly revealed to the interview persons (which would, indeed, also be impossible *not* to reveal due to my dialect!). I have, however, never felt this belonging and pride, or at least not as strongly as most of them felt. Hence, the great power of 'belonging' – making up a large part of the emotional 'footprints' from our past in the form of human warmth and a feeling of security – gradually became clear to me. It was imprinted in their identity, values, personality and behaviour. The longing for the 'first' life of your life – primary school friends, nature, your parents and siblings, playing soccer, going fishing... And, really, it *should* be strong to be able to counterbalance push factors like 'nothing ever happens', 'no jobs', 'fewer public services', 'declining associational life', 'outskirt Denmark' combined with pull factors like higher education, 'all my friends live in Aarhus', exotic city life and the pride of yourself (and of your increased symbolic capital) of a postal code as 8000 Aarhus C or 1050 Copenhagen C (in contrast to 7620 Lemvig or 7500 Holstebro).

Another thing that stroke me was the prevalence of networks of young Lemvig outmigrants in the university cities, that is, what I have termed the *Lemvig colonies*. As a youngster, I myself travelled the long way (culturally-mentally), from my home town to Aarhus in order to study anthropology, however without becoming member of a 'local' network in the city. I lost my previous social capital and had to start from scratch. However, luckily this seems not to be the case for many rural university students today.

In my diary (01-11-2012), I wrote the following: "An interesting (emergent) pattern is that they so to speak have brought their circle of friends with them in their 'luggage' – for example, to Aarhus. Then, a couple of times per year, or more, they all meet – the expatriates' circles and their previous school mates still living in the municipality, for example in Lemvig or in Thyborøn (December 2, December 25, during Easter, etc.)".

Hence, today's adolescents seem to reduce the risk of their investment in (urban) capital (educational and symbolic primarily) by keeping in contact with friends and family from their local communities and – not least – continue to cultivate and benefit from 'old' social capital, that is, much in line with what is the case with immigrants from other countries (e.g. Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993, Levitt 2001).

Belonging and Capital Investment Strategies – A Model

Figure 4 seeks to summarize my findings in a model figure. According to both the questionnaire survey and the 25 interviews, important capital left behind is *social capital* in the form of family, friends and people from the local community, providing the youngsters security and predictability. Besides this, the youngsters exhibited strong place attachment. Local social capital adheres to a local/regional identity (or 'mentality' as many of the interviewees mentioned) and, most often, a strong belonging, not least among the more ambitious of the adolescents who have migrated to the university cities. Hence, in the *local* setting social capital is by the youngsters seen as the most valuable capital form, or 'master capital', immediately convertible to social recognition (symbolic capital) in a particular, local field, in the figure illustrated by a thick arrow. Economic and educational capital are of much less importance in the local field in respect to convertibility to symbolic capital, which is illustrated by the thin arrows.

In contrast, in what regards capitals to be achieved *educational capital* is clearly the master capital (thick arrow), at least among the ‘remote’ outmigrants. This capital form achieved at the universities and other longer educations is highly valid, state guaranteed and useable in practice at the national (and/or international) level, that is in the ‘field of fields’. It makes possible for these ‘longing’ youngsters to establish careers and upwards social mobility, good incomes, free mobility etc. and thus achieve the highest form of social recognition in society – a kind of ‘super’ symbolic capital. However, many of them do not simply skip their ‘old’ social capital built up through their childhood and early youth. Therefore, they prefer to move to the cities together with old friends and, often, share apartments with them. Hence, they lower the risk of a ‘bad’ trade-off, although many of them still feel a sting in the heart when thinking about the native places they have left, due to their social and place attachment. In comparison, the ‘near’ outmigrants did not to the same degree form ‘Lemvig colonies’ and therefore seemed to be more isolated at their new locations.

Finally, as regards potential return migration there was certainly a longing among most adolescents, and especially among the more resourceful, remote outmigrants, to go back home to their home region, Western Jutland. However, this was only provided that they would be able to use their achieved resources – that is, primarily high educational capital – in getting well-esteemed, interesting and well-paid jobs.

CONCLUSION

In recent years, we have seen a global trend of rural adolescents moving to big cities in search for educational opportunities and well-paid, prestigious jobs (e.g. Argent and Walmsley, 2008; Champion, 2012). In this context, previous studies reveal that many adolescents have to make a painful choice between staying and migrating, that is, between attachment to their birth place and their career ambitions. In this way these young people become ‘trapped’ between the warm, secure local communities of their childhood and ambitious career strategies, i.e. their *belonging* to a specific socio-space characterized by ‘survival’ networks (Corbett, 2013), where capitals are directed towards a local/regional field; and their *longing* for a non-specific, other place where they can get a career and increase cultural, economic and symbolic capital that can be applied within the national field (cf. Hektner, 1995; Johnson *et al.*, 2005; Bourdieu, 2014). What has however been less investigated is the youngsters’ second choice: After a period of time, they have to decide whether they should remain at the new place and use their achieved capital there, or return home to their native place and make use of it there.

On this background, and using a case from rural Denmark within a combined Belonging (Cohen, 1982; Corbett, 2013) and Bourdieusian forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Svendsen and Sørensen, 2007; Bosworth and Turner, 2018) theoretical framework, the contribution of this paper was threefold: To give an insight in rural adolescents’ relocation motives, their attachment to their birth place, as well as their reasons for considering, or not considering, to return to their native place. Hence, the purpose was to shed light on the following three, closely interrelated questions:

Why Do Young Rural-urban Migrants Leave Their Places of Birth, What Do They Leave Behind, and Do They Consider Moving Back Later in Life?

Results were reported from two studies in the Danish rural municipality of Lemvig, namely a 2011-survey study that included 120 outmigrants and a telephone interview study in November 2012 including 25 youngsters.

Both the survey and the interviews showed that the main reasons for moving out of the municipality were common sense considerations about getting a job or an education, that is, educational and career ambitions. These considerations rooted in emotions of personal pride and wish of social recognition in the eyes of the world. Moreover, the survey showed that adolescent outmigrants found nature, social networks and quiet surroundings most attractive in their home municipality, that is, an indicator of strong place and social attachment. In line with this, the telephone interviews with 25 young outmigrants clearly showed that they found themselves trapped between two ‘competing’ sets of feelings: Warmth and security versus personal pride, ambition and high self-esteem. On the one hand, important capital left consisted mainly in local social capital (friends, family, local communities) associated with strong local and regional identity, i.e. *belonging*, linked to warmth, security and primary (childhood) cultural capital. On the other hand, the most ambitious adolescents were convinced that in their home municipality there would be too few opportunities in the form of jobs, education and cultural activities (‘nothing ever happens’). They therefore chose to become university students in the big cities to achieve the most powerful and state-legitimized form of *educational capital*, with the hope to get prestigious careers and, thus, enjoy ‘super’ symbolic capital, that is, social recognition that stretches far beyond their local communities.

One should then think that the young outmigrants had skipped their ‘native’ social capital and were forced to build up new networks from scratch. This was however not the case. Many of them moved to the cities together with friends and formed what I have referred to as ‘Lemvig colonies’. In this way, they preserved their most valuable social capital.

Finally, the interviews showed that, within many adolescent outmigrants, an ‘inner fight’ was going on between career and security considerations concerning *future settlement*. This included considerations of returning home at some point in time, or at least moving back to the region. 11 out of 25 wanted to move home to Lemvig Municipality, whereas many of the others would not rule it out – at least, they considered returning back to the region (Western Jutland). Especially the more resourceful, ‘remote’ outmigrants who seemed to have the most privileged family backgrounds (14 out of the 25), mostly university students, were interested in returning, and overall they seemed to have very strong place and social attachment. However, going back home would demand that they were offered well-esteemed, interesting and well-paid jobs, ensuring that they did not waste their high educational capital and, thusly, lose face.

Future research might focus more on the ‘second choice’ of young rural-to-urban migrants, including their rational-emotional motivations to return back to their native places. In that context, it is also important to investigate effects of social recognition (and misrecognition), as well as discourses of rurality at the national level. Ideally, panel studies should be preferred in the form of repeated surveys or in-depth interviews, or both, with the same group of youngsters during a longer time period. This would be to get a more precise picture of how adolescents cope with migrating to the cities, whether they preserve their attachment to their native places, and how their future settlement plans develop over time.

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On the Hijab-Gift: Gift-Theoretical Considerations on the Ambiguities and Ambivalences of Islamic Veiling in a Diasporic Context

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ABSTRACT

One of the most politicised topics across the social sciences today concerns Islamic veils (hijabs) and veiling. Scholarship has not yet sought to illuminate specific veiling phenomena in light of gift theory, begun by Marcel Mauss in the 1920s. We focus on how particular Islamic women - in this case, in diasporic Muslim communities in Finland - give hijabs to each other as gifts. We use gift theory to understand the significance of such acts, unpicking the subtle power dynamics at work. We seek to throw new light on both micro-level, individual-to-individual aspects of *hijab-gifts*, and on the more macro-level factors bound up with these acts of gifting. A *hijab-gift* is potentially deeply ambiguous, as well as powerful, because of the multiple layers of significance at work within it, encompassing factors including religious precepts, family and community norms, and commoditised sartorial fashion objects. Social relations involving such gifts can be deeply ambivalent. Female gift donors are seen to be able to shape the thoughts and actions of recipient women in various ways, in terms of: how and why they wear the hijab; which types of hijab, and which kinds of religious observance, they adopt; and the ways in which they understand their own motivations in the hijab's adoption. By bringing hijab and gift issues into dialogue with each other, we highlight the complex and subtle ways in which gifts can operate today.

Keywords: gender, diaspora, gifts, Muslim, hijab

INTRODUCTION

One of the most politicised topics across the social sciences today concerns Islamic veils - hijabs - and veiling. Multiple perspectives have been developed to understand many different aspects of these phenomena (see Almila, 2017 for a comprehensive overview). Yet to our knowledge, scholarship has not yet sought to illuminate veiling phenomena in light of gift theory. The latter was begun by Marcel Mauss in the 1920s, and there has been almost a century of extensions, refinements and rejections of his original claims about the nature of gifts and gift-giving. We focus on how particular Muslim women give hijabs to each other as gifts. We use gift theory to understand the significance of such acts. We seek to throw new light on both micro-level, individual-to-individual aspects of *hijab-gifts*, and the more macro-level factors bound up with these acts of gifting. In so doing, we hope to offer fresh insights into the nature both of hijab-wearing, especially in terms of dynamics in Muslim diaspora communities, and of the complicated ways in which gifts operate today, including in such communities.

The key themes running throughout the paper are *ambiguity* (of certain clothing objects, to be used as hijabs, that are given as gifts) and *ambivalence* (in terms of the feelings and perceptions of the women handling those objects

in and through gift-giving, and of the social relations operative between female donors and receivers). This is so in multiple, mutually informing, ways, and at a number of levels. According to gift theory, gifts are by their nature ambiguous entities for various reasons, and acts of gift-giving can be very ambivalent. So too are hijabs, for they embody multiple values, encompassing religious, ethnic and gender norms, as well as being sold on markets as commodities.

A hijab is not just a garment, even though it is widely thought to be some sort of scarf. A scarf is just one possible variant. Instead, the term hijab refers more widely to ‘modest’ forms of dress which observe certain religious precepts. Practically *any* suitable garment, bought anywhere, and coming from any kind of producer, avowedly ‘Muslim’ or not, can be used as a hijab. Many garments used as hijabs are produced today by the global Islamic fashion industry, which is also ambiguously located between the realm of constant change, commodities, capitalism and profits, and the world of religious piety and observance. Therefore, a *hijab-gift* is deeply ambiguous, because of the multiple layers at work within it, each of which are themselves marked by complex ambiguities. The ways in which hijabs are discussed, and the manners in which acts of giving them are made sense of, by Muslim women, are also ambivalent, in part because these sometimes involve the mixing of more religious and more secular logics. This is especially marked in diasporic contexts and Muslim-minority locations.

The paper concerns itself with gift-giving in one Muslim diasporic context, namely contemporary Finland. It draws upon data gathered during 10-month ethnographic fieldwork in the Greater Helsinki area (encompassing the urban areas of Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa) carried out in 2011-12. While a much larger data set, involving interviews with 46 Muslim women - Somali, Finnish converts to Islam, Shia Iraqi, Shia Iranian, and Shia Afghan - was collected, this paper focusses on six women. **Nura**¹ is a Sunni Somali woman in her mid-twenties, who holds conservative religious views and dresses accordingly. She came to Finland in her pre-teens, having previously lived in Somalia and Saudi Arabia. **Aisha** is a Finnish convert to Islam in her mid-twenties. She converted when she was 18, and has previously lived in Saudi Arabia with her Arab husband. **Miriam** is a Finnish convert to Islam, and she is in her mid-twenties. She had lived as a Muslim for four years, and did not have any contact with Finnish Muslim communities. **Afra** is a Shia Iraqi in her late twenties. She arrived in Finland as a teenager. **Khadija** is a Finnish convert to Islam in her early 60s. She had converted two years prior to the interview. **Zaynab** is a Somali woman in her late twenties, who arrived in Finland in her early teens. She veiled only as an adult and has moderate views on religion.

We first turn to consider Mauss’s original ideas about gifts and gift-giving, and how these have been extended and criticised over the years. Then we set out the various ways in which capitalism and the globalized Islamic fashion industry impact upon hijabs and Muslim women’s gift-giving. After that, we reflect upon how gifts of hijabs are connected both with the maintenance of existing Islamic diaspora communities, and with the conversion of non-Muslims into the status of affiliated believers. The penultimate section concerns how patriarchal social relations are bound up with *hijab-gift* practices. The final part concerns the ambiguities and ambivalences to be found in Muslim women’s giving away of clothes, including hijab-related ones, for Islamic charitable purposes, or for other, more apparently secular reasons. Overall, we highlight the strikingly high levels of ambiguity and ambivalence that are often involved in all these practices.

THE THEORY OF GIFTS AND GIVING

Since the first publication in 1925 of Mauss’s *Essai sur le Don*, translated into English as *The Gift* (Mauss, 1970), there have been many criticisms, refinements and extensions of his original claims, the main dimensions of which we consider here. Generally speaking, Mauss and later commentators have focused on three major issues: 1) the power of gift-giving to create social relations and communities, 2) the special qualities of objects which accrue to them when given and received as gifts, and 3) the highly ambivalent nature of gifts and gift relationships (For overviews, see Schwartz, 1967, Hyde, 1983, Appadurai, 1986, Parry and Bloch 1989, Carrier, 1995, Godelier, 1996, Titmuss, 1997, Godbout and Caillé, 1998, Graeber, 2001, Mirowski, 2001, Osteen, 2002, Komter, 2005, Pyyhtinen, 2014).

Gift relationships are seen by Mauss (1970: 18) as involving a contradictory combination of ‘intimacy and ... fear which arise[s] from [the] reciprocal creditor-debtor relationship’, which is central to giving and receiving gifts. Gifts operate ambiguously in the spaces between sets of opposed values (Derrida, 1992). These include: *kindness and aggression, disinterestedness and self-interest, co-operation between individuals and conflict between them, care for others and endeavours to control them, giving away wealth and making personal gain, the power of the giver over the receiver (and vice versa), inner volition and social obligation, and interior piety and the social display of virtue*. Gifts are therefore deeply ambiguous phenomena (Skågeby, 2013). We can add to these considerations by noting the ambiguity of the interplay between religious and secular logics which arises in Islamic diaspora contexts strongly influenced by the operations of the

¹ All the names are pseudonyms.

capitalist economy and global politics. A hijab is already an ambiguous object, but when it is given as a gift, various further levels of ambiguity accrue to it, as we will see.

Having examined Franz Boas's ethnography of the Kwakiutl people of the North American Pacific Coast, and Bronislaw Malinowski's study of the Melanesian *kula* ring, Mauss discerned among these groups elaborate social systems which involved giving gifts and repaying them by making other gifts. He deduced that giving gifts is a bedrock of human sociability *per se*, at least in pre-modern societies, but possibly 'modern' ones too (Chanial, 2014). The ways in which objects are handled as gifts, and circulate within and between groups, both embody and reproduce the social relations of those groups (Addo and Besnier, 2008). Gift practices help to create communities and relations between communities. A chain of gifts in exchange for Mauss does not usually involve only a simple dyadic relationship between two individuals, but rather also involves groups of individuals giving to other groups. Even when one individual gives a gift to another, the community - or communities - that each belongs to may be symbolically present. More recent scholarship has shown that gift-giving can construct and reinforce kinship and community ties which otherwise might be dissipated by physical distance and lack of ongoing direct face-to-face contact between the parties involved (Caplow, 1982). Gift-giving has also been seen to create group boundaries, and to structure social relationships within those boundaries (Frith, 1967, Hyde, 1983, Weinberger and Wallendorf, 2011, Cheal, 1988, Godbout and Caillé, 1998).

A crucial issue for Mauss concerns the mixture of 'obligation and spontaneity in the gift' (Mauss, 1970: 63). Gifts, 'which are in theory voluntary, disinterested and spontaneous ... are in fact obligatory and interested'. The gift may be apparently 'generously offered ... [but] the transaction itself is [in fact] based on obligation' (1970: 1). Surface-level generosity can, and usually does, mask more subterranean but forceful forms of obligation. Gift relations are therefore ultimately power relations (Garces and Jones, 2009).

According to Mauss, the recipient of the gift is potentially under two forms of obligation, sanctioned by the social group to which at least the giver, if not also the receiver, belongs. First, there is a tacit but powerful obligation to accept the gift being offered. 'Refusing to accept [is] the equivalent of a declaration of war; it is a refusal of friendship and [social] intercourse' (1970: 11). A person 'does not have the right to refuse a gift ... [because to] do so would show fear of having to repay ... admitting defeat in advance' (1970: 39). '[Y]ou accept ... because you mean to take up the challenge and prove that you are not unworthy' of the gift you are being offered (1970: 40).

Second, there is an obligation for the recipient to reciprocate the initial gift by in turn giving the original donor another gift, the *counter-gift*, after a certain amount of time has passed (1970: 5, 34). The intimate nature of the donor-recipient relationship fundamentally goes together with the risk of 'losing face' if one cannot adequately reciprocate the initial donor (1970: 38). To be unable to proffer an adequate counter-gift is to lose honour, social status and self-esteem. Strong social sanctions are attendant upon someone who fails to return a gift. The counter-gift usually must be of equal or greater value to the initial gift (1970: 63). Such a return gives the initial recipient 'authority and power over the original donor, who now becomes the latest recipient' (1970: 10). The counter-gift therefore shifts the balance of power back towards the initial recipient. The countering of the initial gift is likely to provoke in turn a further series of gifts and counter-gifts between both parties, a process that may last a long time, possibly even for life. Both donor and receiver are pulled into a social system that is given life, and potential permanence, by the to-ing and fro-ing of gift-exchange (1970: 18, see also Douglas, 1990, Belk, 1988). This explains why it is in 'the nature of the gift in the end to be ... its own reward' (1970: 34). The initial expenditure by the first donor leads to a chain of counter-gifts, bringing various benefits to the original donor, and possibly also to the initial recipient.

According to Mauss, the donor retains 'a magical and religious hold over the recipient' (1970: 10), as the object gifted is felt to be invested with some of the spiritual essence of the donor. The spiritual element of the gift is one of its crucial features. When giving a gift, 'one gives away ... a part of one's nature and substance, while to receive something is to receive a part of someone's spiritual essence' (1970: 10). As that essence inheres within and lingers around it, then the gift which is received is 'owned by the recipient', but 'the ownership is of a particular kind ... It is ... a pledge and a loan ... a deposit, a mandate, a trust' (1970: 22). A received gift therefore is never just a simple object devoid of significance. It is rather a powerful reminder of someone else, and possibly of the social group that stands behind them too (Carrier, 1991, 1995). It is a potent object, charged with the presence of the donor, around which a certain kind of animated power hovers, and through which the recipient's obligations to the donor - and vice versa - are expressed and maintained (Keane, 2006).

The gift is also fundamentally connected to forms of social power, for it is potentially a means of controlling other people. The obligations involved in the gift relationship entail that the initial recipient comes into the gravitational pull of the initial donor, and perhaps also of the group to which the donor belongs, or which they present themselves as a representative of. Mauss seems to imply that there are no 'free gifts', because obligations, to the donor, and perhaps also the group they are part of, are always incumbent upon recipients (Douglas, 1990). For one major interpreter of Mauss's ideas, Georges Bataille (1991), gift-giving is pre-eminently a hidden form of power and control. The donor gains advantages over the recipient, and perhaps also over an audience which

witnesses the gift-exchange, by the apparently altruistic act of giving things away (Kosalka, 1999). The socially dominant donor (Sahlins, 1972) can potentially impose a debt that the dominated recipient may never be able to repay fully, thereby imposing their right to keep the recipient in permanent subordination (Blau, 1986, Caillé, 2005, Chaniel, 2014). This is one variant of the 'dark side' of gift-giving obligations (Sherry, McGrath and Levy, 1993), of which there are also 'evil gifts' that express and create antagonisms (Vaughn, 1997), and the contaminating possibilities of 'spoiled' gifts (Belk, 1988). Conversely, some have argued that observation of norms of reciprocity can prevent the powerful from fully exploiting their position of advantage, with wholly one-way flows of gifts, from powerful to less powerful actors, not being tolerated in at least some societies (Gouldner, 1960, Sahlins, 1972).

Later scholars have pointed out that the precise nature of power in a gift relationship depends on whether donor and recipient are regarded, by each of them and/or by a wider peer group, as of equal social status or not (Gouldner, 1960). Wide status differentials between the parties can markedly affect gift-giving dynamics, involving factors such as class, ethnicity and gender hierarchies (Firth, 1967). It is also significant whether gifts are exchanged by participants within communities - themselves riven by multiple power and status differentials - or across community boundaries, with different groups enjoying variable levels of social advantage and disadvantage (Herrmann, 1997). The gift is potentially a subtle but powerful means by which a group, through the gift-giving of one of its members, can begin to instil its values into the mindset and behaviour of a recipient if they are from another group, or can reinforce its values onto a recipient who is already a group member (Mauss, 1970: 73). The latter situation would apply in cases where donors may perceive recipients to be exhibiting less strongly than they think desirable the acceptable attitudes and practices of the group, or are acting in ways perceived to be somehow deviant.

Later scholars have interrogated Mauss's assumptions about the intentions and motivations of donors and recipients. Instead of assuming donors always possess hidden or unconscious desires to control recipients, contemporary scholarship tends to emphasise the mixed motives at work in gift giving, locating these on various spectra. One such spectrum is that between high intentionality and totally unconscious motivations. Another is that between high levels of manipulation and donors having no desire to gain anything from the gift (Herrmann, 1997, Elder-Vass, 2015). This suggests, contra Douglas's (1990) interpretation of Mauss, that totally disinterested gifts - which give the donor pleasure in the act of giving itself, beyond any ulterior motives and expectations of reciprocation - are at least theoretically possible (Godbout and Caillé, 1998). There may exist forms of gift-giving from which Mauss's emphasis on the compulsion to reciprocate is absent (Tearst, 1998, Mirowski, 2001). One can also locate specific acts of gift-giving on a continuum between low status, high frequency quotidian events (e.g. sharing lunch with a work colleague), through to low frequency, high status events socially marked as somehow special (e.g. gifts given at a wedding) (Douglas and Isherwood, 2006).

In Bourdieu's (1977, 2000) influential formulation into phenomenological language of gift-giving practices, these are usually neither entirely interested nor wholly disinterested, but rather involve a mixture of the two elements. The precise mixture is shaped by the interplay of the habitus of each party (Silber, 2009). Actors usually do not think in terms of ideal types of 'gift' and 'commodity' (Gregory, 1982 - and see below), but they normally combine these categories in ways that are not perceived by them as contradictory. The disinterested aspect of giving a gift can be actively created by the donor suppressing any sense of calculation in the giving act. Calculation can also be disguised by the initial recipient by not returning the counter-gift immediately, a delay in reciprocation making the counter-giving seem free of instrumental considerations.

Mauss (1970: 39) notes that 'in certain circumstances ... a refusal [of a gift] can be an assertion of victory and invincibility'. A refusal to receive a proffered gift is possible if the putative recipient has both the boldness and social resources necessary to resist the blandishments of the putative donor, refusing their overtures to enter a gift-giving relationship, and being content to risk giving potentially grave offence. For some - probably more socially privileged - actors, refusing a gift, or refusing to reciprocate a gift already accepted, is a possibility, albeit possibly still a risky one (Callon and Law, 2005). If a recipient gives back to the donor an exactly similar type of object to the one that s/he has previously received, that could be read as a refusal by the recipient to accept the initial gift. To avoid such stand-offs, the counter-gift is often an object of a very different type from that which was given in the first place (Bourdieu, 2000). More generally, contemporary economic sociology stresses the ambivalence and potential messiness of gift-giving, because the different parties may attribute different meanings to the same gift and act of giving. Mismatches in expectations - such as when you give me an object defined as a gift, and I think it is just an object like any other that I can resell on eBay - can create serious ruptures between people. Ruptures are more likely when the parties involved do not have shared habitus and cultural expectations (Lainer-Vos, 2013).

Over the last several decades, feminist scholars have subjected Mauss's formulations to critique and re-evaluation, especially regarding questions to do with how female-to-female gift-giving relationships might work (Leacock, 1981, Strathern, 1988, Weiner, 1992). They have argued that Mauss's account is colonialist, gender-blind and gender-biased, as are understandings of gifts and gifting derived from it, notably that of Lévi-Strauss (Bracken,

1997). Male authors are said to have uncritically projected onto gift-giving in general, and women's roles regarding gift relationships in particular, some of the taken-for-granted gender biases of the societies they themselves are part of (Joy, 2013).

Empirical investigations have revealed that in some contexts women tend strongly to locate specific objects, including gifted ones, within social relationships ('My aunt gave me this scarf for my birthday'), while men tend to talk more egocentrically about objects, under-playing or omitting to mention their embeddedness in social relationships, including gifting relations (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halston, 1981). Women in some societies are also more likely to choose and pass on gifts. The buying of birthday presents, for example, is often delegated to them because such activities are regarded as insufficiently 'masculine' for men typically to engage in (Cheal, 1988). Some researchers have also discovered evidence of gifts given by men being more glorified and formalised, in contrast to the more hidden and informal gifts given by women, especially to each other (Chanial, 2014). This points to the issue of unrecognised and under-valued gifts being particularly associated with female donors and recipients (Caillé, 2007). Some observers have noted that across many cultural contexts, women tend to struggle more than men to refuse gifts, or to escape from obligations to reciprocate gifts, these phenomena being indicative of the presence of broader patriarchal social relations (Folbre, 2001).

We return to issues of gender below. There have also been various other developments in debates about the nature of gifts and gift-giving in the decades after Mauss's original intervention. We will set out the relevant features of these debates in the substantive sections of the paper which follow, connecting the theory to the empirical data in each case.

CAPITALISM, THE ISLAMIC FASHION INDUSTRY, AND LOGICS OF GIFT-GIVING

We now turn to consider the nature and role of gifts in modern capitalist socio-economic systems. This raises issues about the special qualities objects perceived as gifts are thought, by both actors and analysts, to possess. Mauss drew a strong distinction between gift-giving and capitalist commodity exchange relations. In non-capitalist economies, objects are seen by Mauss to be thoroughly bound up with the persons who make and/or give them. The personality of the maker and/or giver is felt to inhere within the object in profound ways. This stands in stark contrast to the logic of capitalist economic exchange, which emphasises monetary price, and through the cash nexus disentangles the object-as-commodity from those who make it or sell it on to a consumer (Appadurai, 1986, Kopytoff, 1986). Once the capitalist consumer has purchased the object, it is (usually) wholly and unambiguously 'theirs'. For Mauss, objects operating as gifts work differently. The object that is given as a gift is transformed from being a mundane material thing into a special sort of entity. The process of gifting and counter-gifting involves not capitalist economic exchange of pure commodities, but rather 'a pattern of spiritual bonds between things which are to some extent parts of persons' (Mauss, 1970: 11).

Later commentators have frequently commented on Mauss's apparently contradictory views on the socio-historical ubiquity of gift-giving institutions. He seems to have oscillated between two possibilities. The first involved regarding gift-giving as a social system-building mechanism which operated only in pre- or non-modern contexts, and which had died out for the most part in Western capitalist modernity, leaving only dim vestiges behind. The second option was to regard pre-modern gifting practices as still alive and well in modern capitalist social orders, operating either along-side, or at least in the interstices of, capitalist forms of commodity exchange (Godbout and Caillé, 1998, Shershow, 2005).

This is an issue that continues to be debated today (Elder-Vass, 2015). Some scholars (notably Cheal, 1988) have argued that the kinds of gift *systems*, encompassing whole communities, which Mauss had in mind are purely archaic, and have been replaced by forms of gifting involving individualistic persons in limited dyadic relations, giving each other presents on voluntary rather than obligatory bases. This position has been much criticised in the contemporary literature on gift-giving. It assumes a simplistic binary division between modern capitalist exchange relations (under which gifting has allegedly been wholly subsumed) and gift-giving chains and systems, which are assumed to be wholly pre- or non-modern in nature. This division ignores the ongoing presence of system-building, gift-giving chains operative today, not only *outside* of contemporary capitalist exchange relations, but also *within* them (Bird-David and Darr, 2009, Adloff and Mau, 2006). Most contemporary scholars who study gift relationships would probably say that gift-giving and the relations it creates can still operate according to their own specific logics, irreducible to capitalist exchange principles, even within contexts that are strongly informed by capitalist socio-economic relations. Objects given as gifts are often not treated by either donors or recipients as pure commodities that can be disposed of blithely in a marketplace setting.

Claims as to gift-giving in modern capitalist societies being a purely individualistic exercise are also charged by critics with being deeply ethnocentric, taking as their model the (post-)Christian phenomenon of Christmas gifts being subsumed under capitalist consumerist logics. The model ignores how different ethnic and religious groups around the world continue to engage in the sorts of practices that build the sorts of systems and chains of gift-

giving which Mauss had in mind (Bird-David and Darr, 2009). This point of course applies to Muslim diasporic communities in Muslim-minority countries. This is especially so at a time when the globalized logics of capitalist consumerism are intertwined in complex ways with forms of Muslim observance, as in the case of the increasing commercialisation of festive periods like Ramadan (Sandıkcı and Omeraki, 2007).

Since Mauss's time, both anthropologists and sociologists have sought to complexify his often rather rigid conceptualisations of the relations between commodity-objects and gift-objects. A clue here has been Mauss's original contention that *any* object can potentially take on the special qualities of a gift, if it is given to a recipient in the spirit of the gift (Mauss, 1970: 12). So powerfully can objects be invested by donors - and recipients too - as possessing the special qualities that gift-objects possess, that for those in a gift-giving relationship, material objects can come to seem to have 'a virtue of their own which [itself seems to] cause ... them to be given and [which in turn] compels the making of counter-gifts' (1970: 37). Once objects are defined by the parties involved as gifts, those 'things have personality' (1970: 44), and are felt to have a special sort of resonance and charisma. They leave various sorts of traces, invisible yet tangible, on both donors and recipients (Hyde, 1983).

Following up on these suggestive remarks, contemporary anthropologists have shown how within capitalist socio-economic contexts, specific objects can shift in and out of particular social categories, by being commodified, de-commodified or re-commodified at different points in time. By the same token, an object can at one point be defined as a gift, and at another time lose that special status and become just one commodity among multiple others (Appadurai, 1986, Kopytoff, 1986). Economic sociologists have also shown how particular individuals can work to define objects as either gifts or commodities - for example, taking price tags off, or wrapping them in special paper, processes which Zelizer (1996, 2000) refers to as 'earmarking'. A focus on such micro-level practices suggests a shift in analytic focus, away from gift-giving relations as system-building mechanisms, which the ethnographic material that Mauss drew upon suggested, towards understanding gifting as a set of more localized, contingent, practical organizational accomplishments (Lainer-Vos, 2014: 482).

Turning now to the case of the hijab, this is an object that is markedly ambiguous in terms of the interplay of religious principles and capitalist commercialisation processes. The hijab itself is not just any garment, but is rather a materialised form of female modesty, encompassing dress, comportment, behaviour and the purity of thought and intention (Almila, 2018). This makes the hijab's relationships to sartorial fashion and the fashion industry complicated, and often for the actors involved, problematic too. Many garments used to construct 'modest' forms of dress today are made by the globalized and trans-national Islamic fashion industry, which makes products ranging from simple scarves which retail at very low prices, to extremely expensive designer garments (Kılıçbay and Binark, 2002, Sandıkcı and Ger 2007, Gökarkısel and Secor, 2013).

This industry is like any other fashion industry in that it produces sartorial commodities for trans-national markets and consumers. But it is unlike other clothing industries because of its explicit and self-consciously 'religious' dimensions. Its products are never just pure capitalist commodities, as most other clothing fashion goods are, because they combine the characteristics of products for sale as well as being objects of religious significance. This is reflected in the fact that there are multiple ongoing debates today, among actors and analysts, about the relationships between Islam and sartorial fashion. These include: whether Islamic fashion shows are acceptable on religious grounds (Jones, 2010a, Sandıkcı and Ger, 2007); whether enhancing one's appearance through fashionable clothes, rather than seeking to create less attention-drawing ways of dressing, is appropriate for a religiously observant woman (Sandıkcı and Ger, 2005); and whether the wasteful consumption often associated with the global fashion industry is religiously acceptable (Moors and Tarlo, 2013).

The partly religious and partly commercialised, commoditised character of the hijab makes it deeply ambiguous in and of itself, and women who wear more 'stylish' forms of hijab have to negotiate carefully the forms of ambivalence promoted by its simultaneously commercial, fashionable and religious dimensions (Jones, 2010b). This ambiguity is augmented when a hijab is rendered *as a gift*. Since a gift is already potentially a highly ambiguous phenomenon, a *hijab-gift* is potentially an even more markedly ambiguous entity, and the acts of giving and receiving it are possibly marked by deep ambivalence. When a *hijab-gift* is given, like any other non- or de-commoditised gift, it contains the lingering presence of the charisma of the donor. But in addition, the fact that it was already pre-defined as having religious significance, even at the point when it was purchased as a commodity, means that it also carries strong associations of religious piety.

Therefore the recipient of such a gift faces an object charged with multiple layers of significance. There is significance deriving simultaneously from the donor (involving an individual-level obligation to receive and reciprocate, encompassing relations and overtures of friendship), *and* from the donor's (e.g. ethnic) group, *and* from the donor's religion (with both the latter factors involving more macro-level senses of obligation). One might expect that a recipient may be particularly reluctant to refuse a gift so potentially powerfully charged, especially when its multiply-layered character has rendered it so apparently strongly de-commoditised and invested with surging levels of significance. The level of potential obligation to receive and reciprocate such a gift would be correspondingly high. A *hijab-gift* is simultaneously very multivalent, and also potentially very powerful as a means

of a donor influencing a recipient. Such power in large part rests in, and is made possible by, the multifaceted and ambiguous nature of the gifted object itself. The object is charged with and expresses multiple types of social relationship: friendship, family and group membership, religious affiliation, and possibly other types too. A *hijab-gift* therefore need not be expensive in money terms in order to be very richly endowed in significance. Even a garment bought by a donor for very little money - the type of object donated in most of the cases outlined in the examples below - can take on huge significance, and be rendered into a powerful means of communication, bonding and influence.

GIFTS, CONVERSION AND COMMUNITY MAINTENANCE

We will now turn to think through such issues in terms of empirical data about a particular diasporic social situation. Mauss's original formulations point towards gift-giving's potential roles as a means of creating and stabilizing social relations of many types, including dyadic relationships between individuals, family and extended kin relationships, and multiple forms of group membership, including in religious communities. Gifting relationships in more settled social contexts can counter quotidian processes of the atrophying of social relations. For example, sending a present to a geographically distant person at Ramadan reminds them of the donor's role as relative or friend, revivifying a relationship that might otherwise deteriorate through unintentional neglect. In more unstable social contexts, gift-giving can help stabilize community relations and provide senses of both group solidarity and of 'normality' in the face of challenging external social forces. These are particularly important means to deal with the uncertain life-conditions faced by many diasporic communities (Hogan, 2010).

Given it is now almost a century old, is Mauss's thinking about gifts outdated in an age of widespread migration and diaspora, where certain communities, including Islamic ones, have become ever more trans-national and spread across multiple terrains? Cross-border gifting relationships, stretching over long geographical distances and across cultural and political boundaries, were in fact already encompassed by Mauss. This is partly because his reflections on gifts were based to some extent on thinking through the implications of gifting across long, even oceanic, distances in Pacific Ocean societies, as this was described by Malinowski. In these sorts of relationships, matrimonial gifts were an integral part of alliances between different groups that were forged through inter-marriage (Hénaff, 2010). Mauss's points about gifts and gifting can therefore be relatively easily applied to trans-national, cross-border social relations and diasporic conditions of the present-day (Addo and Besnier, 2008). Gift-giving within and across various sorts of borders (political, cultural, linguistic, religious, etc.) can both reflect existing, and produce new, forms of social participation, affiliation, and group belonging. This can make group membership both practicable and meaningful for individuals, especially those who may be very physically distant from each other (Lainer-Vos, 2014).

Writing about contemporary gifting practices in Tonga, Addo and Besnier (2008: 40) point out an issue that affects multiple groups across the world today, including diasporic ones. A 'proliferation of conservative objects and practices' - in the Tongan case, traditional woven mats, and in the case under discussion here, some types of hijab - can happen 'at the same time as agents' lives are increasingly steeped in capitalism, consumption and modernity'. Things and practices taken by those involved to be 'traditional', if not indeed 'conservative', are bound up in complex ways with capitalism, consumerism and globalized elements of modernity. Such objects, and the relations within which they are embedded, are stimulated, revived and reworked in and through macro-level forms of social change, as these are played out in micro-level contexts.

The power relations pertaining between and within different communities in diasporic contexts are multiple and complex. It is obvious that most ethnic majority people in Finland enjoy certain benefits that are not available to the members of the Muslim minority, who are marked as 'different' for reasons of both ethnicity and religion. As gift-giving is fundamentally bound up with power relations, it is important to consider the subtleties of different gift-giving pairings: *Muslim to Muslim*, *Muslim to non-Muslim* (including potential convert to Islam), and *non-Muslim to Muslim or convert Muslim*. Different dynamics operate in each of these cases, as we will now see.

It is well known that in diaspora contexts, different social dynamics are at work than in the home country (Moghissi, 2003). To retain, or recreate, one's cultural heritage is of vital importance in a situation where community borders may be under constant threat of dissolving. But the retention of perceived heritage may take on more conservative and/or stricter forms than would be necessary or usual back in the homeland. The transformation of elements of Somali religiosity is one example of this. Traditionally, Somalis have practised a form of Islam that was somewhat Sufi-influenced, involving certain mystical elements. But among the younger generation, especially in the diaspora, such 'traditional' forms of Islam are much rarer today, and new forms of faith have been established. One of these tendencies is related to the conservative form of Islam that is often called 'Salafi'. Salafism is a form of faith that seeks to 'purify' Islam from what it regards as 'external' cultural influences, with the aim of practising religion in a purer 'original' form (Ahmed, 2011). This school of thought is strongly connected financially and ideologically with Saudi Arabia, and is widely considered as 'conservative' or even 'radical' by many Muslims and

non-Muslims alike. This is a school of thought that is very supportive of more conservative forms of female dress. Supporters of these more conservative ideas and practices also often participate in *Dawah*, the ‘calling to Islam’, an invitation to believe in Islam and to practise its tenets, which is directed to both Muslims and non-Muslims.

There are ongoing power struggles within Muslim communities in Finland, in which both the defenders and rejecters of more conservative forms of dress use religious arguments to justify their respective positions. The debates draw upon and amplify a particular sort of ambivalence, that pertaining between ‘choice’ and ‘free will’ (Almila, 2018). It was common in the empirical research undertaken for this paper to find that the same woman would say apparently contradictory things in one interview: on the one hand, that the hijab is only meaningful if it is chosen through an individual’s free will; on the other hand, that the hijab, or a certain form of it, is simply obligatory for a believing woman, beyond any choices she might make.

It is in the light of this ambivalence as regards choice and free will that we can read the gift-giving which Nura, a Somali in her mid-20s, engaged in.

Just this summer I gave up a *kbimar*² I’ve worn for many, many years. It was very dear to me... But... in my opinion it was useless to leave it in the closet; I got a migraine and I couldn’t [wear it]. Someone else wanted to start [wearing] the [*kbimar*], which is a great thing if another Muslim wants to cover herself more. I was very glad [and] I gave it to her.

Nura experiences the joy of giving a gift in an apparently disinterested way. But at the same time, her gift-giving is part of wider discursive struggles within her community. These involve defining the appropriate comportment of female bodies, according to stricter or looser interpretations of Islamic precepts. Nura is strongly influenced by stricter Salafist ideas, and often tells her younger sisters that they should cover up more. A *kbimar* is not exclusively a Salafist garment, but it is sometimes associated with more conservative religious observance. By giving one to another woman, Nura invites the recipient to follow a stricter dress code than presumably the recipient currently observes, and in so doing to make a broader practical and ideological commitment to a more conservative interpretation of Islam. Nura interprets her act as a disinterested one. If the gift was indeed given in that spirit, it may have been particularly difficult for the recipient to refuse such apparent generosity. It is through the means of an apparently sincere performance of generous gifting that the invitation to observe a stricter lifestyle might become particularly compelling for the recipient. This indirect approach may well work better than a direct demand from the instigator, here Nura, for the recipient to wear more covering styles of dress. An imposition on the other person is finessed by garment gifting so that it seems not to be such.

A Somali woman in Finland has far less power either to reject an apparently disinterested gift from a community member, or to take it but never subsequently wear it, than has a Finnish woman. This applies whether the latter is a non-Muslim or a convert to Islam. For the Somali, peer reactions matter much more than for Finns, for her dependence on the goodwill and approval of the community is markedly greater. For a Finnish Islamic convert, there are usually less strong obligations both to receive a *hijab-gift* and to wear it later.

This is especially so if a woman is in an early stage of her conversion career, as we can see in the case of Aisha, who was 18 when she converted. She said how, after reading the *Qur’an* and believing it to be ‘the truth’, she sought to learn more about the practicalities of living as a Muslim. Testing out the religion before taking the major step of affiliating herself with it, she sought to learn how to pray. Through an internet discussion forum, she made the acquaintance of a Somali Muslim woman of her own age, and learned more from her about everyday life as a believer.

I visited her a couple of times and she showed me how to pray and gave me a scarf and then an *abaya*³. [...] So, I actually started to wear them and pray before I had said *Shahada* [the declaration of belief a convert must make].

In this subtle invitation to religious conversion, which the donor’s gift can be interpreted as involving here, the practical value of the gift is significant. A Muslim woman must veil when she prays. By gifting garments that make veiling, and therefore praying, possible for the new convert, her conversion through repeated religious acts is made more likely. Scholars have argued that formal affiliation to a religion is a relatively small factor during an individual’s conversion career (Gooren, 2007). To develop what peers will regard as a properly religiously observant disposition, the patterns of both religious knowledge and practice must be transformed (Rey, 2008). The *hijab-gift* can very much help to encourage the potential convert along the path to affiliation. The counter-gift here can be

² The *kbimar* is ‘a headcover that covers the hair and extends low to the forehead, comes under the chin to conceal the neck, and falls down over the chest and back’ (El Guindi 1999: 130-1).

³ An *abaya* is ‘a long-sleeved robe that covers the body from the neck to the floor’ (Lindholm 2010: 253).

understood as the act of conversion itself, or rather the multiple small acts that together make up the overall conversion career.

It should be added that Aisha, the Finnish convert, would have encountered little risk if she had chosen either to reject the gift, or to take it without feeling any sense of obligation and then never actually wear it. She was not at all dependent on the Somali woman or that woman's community. Even with the decision fully to become a Muslim, Aisha could have chosen some other ethnic or faith community through which to start practising her religion. She could also have become a Muslim with no specific community connections. Her position as a Finnish convert meant that she had much more room than members of ethnic minority groups usually have, both for actively seeking out possible informants (who might become gift donors), and for deciding whether to accept their gifts or use them in the ways the donors intended. A Somali recipient would very likely have felt underlying obligations to deal with members of her own community, to accept their gifts, and to reciprocate their donations somehow, such as by dressing in the manner implied as desirable by the donor.

Many converts to a religion find that their relations with the surrounding society change radically after their conversion, particularly if, in the Islamic case, they choose to veil (Franks, 2000). For another Finnish convert, mid-twenty-something Miriam, who is married to a Jordanian man, the changes were less radical than for some converts. This is partly because she chooses to wear as a hijab a scarf that is not immediately recognisable as 'Islamic'. While she has blogged about her faith and her religious transformation, she has not otherwise talked about it openly, not even with her Finnish family.

I didn't tell [them about my conversion] directly; they've been left to deduce it from the changes that have happened to me. They've not said anything [negative] about it, and my mother even wanted to buy me a scarf, which was really nice. We were at Porvoo [open air] market [in Southern Finland], they have handmade woollen scarves there, and it was really kind of her because I think they think I've converted because of my husband.

Here the gift was particularly powerful, because it has embedded within it multiple levels of meaning. First, the scarf operated as an indicator of acceptance, of the continuance of positive family connections despite religious differences. Second, it expressed a form of parental care that the mother engages in. Third, the setting where the gift was purchased was highly significant. The small town of Porvoo is famous for artisanal arts and crafts objects, most of these being sold by their makers. The scarf was therefore not just *any* object, even when it existed as a commodity to be purchased. It figured as a valuable gift, both in its relatively high money value, and in the fact that it was hand-made and sold by the maker herself. These types of value helped to ' earmark' this gift as a one-off and highly significant entity. The gift-giving of such a thing communicated powerfully the recipient's new socio-religious status and her mother's acceptance, and even appreciation, of it.

This was also an object with more symbolic resonance than pragmatic affordances. The mother did not know that the design rendered the scarf impractical as a hijab garment for everyday use. But the daughter was delighted to receive it, because of what it communicated to her about her mother's apparent acceptance of the conversion. This all resonates with Hénaff's (2010) clarification of one of Mauss's original points: a gift given for honorific purposes is not primarily to be consumed pragmatically (here, worn on the head), but is rather intended by the donor as a mark of respect in a process of alliance-building. By bestowing such a gift, one is 'honoring the existence and status of the other' (Hénaff, 2010: 153). Put another way, giving gifts in this manner is a means of granting and receiving 'regard' (Offer, 1997).

The actual pragmatic uses such an object can be put to are here secondary in relation to its symbolic and positive relationship-generating capacities. The mother's gift is not an instance of a donor seeking to manipulate a recipient, but rather of honouring her decisions and making peace with them. This is partly because it was Miriam's agency that drove the conversion, not the mother's. The latter felt she had to recognise the validity of her daughter's agency, and to render it compatible with ongoing mother-daughter and familial relationships. Here a *scarf-gift* was intended and framed as a *hijab-gift* (illustrating that these two entities are not necessarily the same). The gift failed to operate at the pragmatic level of Miriam actually being able to wear it as a hijab (which is what the non-Muslim mother seems to have intended). Nonetheless the gifted object successfully created bridges - between familial individuals, between religious affiliation and continued family membership, and between Muslim and non-Muslim groups and communities - that helped conduct all parties into the future in a constructive way. Here we see clearly the bonding capacities of such gifts, including across community and religious divisions.

GIFTS, GENDER, PATRIARCHAL POWER AND FEMALE BONDING

In this section we turn to consider two dimensions of the gendered nature of gifts: how gift-giving is a mechanism for the creation and reproduction of patriarchal relations within and outside of families, as well as a

potential means for the creation of the types of solidarities among females that are irreducible to patriarchal dynamics.

Feminist authors have emphasised how gift-giving can be part of wider patriarchal complexes. For example, patriarchal social relations can compel women to give the 'gift' of care-giving - to children, male partners, elderly relatives, etc. - without financial payment and sometimes without any acknowledgement or thanks (Elder-Vass, 2015, Diprose, 2002). Recognition and reciprocation of women's gifts, both by men and wider families and communities, is seen to be prevented because of pervasive gender norms. Giving care, and other sorts of gifts, is widely regarded simply as something that women must just do, because their supposed 'nature' means that they are 'naturally' givers rather than receivers (Ashwin et al, 2013). Empirical research inspired by Hochschild (1989) - who herself invokes Mauss - has indicated the delicate but often fraught 'economy of gratitude' that pertains within particular marriages and families. A woman's domestic labours may or may not be recognised as gifts by others, especially men, and reciprocation or non-reciprocation of those labours by family members both depends on, and creates, subtle power relations within the domestic setting (Pyke and Coltrane, 1996). Such research implies that in many settings, women are not only expected to *give* freely (of their time, emotional energies, etc.) to family members, but also possibly to *receive* certain gifts willingly, and perhaps enthusiastically too. At the least, a performance of willingness and enthusiasm might well be expected on the female recipient's behalf.

The case of Afra, a Shia Iraqi in her late twenties who is married to a man from the same ethnic community, illustrates how women are expected to 'give' to the husband's family in many ways, including to the benefit of the family's reputation among its peers. This is bound up with acts of the giving (by the family) and the receiving (by Afra) of clothing objects rendered as gifts. During the time leading up to her marriage, Afra recalls certain sartorial changes that were initiated by her decision to marry. The marriage was arranged between the two families, and was considered by Afra to be a union of the families, rather than just of two individuals.

It was through my aunt. His sister asked if I'm married. [...] Then they came to visit and asked for my hand and my father asked me what I think, do I agree? I asked what do you [both the parents] think, what kind of a family is it? The family is good and it has a good reputation, we knew this is a high-status family... [O]ne doesn't look at the boy what he's like, what he's done, but at the family. Because the family is responsible for the son. If he does something [wrong], the family takes the responsibility. I thought: that's a good family, the best family here in Finland, really good reputation, no one has as good a reputation here in Finland. So why not?

The putative husband enjoyed high social standing due to the exceptionally positive regard among Shia Iraqis for his long-established family, which was said to be descended from the prophet Muhammad himself. In a 'traditional' Islamic family setup, women are held particularly responsible for the upkeep of a family's reputation, by exhibiting to the wider community high levels of piety and modesty (Webster, 1984). Afra's husband's family sought to protect their reputation partly through female dress strategies.

In respect to dress we [i.e. Afra's original family] are different because they [the husband's family] all wear the *abaya* and the *jilbab*⁴. When a girl goes to school, they dress [like that] immediately. Now [one young daughter] wears trousers and a tunic but they slowly teach her to wear the *abaya*... But [in my family], mother wears the *abaya* and the *jilbab* but we [daughters] don't, we wear jeans and tunics and skirts. We are different [from the husband's family] in the sense that it's not so particular, not so necessary to have the *abaya*.

Afra's marriage made her a member of a higher status family than her own, transforming her life in various ways, including in sartorial terms. Her mother-in-law's gifts were highly significant in this regard.

When I got married, my mother-in-law gave me clothes; she had bought them abroad [probably in the Middle East] ... At that time, I didn't yet wear a black long robe, I had trousers and a top down here [indicates below mid-thigh] and then the scarf. This robe I started to wear when I got married. It was [my husband's family's] wish, and I said why not?

Such gifts as these are very ambiguous and potentially very powerful. While the mother-in-law solicited Afra's opinion about whether she would wear the more covering forms of dress that were being offered, Afra was hardly in a position to refuse to change her dress style. Such a refusal would have been costly to her, particularly in terms of the relationship to her mother-in-law. Refusal would have gone against the norms of the 'economy of gratitude'

⁴ A *jilbab* is a 'full-length long-sleeved outer garment' (Tarlo 2005: 17).

pertaining in this particular diasporic ethnic group (Hochschild, 1989).⁵ The gifts came with an explicit request for the recipient to contribute to the family's maintenance of reputation, by dressing in a more covering way than hitherto, and operated as quite direct tools for enforcing the patriarchal family structure upon the new member. Afra's husband already enjoys a high reputation in the community provided by and through his family's high social standing. Afra is required by the family to contribute to reputation maintenance by modifying her dress and thereby herself too.

These demands could have been read as an imposition by Afra, but instead she found appealing elements in the situation. This is seen in how she narrates how her own family viewed her sartorial transformation.

[My] mother says, the more you make an effort for the religion, the more you work, the better level of Paradise you achieve ... Mother makes a comparison that I who wear the long robe get more [religious credit], because I'm young after all, want to dress fashionably, want to look pretty but I still cover myself for God. Because I fear God and put the long robe on, I get more virtues, I get more points. But [a woman who] dresses according to fashion, she gets less.

In making an appealing case for the sartorial, bodily, aesthetic and visual sacrifices she is required to make, Afra's mother tacitly works in co-operation with the mother-in-law, working upon Afra to accept the clothing gifts with apparent spontaneity and enthusiasm. This illustrates how the forms of social power inherent in and related to a gift can be reinforced by third parties, here Afra's mother. The apparently dyadic nature of the gift relationship can in fact be bound up with wider relations involving multiple actors, and it is this which sometimes contributes a great deal to the power dynamics of gifting. Through her mother's actions, Afra is made more likely to consent willingly, and even enthusiastically, to the patriarchal structure of both the family and of the wider ethnic community. Afra's consent in this regard, and the changed sartorial practices that go with it, are a kind of counter-gift voluntarily proffered by Afra to the mother-in-law, and to the family and community which stand behind her. In this way, a potential imposition is reworked, in both Afra's and her female relatives' perceptions, as a positive form and expression of piety, familial belonging and solidarity-building.

Forms of female bonding through clothing gifts need not necessarily involve these sorts of patriarchal power dynamics. The possibility of women exercising creative agency in gifting relationships has been identified by feminist authors (Weiner, 1976, 1992, Joy, 2013). Gifting may be a means for at least some women in some contexts to negotiate power relations, both with men and with other females (Komter, 1996). Some radical feminist positions claim that specifically 'female' forms of gift-giving are antithetical to what are regarded as essentially 'masculine' forms of exchange of objects. This implies that female-gifting, at least in some instances, may lack the obligatory-return dynamics identified by Mauss, instead being centred on unselfish forms of generosity expressed through gifts that have no expectation of reciprocation attached to them (Vaughn, 1997, Diprose, 2002). Such gifting can create specifically female forms of solidarity and relations of mutual enhancement, which may operate in relation to patriarchal structures in complicated ways, but which are irreducible to them (Cixous and Clément, 1986, Irigaray, 1996).

The case of Khadija is relevant here. She is a relatively recent Finnish convert in her sixties. She described a situation, some years before her conversion, where she had been the recipient of an elaborate gift from multiple donors. She had befriended many Somali families through her work for the City Council of Helsinki, and the community had learned to appreciate her efforts for their well-being. A group of women wanted to give her a garment to show their appreciation. This garment was described by Khadija as 'traditional Somali dress'. This is likely to refer to the *Dirac*, a full-length, sleeveless, rectangular dress-like garment, often made of translucent fabric (Isotalo, 2017: 272). The donors wanted to give the recipient a garment strongly associated with their ethnic group's identity.

Before having the garment made by a seamstress, the women came together to show the fabric to Khadija, to demonstrate that the garment she was to receive was new and made specially for her, a particular kind of 'earmarking'. According to Khadija, this sort of act is crucial for Somali gift-giving: it would be unacceptable to

⁵ The interview data yielded no instances of outright refusals of gifts. Nonetheless, the interviewer (Almila) was sometimes offered cheaply-made scarves, that could be worn as hijabs, by those interviewees particularly interested in converting non-Muslims to Islamic observance. Such women often kept supplies of such scarves in their homes, to be given as gifts to both Muslim and non-Muslim acquaintances, presumably with the purpose of sparking an interest in covering the head, and therefore leading eventually to conversion to the faith. In these cases, the interviewer accepted the gift, for the sake of building a rapport, but did not subsequently wear it or pursue any interest in conversion. But the interviewer did not discard the garments. The gift was accepted but not reciprocated in the manner the donor would probably have wanted. Third-party engagement also happened in this regard: wearing 'modest' forms of dress (but not covering the hair) in Islamic events during the fieldwork often resulted in openly expressed approval, by Finnish converts in particular, for the dress style chosen by the interviewer.

give a second-hand gift for special occasions. Even though the fabric had been purchased as a commodity, the bespoke and artisanal nature of the garment itself meant that it had already been significantly de-commoditised by collective agency before the point in time that it was given, thus rendering it potentially particularly powerful in terms of the recipient's emotional response to it.

The special nature of the gift was also augmented and dramatized through a ceremonial element. Arriving together as a group, to present to the recipient the material of which the garment was to be made, bound all the donor women into the gift itself. All their individual personalities were melded together to become integral parts of the gift. The gift was thereby rendered unlikely to become a commodity at some point in the future, so charged with significance for the recipient was it. This sort of giving act is not reducible to patriarchal social structures, even if the donors live within highly patriarchal communities. By making the gift communicate 'this is a *Somali* garment', 'it is from *all of us*', and 'it is made only for *you*', the women acknowledged Khadija's special status for them: as a non-member of the group that nonetheless the group honours because of the care - a kind of gift in itself - that she has shown them. The donors likely viewed their gift as a counter-gift for all the services Khadija had rendered them in her professional work.

Receiving this gift was one element in Khadija having a very positive view of the Somali community, which in turn encouraged her later to convert to Islam. This sartorial gift was not a *hijab-gift* like others mentioned above, but it nonetheless played a role in her conversion career. Khadija was under no pressure to convert, conversion being wholly a matter of her own agency. The gift here was not patriarchal, at least in any obvious or direct sense. It did encourage her to become a Muslim who has very strong connections to the Somali community, which exhibits strong patriarchal features. Nonetheless, the gift and Khadija's acceptance of it are not at all simple or direct expressions of patriarchy.

CHARITABLE GIVING – BETWEEN THE RELIGIOUS AND THE SECULAR

The explicitly 'religious' dimensions of gifts and gift-giving are aspects of Mauss's thinking that have been clarified by Hénaff (2010). Most attention by subsequent scholars has focused on one of two types of gifting, namely the giving of gifts in direct inter-personal interactions, which in ideal-typical terms are (apparently) symmetrical and horizontal in nature. But there is a second type too, where a person, often explicitly acting on behalf of a group, gives gifts to the gods or other supernatural entities. Such gifts may or may not be construed by actors as sacrifices. The gifting relationship here is vertical and asymmetrical in nature, with an actor who perceives themselves to be lower in a religious hierarchy offering gifts to higher entities. The subterranean point of such gifting when it is done on the behalf of a group is to create group solidarity, through establishing intimate bonds with the supernatural entities to which the group may largely owe its identity as a group in the first place.

Hénaff (2010) points out that the 'religious' type of gifting may in some cases permeate the inter-personal type. Gifts exchanged between people for intentionally 'religious' purposes, of some sort or another, display this dual feature. The everyday gift and act of gifting are imbued with a higher level of significance, concerning extra-mundane and 'sacred' matters. Parry (1986) notes that in many religiously-based groups, donors are required to act in the belief that they must not expect any worldly return on their gift-giving, in terms of accruing some material kind of advantage. But they may tacitly expect - and may be allowed by group norms to expect - some sort of credit in the after-life, if such a thing is believed in.

This points us in the direction of dealing with the complex motivations involved in the types of gift-giving defined by actors as acts of 'charity', whether in explicitly religious or secular forms, or in a mixture of the two (Ostrower, 1997). Giving charitable gifts either directly to known individuals, or to unknown individuals through donating to a charitable organisation, can strongly inform a donor's self-perception, including as a putatively virtuous person (Silber, 1998). Sociologists have shown how acts of charitable giving can also help to establish or reproduce the high social status of a donor (Collins, 1988). This is especially the case when some sort of audience is involved. Approval from a peer group potentially acts as a stronger means of recognising the donor's virtue than does the gratitude of the gifts' actual recipients. In the case of unknown recipients, sentiments of gratitude may never actually be vocalised, or may only be ventriloquised by the officials of the charitable organisation which arranged the donation (Blau, 1986).

Muslim women have different but interlocking reasons for giving away clothes. Some reasons are to do with charity, and therefore the act of giving away is a kind of gift-giving (captured in the phrase 'donating to charity'). Charitable giving is one of the foundations of the Islamic faith, expressed in the Five Pillars of Islam. Zaynab, a Somali in her late twenties, sends parcels of old clothes to Somalia.⁶ Charitable giving was pleasurable for her, possibly gaining her peer approval in her community, regarding her perceived religious credentials.

⁶ For what may happen in particular recipient contexts to clothing gifts, see Hansen (2000).

Yet Zaynab's thinking was also very much shaped by environmental concerns, which are secular in nature. She sought to reduce her meat consumption - 'I don't really need it' - and was also highly conscious of the environmental issues thrown up by rapidly-changing fashion cycles. While her consumption was notably informed by secular environmental considerations, her giving away of garments was more shaped both by religious considerations of charitable gifting, and by a sense of trans-national community belonging and solidarity with the homeland. Zaynab's reality is one where her garment-related and gifting activities are thoroughly underpinned by a mixture of religious and secular concerns, which one may take to be typical of many young Muslim adults in diaspora contexts (Moors and Tarlo, 2013).

Nura, already encountered above, illustrates a different way in which religious and secular concerns inform, in complex ways, sartorial and gifting practices. She considers her whole attire as involving obedience to God. This makes the possession of specific garments, including hijab garments, relatively unimportant to her.

In my opinion the clothes aren't the thing, but that you obey God. If a garment serves that purpose it becomes important. Not so that you're attached to material, but you wear certain [clothes] because you're a Muslim and you obey God and that's it. Nothing else. In my opinion Muslims shouldn't cling to anything worldly. You wear what you wear because Allah has told you to and you obey God, and there's no greater reason.

One might expect, on the basis of such sentiments, Nura to discard clothes through Islamic charitable giving. But she does not. Instead, while she considers it a religious duty not to be overly attached to worldly goods, she also uses secular language about 'recycling' clothes. However, this is not necessarily for environmental reasons.

I've also learned to recycle the clothes I don't wear anymore so that my closets won't be stuffed. So that I won't feel guilty for having closets full of clothes.

Just as religious and secular arguments are often mixed together when Muslim women reject overly 'fashionable' garments (Moors and Tarlo, 2013), so too when giving away one's garments, religious rationales may get tied up with secular language and notions. While Nura's sense of guilt about having 'too many' clothes is partly induced by religious considerations, her reaction to such a situation is more secular in nature. Instead of charitably donating garments for religious reasons to those in need, she says she 'recycles' them. 'Recycling' of garments is very much part of the rhetoric today of the global capitalist system and putative reforms of, or alternatives to, it (Claudio, 2007). Nura's choice of words shows that a very religious person may yet understand what they are doing, when they discard clothing and other material objects, in very secular terms. Those secular terms may stimulate ways of giving away clothes, or other goods, which seem in this case to trump charitable giving for religious reasons.

As Nura wears both highly 'religious' garments and 'normal' (in Finnish terms) clothes underneath them, her recycling could involve giving away either type. She did not specify in the interview whether the latter category was more likely to be deemed 'recyclable' than the former - an intriguing gap in this research which merits further investigation. Nonetheless, there is a further irony here. When Nura 'recycles', she is most likely taking the clothes to a public collection-point for unwanted clothing items. Most such repositories in Finland are run by charities, some of which are secular while some are Christian. Therefore Nura's 'recycling' might well become, presumably unintentionally and unknowingly, in one sense an act of secular or Christian charitable gift-giving.

CONCLUSION

The central point of this paper has been to demonstrate that hijabs and gifts can throw new light on each other when they are considered in tandem. Gift theory can give us new insights into the wearing of hijabs, while examining hijabs given and received as gifts can tell us novel things about the nature of gifts. Muslim women operate today in social contexts where both hijab-related and gift-related practices are notably multi-layered. Focusing on gifting activities can generate new perspectives for understanding the multiple layers of meaning and significance that are involved in the wearing of a hijab, including in diasporic contexts. Focusing on the *hijab-gift* and related sartorial objects, which are usually ambiguous in nature, gives us a constructive way into investigating complicated and often ambivalent issues to do with religion, community, gender, clothing, fashion and diaspora.

The giving of hijab-related garments as gifts is primarily, if not exclusively, a matter among women only, men being excluded from such processes. This possibly complicates the connections between such gift-giving practices and patriarchal social structures, for men's actions are not directly involved in these matters. How male members of families and communities are connected to such practices remains to be investigated. Nonetheless, we have seen how female members of families, and more broadly of specific ethnic communities, can subtly but profoundly influence, through giving certain garments as gifts, what individual recipient women do vis-à-vis the wearing of hijabs. Donors can shape whether recipients will wear a hijab or not, including in relation to converting to Islam.

They can also impact upon which *type* of hijab will be worn by recipients, and what kinds of religious observance - stricter or looser, more conservative or more liberal - will accordingly structure both the recipient's interior sense of selfhood and also their exterior look and conduct.

The existing literature on Islamic veiling recognises ambivalences in relation to why and how many women adopt hijabs, and the reasons they give for such adoption. Women are led to understand that the adoption must be an apparently wholly voluntary act of free will, while simultaneously they are told by families, peers and religious authorities that the adoption is strongly desirable, if not in fact compulsory (Almila, 2018). The potential contradiction here may be particularly prone to surface in diasporic contexts, which are often marked by the complicated interplay of religious and secular logics and forms of justification. This paper has shown the important role of gifts and gift-giving in such processes, a feature that has not been much remarked on before, if at all. Donors of *hijab-gifts* can influence the precise manners in which recipients embrace the hijab and make sense of their adoption of it, sometimes coming to understand the latter as a voluntary act to be engaged in enthusiastically.

We can say that hijab-related gifts and gifting practices can, at least under certain circumstances, work to smooth out, obscure and neutralise perceptions and feelings of ambivalence, of the sort noted above, that may pertain among diasporic Muslim women. In a paradoxical way, then, it may be that it is the *hijab-gift's* ambiguous nature *itself* which allows it to work as a resource for neutralising potential ambivalences, both within the thoughts and perceptions of recipient women, and in the social relations that pertain between donors and receivers. Such relations are themselves made possible, or at least strongly influenced by, the very act of gift-giving itself. Giving an ambiguous object may be a way of - partly or wholly - eliminating ambivalences, both in the recipient's mind about the wearing of the hijab, and also in her relations with the donor, as well as with the family and community members who stand behind the latter.

In line with contemporary economic sociology, we want to emphasise that while *hijab-gifts* have the *potential* to exhibit such capacities, there is nothing automatic about the realisation of such potentials, for the latter depends upon contingent empirical circumstances. We hypothesise that the stronger familial and community bonds are, and the more decidedly patriarchal are social relations within specific families and ethnic and religious groups, the greater likelihood there is of *hijab-gifts* working to neutralise perceived ambivalences, about hijabs and related matters, experienced by recipient women. Conversely, precisely because of their ambiguous nature, such gifts could also potentially *heighten and dramatize* feelings of ambivalence, both within the recipient's mind, and between her and the donor, and the groups who stand behind the latter. This may be more likely in contexts marked by looser community and familial bonds, and less marked patriarchal structures and attitudes. Although such a scenario was not captured in our data, empirical examination of such possible scenarios in other diasporic contexts would be a productive pathway for future research.

Despite these open-ended questions, we can conclude that a *hijab-gift* is always potentially a very powerful object, as well as a subtle one, tied up in various ways with different sorts of power relations. Its capacity to generate relations between individuals, and to influence individuals' actions, ultimately rests in its complex nature and its deep, multi-layered ambiguity. The giving and receiving of such gifts is marked by multiple ambivalences, which can be handled by women in different ways. Specific forms of social power can be created, nurtured, maintained, expressed, thematised, obscured, neutralised, modified, and perhaps sometimes resisted, in and through the social relations that the giving and receiving of such objects involves and makes possible. Gift theory since Mauss has been very aware of any gift object's potential powers and affordances. Consideration of the case of the *hijab-gift* adds various more layers to those original insights. It allows for new and more precise delineations of the multiple factors that, in a globalized world condition marked by diasporic situations and world-spanning flows of commodities, together constitute the burgeoning complexity of the often strikingly manifold and subtle nature of gifts and the social relations they inspire.

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Stay in Your Own Part of the Bookshop! Legitimation in the Literary Field and the Limited Exchange Value of Celebrity Capital

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the phenomenon of boundary crossing between cultural fields and the role that different kinds of capital play in determining whether or not the crossing is a successful one. The fields in question here are those of entertainment (specifically, stand-up comedy) and literature, and the particular boundary crossing is represented by the figure of Ben Elton, a British comedian who has published 15 novels since 1989, with mixed critical and commercial success. One novel (*Popcorn*, 1996) received sufficient attention within the literary field to be long-listed for the Booker prize, an accolade usually reserved for writers belonging to the sub-field 'literary fiction'. Others have fared less well, and after many years Elton's credentials as a writer are still queried in some reviews of his work. I suggest that, from a close analysis of reviews in the UK press, Elton's boundary crossing was initially enhanced by the amount of celebrity capital that he was able to export to the literary field. Despite his evident intention to remain a serious practitioner in that field, however, this capital has increasingly diminishing returns, and legitimation of his work is forever hampered by the image of his celebrity persona.

Keywords: bourdieu, celebrity, cultural fields, literary field, fiction

INTRODUCTION

The study of symbolic boundaries in social and cultural life has largely focused on their role in producing inequalities of social class, race and religion (Bourdieu, 1984; Lamont, 2000). In this paper I am examining a somewhat different type of boundary crossing, one in which the agent would appear to carry a good deal of useful capital, but where that capital proves to be of limited use in achieving full legitimation in a different cultural field. I am speaking specifically of celebrity capital (Driessens, 2013) and its exchange value in the literary field, particularly at its high-status end, the sub-field known as 'literary fiction'.

Celebrity capital has been conceived as "accumulated media visibility that results from recurrent media representations" (Driessens, 2013, p. 543), and enables celebrities to cross from unrelated fields such as entertainment into politics (Arthurs and Shaw, 2016), or across boundaries that separate high-status fields from lower ones, such as Paul McCartney's migration from popular to classical music (Giles, 2015). However, as the case of McCartney suggests, while celebrity capital can secure a foothold in a higher status field it does not guarantee legitimation in that field if other important credentials are required, such as the cultural capital accumulated through formal education within that field.

The literary field, like the musical field broadly conceived, consists of a similar hierarchy, particularly where fiction is concerned. At the top is found the rarified subfield of literary fiction, a category that has been largely invented by publishers and booksellers in recent years to indicate "quality" or "highbrow" fiction, although its

distinguishing criteria are mainly industrial rather than aesthetic: “a set of publishing processes and practices which include not only the composition and editing of the book but also its design, marketing and distribution, as well as, most distinctively, its relationship with particular institutions such as literary prizes and broadsheet reviews” (Norman, 2011, p. 38).

It is these last two institutions which have particular relevance for the case study I will go on to present. The Booker prize was established fifty years ago in order to reward “the best novel of the year written in English” with the broad aim “to increase the reading of quality fiction” (The Man Booker Prize, 2018). Winners have included some of the most prestigious and celebrated British and Commonwealth (and since 2016) American writers and, although not explicitly stated anywhere, the assumption is that novels selected for the ‘long’ shortlist are exclusively drawn from the literary fiction category. The second institution Norman mentions is “broadsheet reviews”, referring to book review sections of the UK national press, though only those from the ‘quality’ end of another hierarchy – those traditionally larger-sized publications such as *The Guardian*, *The Times* and *The Independent*. I will refer extensively to both “institutions” throughout the course of this article.

The case study that I will use to explore this particular boundary crossing is that of Ben Elton, a British stand-up comic and TV scriptwriter who has enjoyed considerable commercial success as an author as well as receiving some legitimation within the literary field, most notably the nomination of his 1996 novel *Popcorn* for the ‘long list’ of the Booker Prize. At the same time, during his three decades as a novelist, critical reviews of Elton’s work have often worked to discredit this legitimation, and, through close analysis of his novels’ reception in the UK “broadsheet” press I will discuss the ways in which this has been achieved. First, however, I will discuss some of the specific aspects of comedy that are relevant to this case study, and review the literature on the practice of book reviewing.

Comedians and the Literary Field

According to Bourdieu (1993, p. 165), the writer enjoys a ‘double status’, as orator (‘saying the true and the good’) and fool (‘to whom is accorded transgression without consequences’). It is perhaps no surprise, then, that so many British comedians – to whom the same double status surely applies – have recently made the boundary crossing from stand-up comedy into the literary field. Since Ben Elton made his literary debut with the comic novel *Stark* (1989), no fewer than 40 novels¹ have been published by authors who are best known to the public for their appearances on UK television or on stage as, primarily, comedians. While Elton’s own oeuvre accounts for a substantial chunk of this output (15 titles to date), other names include Stephen Fry, Dawn French, David Baddiel, Robert Newman, Stewart Lee, Hugh Laurie, Alexei Sayle, and Jenny Eclair.

There is not a long tradition of British comedians entering the literary field. Spike Milligan’s *Puckoon* (1964) was a rare critical and commercial success, selling over 6 million copies and featuring in various lists of the best comic novels of all time, but there are no precedents for comedians enjoying success in non-comic genres, and certainly not the coveted genre of ‘literary fiction’. Inevitably, then, most comedians-turned-novelists have begun their writing careers opting for the familiar format of comedy, only attempting to branch out into other genres after having secured a safe footing in the broad literary field.

On the face of it, comedians are uniquely equipped for a second career as authors of fiction. They are gifted storytellers, crafting anecdotes to please an audience (stage comedians receive instant feedback), and share the same outsider status as ‘the writer’ – that is, the literary author as conceived by Bourdieu (whose model was essentially Flaubert, described by Sartre as “the village idiot”). Caught between the two opposing poles of bourgeoisie and the proletariat, and above all fully *independent*, artists need (Bourdieu, 1993: 169) ‘to free themselves from bourgeois demands and define themselves as the sole masters of their art’.

This spirit of independence extends to politics, another field in which comedians have enjoyed some recent influence, albeit as popular activists (most notably the Italian Beppe Grillo but also the British comedian Russell Brand). Again it is the perceived neutrality of comics arising from their outsider status that lends weight to their claims to represent the public voice (Arthurs and Shaw, 2016). Stand-up comedy is a particularly effective vehicle for communicating political ideas: as Quirk (2015) argues, the perceived (unmediated) neutrality of the theatre stage allows performers to try out routines that would be unacceptable on television (the same applies to online media like YouTube). Indeed it is a long-standing tradition for stand-up comics to release ‘live and uncensored’ recordings that remind audiences of their position outside the constraints of regulated media. It is perhaps no coincidence that most of the comedians-turned-novelists began their comedy careers in this format.

The Institution of Criticism

How do writers become legitimated within the literary field? Van Rees (1987) identified three levels of criticism that perform this function: the journalistic level, through reviews in national newspapers; the essayist level, through more extensive discussions of work in literary magazines and journals; and the academic level, where work is

¹ Specifically novels aimed at a broad adult readership (excluding at this point books aimed at children, which I will discuss briefly later on)

formally scrutinised and selected for course curricula. Together these constitute what Janssen (1997) terms ‘the institution of criticism’, where, through a gradual process of ‘orchestration’, certain writers are granted legitimation (often just determined by critical attention, e.g. which books are actually reviewed) and others condemned to obscurity.

In this paper I am going to focus entirely on the journalistic level of criticism of Ben Elton’s work because it would seem to be the most relevant given Elton’s very high existing media profile at the outset of his literary career (indeed this would be the case with any existing celebrity who decides to publish literary work – as opposed to authors who attain celebrity solely on the basis of their writing). In relation to Bourdieusian theory, reviewers in national newspapers would seem to correspond with his description of a ‘corps of professionals appointed to conserve the work of art, both materially and symbolically’ (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 36) who produce ‘meaning and value’ (ibid, p. 37), apeing ‘the learned, sententious tone and the cult of erudition characterising academic criticism’ (ibid, p. 131). Ultimately, reviewers have to decide whether a work of art is sufficiently detached from commercial interests to be taken seriously. The importation of celebrity capital then immediately sets up a degree of suspicion – is this individual simply ‘cashing in’ on their fame?

There are other functions of critical legitimation that are unique to the literary field. These include the formal quality of the writing itself – the intrinsic properties of prose style such as word choice, grammatical consistency, and the use of recognised literary devices – as well as the treatment of setting, narrative and character development deemed to be necessary evaluative criteria for a novel (Corse and Griffin, 1997). Despite the apparently objective nature of such criteria, it has been argued that critical legitimation is largely arrived at through orchestrated consensus, whereby critics ‘attune their judgements to each other’ (Janssen, 1997, p. 277). Partly this is a protective strategy to maintain the status of the critics themselves. It may also have a basic social function; as de Nooy (1999) has argued, reviews have interpersonal consequences – in terms of their relationships with authors – for those who write them. Apart from anything else, journalistic critics are often published or aspiring authors themselves.

Ben Elton: From Stand-up to the Booker (and Back?)

When Ben Elton published *Stark* in 1989, he was one of the most recognisable figures in British popular culture. Compère of the BBC’s variety show *Friday Night Live* and co-author of the classic sitcom *Blackadder* (which was just about to air its fourth and final series), he personified ‘alternative comedy’ for the mass audience with his abrasive and electrifying delivery, with frequent attacks on then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, perhaps best captured on the live 1987 LP *Motormouth*. *Stark*, a comic novel with an environmental theme (aiming satire at politicians and eco-activists alike) was an immediate success for Sphere books, selling well over a million copies, and was followed by four further novels for Simon and Schuster. The last of this series, *Popcorn* (1996), tackled the subject of violence inspired by Hollywood film (in the wake of the media outcry around Oliver Stone’s *Natural Born Killers*) and became Elton’s first genuine critical success, winning the Crime Writers Association’s Golden Dagger award and being longlisted for the Booker Prize². Subsequent novels fared less well critically, despite continuing commercial success: Nielsen Bookscan listed Elton as the 58th best-selling author for all books sold in the UK over the 2000-2009 decade.

Thematically his fifteen novels can be grouped into three phases: the early (often environmentally-orientated) comic farces borrowing liberally from his stage act material; the middle period (from *Popcorn* onwards) in which contemporary issues – such as reality TV and drugs – form the setting for a murder mystery; and the later period (from 2005’s *The First Casualty*), which sees him draw on historical, typically wartime, settings. These last two phases can be distinguished by the visual appearance of the paperback editions: the mid-period covers are vividly colourful, trumpeting ‘No. 1 bestseller’ even at the point of release, while the history-themed novels have elegant, sober covers with embossed lettering, in the style of the literary fiction genre. (This apparent development is not necessarily reflected in critical appraisals of the work, as I will go on to argue later.) Elton’s literary career has unfolded in conjunction with other successful writing ventures including musical shows and plays, as well as scripts for TV series, though since *Blackadder* these have attracted increasing criticism from peers and reviewers.

In the next section I will present an analysis of some of the critical reviews of Elton’s novels, taken from the archived content of British newspapers held by the News Bank dataset. I have concentrated almost exclusively on reviews in the ‘broadsheet’ newspapers (*Guardian*, *Times*, *Independent*, *Telegraph* and their Sunday equivalents), given their legitimizing role within the field of literary fiction. By taking an iterative approach derived from methods such as thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) and grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998), I identify a number of broad patterns and common elements throughout the reviews which describe the way in which critics have evaluated Elton’s work.

² It should be noted that *Popcorn* had the good fortune to be published before the Booker organisers shrunk the long list to less than half its previous size at the beginning of the current century (from around 30 to the current 13).

THE CRITICAL RECEPTION OF BEN ELTON'S NOVELS

“The Motormouth Comedian in a Spangly Suit”: Depicting the Author

“I still have this comic-writes-fourteenth-novel thing” says Ben Elton in one of his frequent press interviews (1). A great many reviews of Elton’s novels contain, often in the first sentence, a stereotypical image of the author in a decidedly non-literary context. The intent here is often to present Elton as confounding expectation, either by writing a novel in the first place, or by continuing to publish. At other times, it is simply a device for accounting for the particular book’s perceived limitations (“unsurprisingly for a man who first flourished as a stand-up comedian...” (2)). In either case, it serves to frame the author in the context that will be most recognisable to readers, typically in his 1980s stand-up persona, and occasionally, usually to set up an unflattering comparison, as co-writer of *Blackadder*.

The stand-up persona is surprisingly ubiquitous in the reviews because it is typically captured by a set of striking images: the performer in the “spangly suit”³ and oversized spectacles with a “manic” or “motormouth” delivery, cracking jokes about “Mrs Thatcher”. The most frequently impersonated celebrities, such as Elvis and Charlie Chaplin, are those whose image can be conveniently reduced to a set of signifiers (Giles, 2017), but in the process the individual artist becomes frozen at a specific moment in their career. In the same way that Elvis is forever strutting around a Vegas ballroom, Elton has been immortalised in a manner that does not sit comfortably with the image of a serious (even seriously comic) novelist.

Later reviews, while still occasionally referencing the stand-up persona, begin more frequently to use his previous novels as points of comparison. *Meltdown* (2009) is unfavourably compared to *Popcorn* (1996), the latter being “very funny and sharp” (4), although the same review still drags stand-up in by alluding to one of his 1980s catchphrases (“he’s got to get in his little bit of politics”). As early as 1996 a reviewer describes Elton as “an ‘issues’ novelist” whose latest novel represents something of a departure (5); by 2005 his shift from murder mysteries to historical fiction earns him the criticism that he “should stick to comic crime writing” (6). One particularly effusive review of the same novel (*The First Casualty*) actively seeks to reconstruct Elton’s image for the reader: “Put aside any remaining thoughts of Ben Elton in his shiny jacket and start to think of him as a real writer” (7).

A very common theme in reviews of Elton’s novels, particularly in right-wing newspapers, is the claim that he has moved away politically from his stand-up period. Reviewers in the *Times* and *Telegraph* – notably some of the most positive – frequently express surprise at the moralistic tone of the novels, particularly those from around the end of the millennium. One of the most friendly reviews of *Popcorn* (1996), in many respects Elton’s watershed novel, celebrates his perceived turn to conservatism (“reactionary humour at its most engaging”) and claims that he “will end up writing for *The Spectator* [right-wing cultural magazine] if he carries on like this” (8).

Telegraph critics in particular seek to cast Elton in the mould of 1950s ‘angry young men’ such as Kingsley Amis (cited in both (9) and (10)) and John Osborne: like these figures, Elton is perceived – favourably – as a young left-wing firebrand who sensibly mellowed into establishment conservatism in middle age. Such endorsements often come with a hint of nostalgia for the days in which he could be relied upon for a good “rant” about “Thatch”, even to the point of seeing the mid-2000s Elton as “disturbingly conservative” (11), and can be read as part of a ‘maturation’ narrative that characterises several of the most positive reviews. One writes of his “journey...to full-blown curmudgeon” (10); another of “a once-angry young man whose rage is becoming fascinatingly reactionary” (9). Even the *Guardian*, referencing a somewhat different literary figure, claims that “he is becoming decidedly Pooterish in his prime” (12). In each case, the reviewer seems to suggest that Elton’s satirical gifts are slightly wasted on the media topics that form the settings for the mid-period novels: screen violence (*Popcorn*), reality TV (*Dead Famous*), TV talent shows (*Chart Throb*).

By the time Elton’s literary career enters its latest, history-themed phase, the more positive reviews seek to distance the work even further from the “shiny suit” caricature. In the most glowing critique of all, the *Telegraph* review of *The First Casualty* declares: “it is impossible to believe it was written by the same man who used to tell stories about going to the loo in nightclubs.” (7).

Damned with Faint Praise: Ben Elton as ‘Non-writer’

The next theme I have identified follows on from the first, in that it extends the rhetorical function of references to Ben Elton’s stand-up persona: namely, the framing of Elton as literary outsider or even interloper. This is a rite of passage that all celebrity authors must endure in order to be fully legitimated, because the effectiveness of celebrity capital is such that the literary critic feels obliged to perform the function of cultural intermediary. Even

³ The numerous references to ‘spangly’ or ‘shiny’ suits are not really borne out by the archived performances available on YouTube from the Friday/Saturday Night Live period. In most of these he is wearing a fashionable Yuppie-era suit, but there is only one video in which the jacket conspicuously sparkles. Most curious of all is the review (3) in which it is claimed that Elton has ‘long ago hung up his donkey jacket’ – sartorially just about the antithesis of the sparkly suit.

though the work of Elton and other celebrities will have inevitably undergone the scrutiny of agents, editors and other publishing industry professionals, there nevertheless remains a suspicion that the author has not taken “the proper path to publication”, as Levey (2016) says, ironically, in relation to self-publishing.

In this respect, references to celebrity status in reviews of Elton’s books serve the same function as post-impressionist painter Henri Rousseau’s nickname ‘Le Douanier’, which is so frequently used in lieu of his proper name that it is easy to overlook the fact that it was initially a jibe at his former profession of customs officer. The sobriquet has remained in place to remind people that Rousseau was not a ‘true’ or professional artist (Bourdieu, 1993, contrasts him with the much better-connected Marcel Duchamp, whose ‘readymades’ were framed as iconoclastic artistic comment rather than naïf art). Likewise, descriptions of Elton in his “shiny suit” berating “Mrs Thatch” remind readers that he is not a ‘born to the manner’ novelist but one who has travelled into the literary field on a celebrity passport.

The image of the outsider permeates even some of the quite favourable reviews, two of which are worthy of close scrutiny, both of *High Society* (2002). This novel saw Elton take on the complete legalisation of drugs, a position that, according to Will Hutton in the *Observer* (13), the author is passionately in favour of; the paper’s byline to the review even refers to it as a “crusading novel”. Hutton’s review begins by admonishing Elton for what he sees as an unwriterly and thereby clumsy attempt to impose his own views on his characters, describing him as “a very good comedian abandoning his craft and lumbering into the pulpit to preach”. The message here is emphatic: stay in your own field (comedy). He builds to a positive note, however, arguing that the book is “saved by its pace and the author’s passion for his subject”. He concludes, rather in the manner of a schoolteacher commending a weaker student’s essay: “This is a tough subject tackled with courage and commitment. The great Victorian novelists managed to crusade and to entertain. Elton’s book, despite its weaknesses, is cast in that tradition.” In other words: not bad for a comedian.

Meanwhile, in the *Sunday Telegraph*, it seems as though David Robson (14) has been allocated a different book altogether. “Where does Ben Elton stand on the regulation of drugs? I have no idea. Nor will the reader of *High Society* have any idea.” This apparent ambiguity is a “tribute to the book’s even-handedness.” But this is not a lucky accident incurred while blundering out of the author’s proper field: it is the mark of a gifted writer. “Superior novelists do not take sides,” Robson argues, “and Elton is now, against expectation, a superior novelist.” Like Hutton, although for contrasting reasons, this reviewer ends up being somewhat ambivalent about *High Society*: “not one of his strongest books...a lightweight piece...but as a comic entertainment, it is both well observed and easy to read”.

As I will consider in more detail in the next section, one of the most striking features of reviews of Elton’s work is how little consensus there is on the question of his writing ability and on the qualities of individual novels. Much of this variation is, I believe, the result of his ‘back door’ entry into the literary field. Lacking a common literary reference point, reviewers take each novel at face value. A third review of *High Society* provides further evidence of this fractured consensus, from the *Independent*. Like the *Sunday Telegraph* reviewer, Susan Jeffreys (15) is unable to discern Elton’s position on drugs (“difficult to tell, from this novel, where Ben Elton stands”), but this is due to what she interprets as his indifference to the subject (“his heart doesn’t always seem in the [pro-legalisation] argument”), arguing that, as the book progresses, he “seems to lose interest in some of [the storylines]”. While Hutton in the *Observer* contrasts the novel condescendingly with “the great Victorian novelists”, Jeffreys chooses a previous Elton work (which she herself had reviewed enthusiastically the previous year (16)) as an unflattering point of comparison: the “impressive” *Dead Famous*, against which *High Society* “isn’t quite in [the same] class”.

The outsider/interloper theme appears frequently in qualified comments about the merits of Elton’s writing, typified by David Robson’s aside about Elton being a superior novelist “against expectation” (14). A common practice is to praise positive elements of his craft in order to dismiss others, so a plot is “robustly structured and paced so nicely as to distract the eye from most of the book’s inconsistencies”, with prose that is “soothingly anodyne” (7); a narrative that is “effective without any style at all” (17); a “competent detective story” (19). There is occasionally the hint that a successful work may have been a fluke (this is perhaps the sense of Jeffreys’s reference to *Dead Famous* (15)): a similar reference is made by Jenny Colgan, reviewing *Meltdown* unfavourably in the *Guardian* (4), to the much-earlier *Popcorn* (“very funny and sharp”). At the time, *Popcorn* was one of the most positively-received novels, but even then the quality of the work was acclaimed as a “big surprise” in one review (8), and patronised as a “grown-up book” in another (18).

This last comment relates back to the maturation narrative discussed earlier, whereby the celebrity-turned-novelist is perceived as learning on the job, as distinct from the *bona fide* writer who, it is assumed, could not have been awarded a book contract without a certain degree of literary polish. Changes in thematic content or setting provide opportunities for reviewers to note signs of progress in Elton’s output (for example, *Popcorn*’s “writing is more settled and less attention-seeking than it has been” (5)), and the fertility comedy *Inconceivable* (1999) is praised

for being based on personal experience rather than topical issues, and in which “[Elton] learns to write from the heart”. (19)

Can Ben Elton Write?

Whom do editors commission to review books? Certain critics seem to be habitually assigned the new Ben Elton each time, regardless of their appraisal. David Robson (*Telegraph*) crops up three times in the archive, initially as an enthusiast; however, his review of *Blind Faith* (2007), a novel seemingly overlooked by most newspapers, is one of the most damning of the entire sample. Jenny Colgan (*Guardian*) is asked to review *Two Brothers* in 2012 after panning *Meltdown* in 2009; Henry Sutton (*Independent*) surfaces from time to time to administer a bashing. Much of the time, however, Elton’s books seem to be allocated to somebody who is not familiar with his earlier novels, which may partly account for the repetitive use of 1980s stand-up imagery in the opening paragraph of so many reviews. It might also account for the lack of consensus in appraisals of the literary qualities of the work.

Just as reviewers were unable to agree on Elton’s position on the legalisation of drugs in *High Society*, they are rarely in accordance on either the quality of the prose in his novels or on the success of the characterisation. The same writing is described, across various books, as “inelegant”, “tired and slack”, “excruciating” and “laboured”, but elsewhere, “brilliant”, “good” and “terrific”. The characterisation is described in some reviews as “poor”, “one-dimensional” (twice), “mechanisms, not people”, yet other critics (not necessarily in positive reviews) find the characters “warm-hearted”, “beautifully delineated” and “well-drawn”.

Reviewers seem to have particular trouble agreeing on the merits of the first war novel in Elton’s most recent phase, *The First Casualty* (2005), in which he revisits the First World War setting associated with so much acclaim for the *Blackadder* series. I have already cited from Toby Clements’s review in the *Telegraph* (7), but to this eulogy can be added the review by Melissa Katsoulis in the *Sunday Telegraph* (21): “some dodgy plotting can be overlooked when the prose is good – and in parts Elton’s is brilliant...unputdownable and disgustingly realistic.” Other reviewers, however, dismiss the novel as “preposterous” (22), “ponderous and pompous” (6), “tragically flawed” (23), unsubtle and “melodramatic” (2).

Unanimity among critics finally arrives with the most recent two novels in this tradition, *Two Brothers* (2012), a novel set in pre-Second World War Berlin, and *Time and Time Again* (2014), a time-travel thriller set partly in the run-up to the First World War. It is surprising to see historical fiction criticised for being too well-researched, but Helen Rumbelow’s claim in the *Times* that *Time and Time Again* is “hyper-researched” (24) chimes with most other reviews of these two works. Research is good, the consensus seems to be, but not when the writing is weighed down with historical “exposition”. Almost every review lambasts the latter, as “finger-wagging” (20), “clunking” (25), “heavy-handed” (26); the prose full of “obvious research-won ‘facts’ about Berlin in the 20s” (24) resulting in “stilted dialogue” (27). Rumbelow rubs salt in the wound by comparing *Time and Time Again* with a recent “alternative history” novel by double Costa book award winner Kate Atkinson: “her writing is beautiful, while Elton’s is effective” (24).

The unflattering comparison is not an unusual device for showcasing Elton’s perceived limitations as a writer. At the time of *Dead Famous* (2001), a writer with slightly higher literary pedigree, Mark Lawson, had published a similar novel satirising reality TV in the wake of the first UK series of *Big Brother*, and two newspapers chose to run reviews of the novels in tandem (one of the two reviewers concluded by recommending readers to “buy both”). The following year, the *Sunday Times* carried a similar parallel review featuring *High Society* and John O’Farrell’s *This is Your Life*, a comic novel about celebrity, which was praised for having “more distance – and hence sharper satire” (28).

So, can Ben Elton write? Much depends on what he is writing about, when he is writing it (abrupt changes in style seem to fare better than the prolongation of a particular format), and whomever has been assigned to write the review. It is evident that critics find it difficult to agree exactly what kind of writer he is: Booker longlisted in 1996; merely “effective” in 2014. Ironically, it is the two most recent novels whose packaging has been designed with the apparent intention of moving Elton away from the popular crowd towards a more sophisticated literary readership. **Figure 1** contrasts the cover design for *The First Casualty* (2005) and *Chart Throb* (2006), whose bright colours, bold typefaces and claims of ‘bestseller’ clearly target a mass audience, with that for *Two Brothers* (2012) and *Time and Time Again* (2014), featuring tasteful, subdued images, with the latter’s title embossed in elegant gold lettering. Perhaps the most striking difference lies in the presentation of the author’s name: for the first two books – in common with most of the pre-2012 titles – it occupies nearly half the cover space, screaming ‘celebrity author’, while for *Time and Time Again* in particular it is barely noticeable at first glance, the eye being drawn to the first word of the book’s title. Despite the best efforts of marketing professionals, though, reviewers have conspicuously failed to adjust their perspective of Elton as an author.

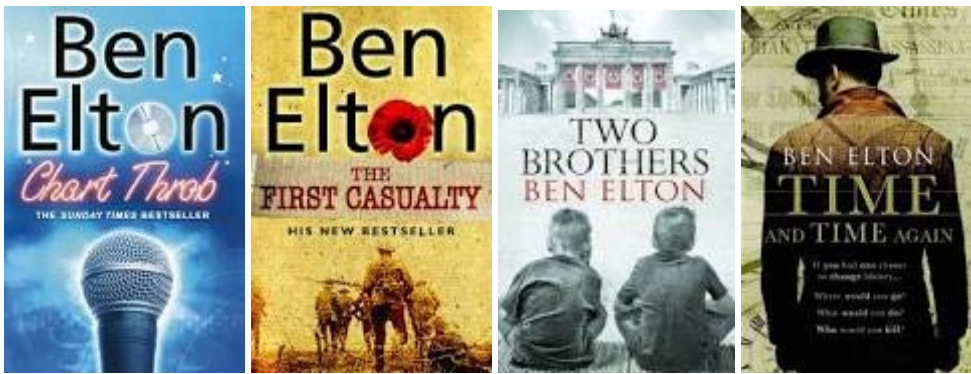


Figure 1. Comparison of 'popular' Elton with 'literary' Elton

'Middlebrowness'

"I have middlebrow tastes, so perhaps that's why I write middlebrow work" (Ben Elton, in 29)

This next theme more explicitly concerns reviewers' attempts, either implicit or explicit, to place Elton's work within a specific literary tradition or genre. As far as publishing companies' marketing departments are concerned, cover design performs an important function here, if only to persuade booksellers to organise the shelving accordingly. But within the broad domain of 'fiction' there is a clear hierarchy based on (perceived) genre, with 'literary fiction' at the summit, and other genres (crime, young adult, etc.) at various positions below. These genres can be mapped further on to long-standing notions of 'highbrow' and 'middlebrow' fiction, which equate roughly to Bourdieu's (1993) distinction in 19th century France between the serious art novel (epitomised by the work of Flaubert) and the popular serialised 'feuilletons'.

Seventy five years later, the debate over the distinction between high- and middlebrow fiction continues to rage around contemporary publishing practices (Jaffe, 2015). Virginia Woolf, albeit with tongue firmly in cheek, defined "the middlebrow" as a person "in pursuit of no single object, neither art itself nor life itself, but both mixed indistinguishably, and rather nastily, with money, fame, power or prestige" (1942, p. 155). A more recent analysis has concluded that the middlebrow is defined by eight key features: middle-class, reverential towards elite culture, entrepreneurial, mediated, feminised, emotional, recreational and earnest (Driscoll, 2014). This is consistent with Bourdieu's (1993) argument that (serious) literature has symbolic power assigned to it by critics that overturns the usual operation of economic laws, so that the word 'bestseller' becomes (in the literary field at least) a term of contempt rather than an accolade.

Part of the problem is that the genre "literary fiction" is so slippery, so hard to define. While Norman's (2011) definition (cited earlier in this article) might allow us, at least superficially, to distinguish between literary fiction and an unambiguously thematic genre such as crime or sci-fi, it is hard - if not impossible - to specify the cut-off point below which a work is insufficiently 'literary' to qualify as a legitimate member of this elite category. Irrespective of decisions made by marketing departments (such as the packaging of Elton's historical novels), it is ultimately the work of critics that determines the literary status of a specific book and its author.

Sometimes this designation is accomplished by reviewers allocating their own criteria. One might not think that a book could be "too topical", but this is the basis of Jenny Colgan's dismissal of *Meltdown* (4), as well as its being "extremely readable". In a later review, Colgan criticises *Two Brothers* for being "readable as an Archesque yarn" (20) (Jeffrey Archer here being the touchstone for middlebrow fiction). For these reviewers, literary fiction needs to make certain intellectual demands on a reader, and should shy away from a setting that grounds it too firmly in its own epoch. Another review (30) dismisses *Dead Famous* as a "poor offering...even by the humble standards of its genre". Since, in Elton's case, genre is ambiguous, this leaves the reader to guess which genre the reviewer is referring to solely on the basis of their previous comments about the novel's absorption in television culture.

As Bourdieu (1984) points out, classification judgements assign not only cultural products but critics themselves to categories. One early review (31) described Elton's debut *Stark* as "not the kind of book I usually read", elevating the reviewer at the same time as dismissing the author. A more subtle way of achieving the same effect is to draw a direct comparison between Elton and an author of (perceived) higher literary status, as in Helen Rumbelow's (24) unflattering contrast with Kate Atkinson's "beautiful writing"⁴. She goes on to say: "That's not to denigrate Ben Elton; in its own part of the bookshop *Time and Time Again* triumphs and it's the best I've read of Elton's many bestsellers." Again, here, the allusion to genre is paradoxical because bookshops do not generally discriminate

⁴ Kate Atkinson is a surprising point of contrast, since she is equally renowned for her genre (crime) fiction as for her 'literary' work, which are presumably segregated into two separate sections of the bookshop. There is also the perception among some that her reputation as an author of 'bestsellers' counts against her own legitimation in the literary field, leading her to be overlooked for even the long list of the Booker prize (Crompton, 2014), though she has won numerous other prestigious awards.

between ‘literary’ and ‘middlebrow’ fiction. Nevertheless, the point is clearly understood. Elton is not quite one of ‘us’.

CONCLUSION

Perhaps the most striking feature of Ben Elton’s critical reception as a novelist is the apparent lack of consensus between reviewers across different newspapers, different books, and different time periods. Many reviewers, even those of his later books, seem to come to his work afresh, and feel obliged to begin their reviews by alluding to his stand-up history. There is often surprise at the number of books he has written. As a writer, Elton seems to be under continuous assessment: each time a new book appears, his right to be reviewed, taken seriously, published even, is under scrutiny. In his case at least, the claim that the ‘institution of criticism’ orchestrates consensus (Janssen, 1997) is well wide of the mark. If there is consensus here, it is in the institution’s reluctance to legitimate Elton as a *bona fide* novelist.

How much of this can be attributed to Elton’s status as a celebrity? Clearly, there are elements in the writing itself that make it hard to defend Elton as a serious novelist. Although his own self-categorisation as ‘middlebrow’ carries a slightly bitter flavour, it does not help his cause. The charge of being ‘too topical’ is in part upheld because Elton himself is so open about the influence of the media in his work (for example, he admits (29) to having been inspired to write *Past Mortem* after reading an article in the music magazine *Q*).

One of Elton’s biggest problems is that, in writing about contemporary issues, he effectively invites critics to see himself as a character in his own work. There is much discussion in reviews about the author’s own critical standpoint on the issues involved, and which characters are articulating his views. A reviewer of *Dead Famous* asks of the writer: “I couldn’t work out whether he abhors [*Big Brother*]: I doubt he has missed an episode” (32). That the question matters indicates the difficulty reviewers have of separating the text from the “motormouth in the sparkly suit” whose trenchant opinions are believed to lie behind its creation. It may also explain Elton’s eventual move into historical fiction (a direction taken, at a similar stage in their writing careers, by other celebrity comedian authors such as Stephen Fry and David Baddiel). Here, however, it is his research, rather than his opinion, that is heard tumbling out of character’s mouths.

At this point I shall return briefly to Paul McCartney, another instance of a successful performer in one field (popular music) seeking legitimation in another, higher status field (classical music) (Giles, 2015). Both he and Elton are revered for their work in their original fields - not a bad word is ever said in reviews about McCartney’s popular recordings, or Elton’s (early) television comedy - to the extent that one is reminded of Arnold Schoenberg’s famous put-down to George Gershwin when he approached him for tuition: “I would only make you a bad Schoenberg, and you’re such a good Gershwin already”.⁵

The pattern of critical reception, and struggle for legitimacy, is broadly similar in each case: occasional recognition (awards, nominations) outweighed by a large volume of negative appraisal, largely from broadsheet reviewers. While much of this struggle can be attributed to cultural snobbery or elitism, there is also a degree of hubris and audacity on the part of both Elton and McCartney in pushing their questionable credentials in a different cultural field. Early successes (such as the Booker listing of *Popcorn*) have encouraged the artists and their publishers (or commissioners in McCartney’s case) to plough on, disregarding the bad reviews, long after the institution of criticism’s well of patience has run dry.

My principal focus in both studies has been on the aspect of celebrity as a form of capital that is only partly convertible when transferred to a new field. While Elton and McCartney have tried to convert celebrity status into success in a cultural field further up the hierarchy of distinction, it can be equally difficult for celebrities in higher-status fields to convert their celebrity downwards, as demonstrated by the relative failure of genre novels written by well-known purveyors of literary fiction such as Martin Amis (Norman, 2011). Ultimately, the most successful boundary crossers (or at least the most comfortable) are those who respect the hierarchy and are able to slip from one field to the other even if it means donning a disguise: a good example here is Booker Prize-winning novelist John Banville, who writes crime fiction under the alias Benjamin Black, and has referred to his dual identity as “two completely different writers” (Ellis-Petersen, 2014).

I want to end this paper with some consideration of changing cultural practices on the whole question of legitimation and critical evaluation. There is little doubt that the critical elite, as represented here by broadsheet reviewers, is under considerable threat from the groundswell of amateur reviewers found in the many online literary blogs and websites. In a study of consumer reviews published on Amazon, Allington (2016) shows how elite cultural values can be undermined by a commercial readership so that a rapturously received Booker Prize winner can now be exposed to criticism on a hitherto unprecedented scale.

⁵ This anecdote is reported in multiple sources, although an alternative anecdote has also done the rounds featuring Ravel in the place of Schoenberg: at least one Gershwin biographer (Schwartz, 1973) has suggested that they are both apocryphal.

The institution of criticism has managed throughout recent history to orchestrate its consensus largely untroubled by the reception of the readership at large, but this may well be changing. What impact this will have on the literary canon remains to be seen: will popular authors like Ben Elton one day be hoisted on to the pedestal to take their place alongside Shakespeare, Tolstoy, and even Kate Atkinson? More likely is a scenario in which the pedestal itself simply disappears, as Bourdieu's commercial and restricted 'spheres' fuse together, leaving the novel – literary fiction included – as just another commercial product like soap and toothpaste.

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- (10) James Walton, *Telegraph*, review of *Chart Throb* (2006)
- (11) *Sunday Times*, interview (2006)
- (12) Lisa Allardice, *Guardian*, review of *Dead Famous* (04/11/01)
- (13) Will Hutton, *Guardian*, review of *High Society* (2002)
- (14) David Robson, *Sunday Telegraph*, review of *High Society* (2002)
- (15) Susan Jeffreys, *Independent*, review of *High Society* (2002)
- (16) Susan Jeffreys, *Independent*, review of *Dead Famous* (2001)
- (17) Russell Celyn Jones, *Times*, review of *Past Mortem* (2004)
- (18) Michael Bywater, *Independent*, interview (1996)
- (19) Mike Pattenden, *Times*, review of *Inconceivable* (1999)
- (20) Jenny Colgan, *Guardian*, review of *Two Brothers* (2012)
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Son Preference among the Educated Urban Middle-class in North India

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ABSTRACT

The prevalence of son preference among different socio-cultural and religious communities in India is an expression of patriarchal culture and values which highlights men's social dominance and women's subordinate position within this society. This qualitative study sheds light on how urban middle-class married mothers in the states of Delhi and Haryana, India, view and practice son preference. I conducted semi-structured interviews with 45 urban married, educated middle-class mothers who were recruited through the technique of snowballing. This research finds son preference to be deemed natural and acceptable by the urban middle-class women interviewed during the course of this study because of the various socio-cultural advantages associated with having a son. Old-age support, enhanced social status, women's social dependency on men are some of the various socio-cultural benefits that participants attributed to the popularity of son preference. However, despite the prevalence of son preference, daughter aversion was not evident among the participants; they provided the same love, care, and education career opportunities to their daughters as they did to their sons. The research concludes that daughters' social status is gradually improving as social attitudes among the urban middle-class are changing. This article suggests that women's acceptance of son preference signifies that they have internalised their own gender subordination to the extent that they consider men to be socio-culturally and biologically superior to them. In order to examine this acceptance of gender subordination by women, I have employed Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of symbolic violence and symbolic capital.

Keywords: symbolic violence, dowry, female foeticide, patriarchy, son preference

INTRODUCTION

Son preference is a patriarchal ideology which favours sons over daughters and has led to the practice of female foeticide in contemporary times. Female foeticide refers to sex-detection of a foetus followed by an abortion if the foetus is found to be female. It is prevalent in many countries such as China, India, South Korea, and Vietnam (George, 1997). China has the lowest female child sex ratio in the world, followed by India. There have been a number of studies conducted at the global level and particularly within Asia which examine this imbalance in female-male sex ratios (Goodkind, 1996; Miller, 1987; Pande, 2003; Unnithan-Kumar, 2005).

While son preference is common in India, it is not practiced uniformly across different class groups (Mitra, 2014). For instance, because of their education, knowledge and financial resources, financially affluent people usually resort to sex-selective abortions and In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) techniques to have a son while keeping their family size small, often limited to two children (Mitra, 2014; Smith et al., 2008). On the other hand, people with less wealth usually have a higher fertility rate and a higher female child mortality rate, lower female literacy, higher female malnutrition, and are more likely to practice female infanticide in place of female foeticide (Mitra, 2014; Smith et al., 2008).

I carried out my research in the urban regions of Delhi and Haryana, in the years 2010 and 2011. In this article, I discuss son preference as it is experienced by educated urban married middle-class mothers from the North Indian states of Delhi and Haryana (Yamuna Nagar district). The study explores women's attitudes to son preference and how they frame the issue. The article also elucidates popular reasons for son preference among the urban middle-class. Further, I also examine how women treat their daughters within a rapidly changing social and economic context where son preference remains the cultural norm.

Since the introduction of neoliberal policies in 1980-1990s both Delhi and Haryana have experienced rapid urbanisation and economic growth, with an increase in Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) and Information Technology (IT) industries, and a sharp increase in the building developments, including new shopping malls and modern housing sub-divisions (Chatterji, 2013). I choose Delhi and Haryana because the urban middle-class in these states is facing dramatic socio-cultural and financial changes as a consequence of neoliberal practices. Changes include increased economic development, a higher female literacy rate, women entering into the paid workforce, and a trend away from large numbers of children to nuclear families of one or two children at most.

Interestingly, both Delhi and Haryana have a low female child sex ratio, but have recorded an increase in female literacy. According to the 2011 census, the literacy rate in Delhi and Haryana is above the national average of 65.46%. The female literacy rate in Delhi is 80.93 %, and in Haryana, it is 66.77%, whereas for Yamuna Nagar it is 72% (Census, 2011; Talwar and Meenu, 2014).

Haryana has the lowest female child sex ratio in India, with 834 female children per 1000 male children (Indian Census, 2001). Not even a single district, out of 22, in Haryana is above the national average of 914 females to 1000 males. Similarly, Delhi also ranks low in its female child sex ratio, with 871 girls per 1000 boys (Indian Census, 2001). The urban areas have a lower sex ratio than the rural areas: in 2011 urban regions recorded a female child sex ratio of 902, which was lower than rural areas where it was 919 (Chandramouli, 2011; Indian Census, 2001).

Son Preference in India

Indian society is mainly patriarchal and patrilineal; that is, men are the heads of families and women join their husbands' families after their marriages. Patriarchal beliefs and values have resulted in different forms of gender inequalities, and despite several socio-cultural and legal reforms, various types of gender inequalities are still persistent in urban India; female foeticide is one such example of gender inequality.

Although female foeticide is illegal under the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act 1994, sex-selective abortions are procured illegally, leading to a constant decline in the female child sex ratio (Patel, 2007; Unnithan-Kumar, 2010). With the introduction of modern reproductive technologies, infanticide has been replaced by foeticide (Indian Census, 2001). Indian historical accounts suggest that female infanticide was common in societies where dowry¹ was practised, and where only a few women were employed in the agriculture sector (Miller, 1987; Miller, 1997). According to Miller (1997), during the British colonial era in India, female infanticide was widely practised in North West India because of dowry practice. On the other hand, in South India, infanticide was not as prevalent because of women's participation in agricultural activities.

Previously dowry was practiced by high castes as a form of financial support for daughters, as women were restricted from working outside and were not allowed to inherit property (Dalmia et al., 2007, p.73; Srinivasan and Lee, 2004). Women are now legally entitled to inherit their parents' and grandparents' property, but dowry now seems to be a price for a good match (Dalmia et al., 2007). Educated grooms are highly valued and considered to be a good catch. This paradoxically leads to a demand for an increased dowry for the educated and employed bride's family (Dalmia et al., 2007; Munshi, 2012). Dowry practice has not only increased significantly, but it is also now rapidly spreading in areas and communities where it was not prevalent before or where bride price was practised (Agnihotri, 2003; Self and Grabowski, 2009). A study suggests that the more educated married women spend on dowry, the more dowry has become the status quo. As demands for dowry are increasing, brides' families are also providing big, elaborate, modern Indian style weddings to maintain their social status (Brosius, 2011).

In addition to dowry, the popularity of son preference in India could also be attributed to collective patriarchal family values. India has a collective culture in which relationships and family values play a vital role in determining people's choices (Guess, 2004; Kinsky et al., 1999). People in India have close social networks and are socially, emotionally, and economically dependent on each other in their daily lives. Since women in India leave their maternal families after their marriages, most parents are financially, emotionally, and socially dependent on their sons in their old age. Therefore, dowry is not the only reason behind son preference, instead financial and old-age support are also some of the essential driving factors (Arnold, 2001; Das Gupta et al., 2003; Unnithan-Kumar, 2010).

The demands for dowry and the seeking of financial, social and emotional support by parents of sons may at first glance seem to suggest that families from lower economical and educational backgrounds are more likely to

¹ Dowry is the practice of giving away of material wealth in the form of money or property or jewelry or goods by a bride's family to a groom's family.

practice son preference (Mitra, 2014; Sharma et al., 2007). On the contrary, studies and census figures reveal a link between increasing female literacy rates and declining female child sex ratio (Indian Census, 2001; Sharma et al., 2007; Talwar and Meenu 2014). Educated and employed women from affluent families comprise a significant proportion of the consumers of foeticide services (Patel, 2007). Because of their knowledge and financial status, educated women from wealthy backgrounds can easily access reproductive technologies to obtain sex-selective abortions as they pursue their desire for a son, unlike uneducated women who are unaware of or lack access to such services (Sharma et al., 2007).

Further, the popularity of the modern small family size among the middle-class is also an important reason behind the lower female child sex ratio. Small family size plays a pivotal role in the increased use of ultrasound, and sex-selective abortions as urban educated couples want to have at least one son and also limit their family size to one or two children (Sekher and Hatti, 2010; Unnithan-Kumar, 2010) Therefore, in contemporary urban India son preference is a complex phenomenon where different traditional and modern socio-cultural and economic factors are at play.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu discussed four types of capital: economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). These capitals are accumulated through labour (Bourdieu, 1986, p.46). Labour in this context can be understood as including social work or actions, such as practising a socio-cultural belief that will help in the accumulation of different forms of capital. Bourdieu's use of the term 'capital' is much broader than monetary gain, and he employs the term 'capital' in the wider system of socio-cultural exchanges. He insists that capital cannot be limited only to monetary achievements, such as wealth, income, property, and other financial assets that indicate one's financial class and status. He argues that capital is also accumulated through social, cultural and symbolic gains (Bourdieu, 1986).

Economic capital signifies money, property, or other financial assets that indicate one's class and status. In this article, economic capital is discussed in relation to dowry, parents investing money on their children, and parents receiving financial support from their children, mainly sons.

Bourdieu explained that, beyond economic capital, cultural habits and dispositions play a crucial role in determining one's class and status. Cultural capital includes forms of knowledge, skills, education, intellect, and knowledge of religion, traditional rituals and customs which simultaneously indicate one's class and status, and simultaneously confer the status (Weininger and Annette, 2007). In this research, cultural capital is considered in the context of urban middle-class collective family values, gender roles, and the gendered division of labour.

Social capital, as discussed by Bourdieu, is discussed as different forms of social and human resources within one's network, used by social actors to achieve their interests and to position themselves (Ihlen, 2005). Social capital signifies having good networks, social connections, relationships, and support from family, friends, and acquaintances which enhances the quality of life at different levels such as professional, social, and individual (Benzanson, 2006). Because daughters join their husbands' families after their marriages most of the mothers interviewed in this research relied on their sons for all sorts of support. Thus, in this study, social capital could be understood as women receiving support from their sons; and brothers and sisters having healthy relationships.

These forms of capital further lead to the accumulation of symbolic capital, which could be understood as prestige, honour, reputation, recognition, and personal authority and refer to the available resources that provide social positioning and recognition to individuals and groups within a society (Bourdieu, 1986; Swartz, 2012). Symbolic capital "functions as an authoritative embodiment of cultural value" (Swartz, 2012, p. 648), and it is a socially constructed process (Bourdieu, 1986) which leads to a common understanding and shared beliefs of "valued, legitimate, valid and useful" resources or practices within a society (Doherty and Dickmann, 2009). In this article, symbolic capital is discussed as the capital acquired by the participants by having a caring son who would provide old-age support and would care for them. All of this provided the participants with social recognition and value among their families and social acquaintances. Because of the cultural, economic, social and eventually symbolic capital conferred by having a son, women viewed son preference as legitimate and normal. I argue that the acceptance of son preference as natural is a manifestation of participants internalising their gender subordination within the patriarchal setting they are accustomed to. By doing so women internalise their lower socio-cultural position and reimpose gender inequality; this could be understood as a form of symbolic violence. In this article, internalisation can be understood as the acceptance of patriarchal socio-cultural beliefs, values, and norms that individuals learn through their experiences of socialisation. Women apply these values and beliefs to themselves and other women and consider men to be socially superior, while regarding themselves as inferior and dependent. Institutions such as family and marriage maintain the norms of gender inequality and reproduce them in daily socio-cultural interactions.

In this context, Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) introduced the concept of symbolic violence that explains how inequitable gender relations are reproduced and maintained. Jenkins (1993) suggests that through socialisation symbolic violence leads to various ways of thinking and acting being internalised by groups and classes in a way that masks underlying power relations. Symbolic violence is violence because “it leads to the constraint and subordination of individuals, but it also symbolic in the sense that it is achieved indirectly and without overt and explicit acts of force or coercion.” (Connolly and Healy, 2004). Symbolic violence is different from physical abuse and denotes different modes of socio-cultural domination where the complicity of the dominated is a prerequisite (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2004). The dominated social actors (in this case, women in patriarchal societies) accept and misrecognise the dominance of the social order as natural rather than something which is socially constructed (Bourdieu, 2002; Clark, 2004; Köverová, 2010; Swartz, 2012). Furthermore, symbolic violence legitimises this domination which subordinates social actors placed at the lower level of the social hierarchy (Trammell, 2011, p.307). Groups located at the higher positions in social strata are considered to be advantaged as they not only practice domination over dominated groups but also deny them “access to the same opportunities and privileges.” (DiGiorgio, 2009, p. 917). Therefore, symbolic violence is manifested in the way that individuals internalise their subordination to which they are subjected to because of their race, class or gender.

Bourdieu mentioned symbolic violence as a means of reproducing gender hierarchies, in a way that tends to benefit men more than women: this is done without coercion or physical force (Bourdieu, 1990). According to Bourdieu and Wacquant (2004), “the male order is so deeply grounded as to need no justification” (p. 273). Bourdieu and Wacquant (Swartz, 2012) further argue that:

The case of gender domination shows better than any other that symbolic violence accomplishes itself through an act of cognition and of misrecognition that lies beyond or beneath—the controls of consciousness and will (p. 273).

Symbolic violence is a process of social reproduction of inequalities: even though women have equal legal rights, popular culture becomes the site where unequal gender relations are justified (McRobbie, 2009 and 2004).

METHODOLOGY

During the course of this qualitative study semi-structured interviews were carried out among 45 married and educated middle-class mothers in Delhi and Haryana. The study was approved by the Human Ethics Committee of the University of Canterbury, New Zealand before fieldwork commenced. Informed written consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study. Further, I highlighted the issue of confidentiality to my participants before the interview process. This information on maintaining confidentiality was provided to the participants both orally as well as through the information sheet. I have preserved the identity of my participants by using pseudonyms. I have changed the identification details of my participants such as their field of work and studies to preserve their anonymity. This was necessary because the participants in this research were located through snowballing technique: changing these markers have made it highly unlikely that one of the recruiters would be able to identify participants through their identification details.

I conducted interviews in Hindi language among educated urban middle-class married women with children who had either had an abortion or whose first child was a daughter. I preferred to interview those middle-class women who had at least some form of formal education because, as discussed earlier, an increased female literacy rate is closely linked with an increased rate of female foeticide (Indian Census, 2001; Sharma et al., 2007; Talwar and Meenu, 2014).

These women have access to and knowledge of ultrasound and sex-selective abortions, which means that family size and gender composition are not an issue of discrepancy between the educated and wealthy couples (Sabarwal et al., 2012). Because of this, it is often argued that the rate of domestic violence against women in the context of son preference among the urban educated middle-class is relatively low (Sabarwal et al., 2012; Srinivasan and Bedi, 2007). Likewise, not a single participant in this study mentioned experiencing any form of physical violence by their husbands or any other family members for not reproducing a son or for any other reason. Therefore, their accounts and experiences around son preference refer to symbolic violence than physical violence.

Profile of the Participants

Forty-five participants from urban middle-class backgrounds took part in this study. Among the 45 participants, only 16 belong to the non-working group and have never worked in their lives, identifying as housewives. The remaining 29 were doing some form of paid work or had been formerly employed in the public sector or in the private sector in the field of education, law, or medicine, or they had run their own businesses. It is important to note that the working status recorded shows the employment status of the women during the period when they

were interviewed. Most of the participants had more than primary education; only two participants studied until year five, and the remaining participants either finished their schooling (16 participants) or were highly qualified (27 participants). Some of them were doctors, lawyers, government officers, teachers, or professors or self-employed and were working in the private and public sectors.

In regards to family size, the majority of the participants met the modern small-family norm of one or two children. For instance, 30 participants had small families: at the time of the interviews 19 participants had two children. Of these 11 had a boy and a girl, five had only two sons, and three had only two daughters. Eleven had only one child, a daughter, at the time of interview². The remaining 15 participants had a family of three or more children, comprising both boys and girls. It is important to mention that all the participants with more than two children described their family size as large. Twenty-one participants lived in a nuclear family, and 24 participants lived in a joint family on a regular basis, at least in some phase of their lives.

All participants began their reproductive lives no earlier than the 1980s, and all had access to safe and legal abortions and contraception. Furthermore, they all were aware of the use of ultrasound for sex-detection purposes since amniocentesis was introduced in India in 1975. Participants who had their children prior to 1994 were able to access ultrasound for sex-detection purpose without facing any legal repercussions as sex-selection was only criminalised after 1994.

In selecting participants, I gave priority to class since after the neoliberal reforms, unlike the pre-independence and early post-independence periods, the middle-class group is not limited to elites and upper caste Hindus and Muslims, and their hegemony is no longer taken for granted (Donner and Neve, 2011). The new middle-class also consists of people from lower rural castes who have now moved socially and financially upward by entering the urban educated professions such as IT or computer sectors (Belliappa, 2013). It is important to note that the new urban middle-class group is diverse in terms of caste and religion, and may not share the same roots as the old middle-class, but it does share many of the same practices and values (Donner and Neve, 2011). Similarities in ideas about gender relations and patriarchal values are common to the new middle-class (Belliappa, 2013; Radhakrishnan, 2009).

All participants came from a middle-class background. In this study, middle-class is defined as those who have more than the basic necessities of life (food, clothes, and shelter) such as a car, mobile phone, laptop, air-conditioner, and fridge. Sridharan (2011), based on income earnings, suggests three middle-class groups in India. These include elite middle-class (more than Indian National Rupees [INR] 140,000 per annum [p.a.]), expanded middle-class (from INR 105,000 p.a.) and broadest middle-class (from INR 35,000 p.a.). My participants belonged to the expanded middle-class group. Because of their financial status, all of the participants were able to access different reproductive technologies to achieve their reproductive interests mainly around son preference.

Initially, I approached my acquaintances to ask them if they would be interested in participating (if applicable) or if they could spread the word regarding my research. Out of 45 participants, 43 of them were Hindus, and two were Muslims. Despite being from diverse religious backgrounds, the Muslim participants shared the same ideas around son preference. Research also suggests that son preference is also practised by Indian Muslims (Unnithan-Kumar, 2010).

FINDINGS

The first key finding is that the majority of the participants did not challenge the practice of son preference, and many of them were even more eager to have a son than their husbands and extended families. This was because a son was seen to confer various socio-cultural benefits. Some of these benefits are old-age support, protection from social criticism and increased social status.

Interestingly, all of the participants agreed that women's reproductive choices should be free of any form of coercion or violent assault. Even though sex-selection is illegal, and participants were aware of that, the majority of women did not consider pressure to have a son or sex-detection to practice female foeticide as a form of violence towards them or against their daughters or female fetuses. The compliance of this domination was well articulated in many women's accounts. For example, Sheila, in her mid-30s was a post-graduate, and had two sons. She said:

Nothing is illegal or immoral in practising female foeticide everyone practises it.

Similarly, Tulsi in her early 50s, a housewife held a secondary education and had two daughters and one son. Rita was in her 40s, and had four children: three daughters and one son; and Laxmi in her mid-30s was educated and working and had two daughters. Sana was in her 40s, and had one daughter and a son. All of these women's

² There was no family of one child with a son.

daughters were either going to the best schools in town or they were highly educated and were working. Despite treating their daughters with love and care their words reveal clear acceptance of the norm of son preference:

- Tulsi: Son preference is natural, and you cannot stop that.
Rita: Yes, everyone wants to have a son, it's natural. Everyone in the family would be happy including me it's like the family is complete now [after having the son].
Sana: It is in our culture if the first child is a daughter then second must be a son.
Laxmi: According to me in India, everyone wants to have a son.

Tulsi, Laxmi, Sana, and Rita wanted to have a son. Tulsi, Sana, and Rita had an ultrasound to ensure the sex of the foetus.

Furthermore, the majority of the participants, whether they had sons or not, calmly stated, that women have a strong desire to have a son. Sonia was in her late 20s, Monika was in mid-40s, and Tara was in the early 40s, all of them were highly educated and were working in influential positions. They all had a daughter as their first child. None of these participants were forced to have a son by their families and all of them themselves had a strong desire to have a son. Monika fell pregnant for a second time as she wanted a son. Tara's second child was a son, and she even had an ultrasound for sex-detection in her second pregnancy.

- Sonia: women practice son preference because they badly want to have a son.
Monika: because they [women] do not think it is a big deal to practise son preference.
Tara: because from deep inside women always wish to have a son. I think women are actually more eager than men to have sons.

Tara was adamant that she would not have more than two children and was ready to abort her second pregnancy if it had been a female foetus. However, it was a male foetus and after this was confirmed by ultrasound, she continued with her pregnancy and gave birth to her son. Educated and employed urban middle-class women adhere to traditional patriarchal practices by preferring sons instead of challenging this norm.

Interestingly, both forcing women to bring dowry and pressuring them to have a son or obtaining an ultrasound for sex-detection are illegal, but this has had little impact on these practices. Women do actively report against dowry, whereas they are silent on female foeticide. This elucidates the social transformation against dowry violence, but as yet no major transformation is evident in regards to reporting against pressure to have a son. I asked my participants "Why is it when women are beaten or when they are tortured for not bringing enough dowry they report it to the police? But, when they are forced or tortured to have a son then they do not report it to the police?" The majority of the replies that I received demonstrated that the legitimisation of the morality of son preference remains largely unquestioned among the urban middle-class at a socio-cultural level. For example, both Radha and Kaveri obtained an ultrasound for sex-detection purpose and only continued with their respective pregnancies once the sex of the foetus was confirmed as male. They stated:

- Radha: Well, I explain you this. Because pressurising women to have a son is not any form of torture on women. Beating and demands for dowry is a form of torture.
Kaveri: [laughter] in that case [dowry] women are getting hurt that is why they call the police. In the other case [bearing a son], they [affinal family] are asking for a son and the son will remain with the mother [will look after the mother] that is why women do not report against son preference cases.

During the interviews, many participants implied in their tone that son preference is acceptable and popular, unlike dowry. The laughter in Kaveri's account indicates this. Radha and Kaveri did not themselves experience any pressure to bring in dowry, but articulated that physical beatings or emotional pressure for dowry are a form of torture.

Dowry is often argued to be one of the most vital reasons for son preference (Unnithan-Kumar, 2010), and a few of the participants who had two or three daughters mentioned that it would be or was challenging to have big weddings. The participants did not consider giving a big wedding and presenting gifts to their daughters and their sons-in-law and their families as a form of dowry. Instead, giving dowry was a vital medium to show and maintain their social status. Only two participants mentioned dowry to be the principal reason behind son preference.

Another participant, Mira who was in her 40s, had two grown-up educated and working daughters in this context commented that:

This is because the woman has to bring dowry from her parents' family, but the son is born in the affinal house [no financial burden on the maternal family].

The dowry system not only puts great financial pressure on women's maternal families but parents also feel that paying dowry is their social duty to protect their daughters from hardship and violence at the hands of their

affinal families. Often women do not want to put any pressure on their parents and, in the case of son preference, women can themselves deal with the pressure and negotiate.

The participants further highlighted the benefits of old-age support that were ensured by having a son. For instance, participants preferred to have sons because daughters would get married and join their husbands' families. Kiran was in her mid-20s and only had a daughter. Her daughter was going to the best school in the town and was loved and cared for by her and her husband. Despite this, she and her husband both had a strong desire to have a son. She commented that:

His [her husband's] thinking is that when we grow old, then we will be on our own. We should have a son who will live with us and who will support us. We cannot pin any hopes on our daughter. We will provide her education and everything, but she will join her husband's family eventually.

Gender bias is articulated through the experiences of insecurities around old-age support. These gender relations lead to greater reliance on sons than daughters and influence parents' decisions about the gender composition of their children.

Further, the popularity of patriarchal beliefs and values encouraged women to safeguard themselves from social humiliation by having a son. Sana explained that women try to avoid social criticism by having a son.

It is women and not men who actually have a strong desire to have a son, and I believe this. Because it has been embedded [son preference] in our [women] minds within our own cultural settings, women wish more strongly to have sons. So, that no one in society could say anything to them [criticism or taunts] that they only have daughters and no sons. It is gradually changing now [views around son preference] still these views persist.

This quote highlights how women internalise the patriarchal beliefs that reproduce gender hierarchy rather than challenging them. For, instance, a few of my participants mentioned receiving inferior treatment, such as taunts or not being allowed by their acquaintances to participate in certain festivals and rituals such as Ahoi³ because they did not have a son. In the majority of these cases, participants' desire to have a son increased after experiencing criticism. Because they tried to improve their status by having a son, they accepted inequality, rather than challenging it or transforming it. For example, Rama a Muslim participant in her 30s, was highly educated and was working in the public sector. She had three children, two daughters, and one son. Rama and her husband were spending a lot of money on their daughters' education and held high career aspirations for them. After being taunted for many years by her affinal family members and social acquaintances, for not being able to have a son, Rama decided to fall pregnant for the third time to have a son. The participant's husband was not initially ready to have a third child because he preferred a family of two children only; however, after prolonged negotiations, he accepted Rama's proposal. Rama narrated an incidence that was a catalyst to increase her urge to have a son. The incident happened at the birth of her second daughter:

At the birth of my second daughter, my elder sister-in-law talked to me in a very strange manner. She said to me "Oh gosh, your second child is also a daughter, and I thought that if you had a son, then I would give you a gold chain". Then I ignored her and said that I did not want her chain.

However, when Rama at last had her son her sister-in-law did not gift her anything. Gold is very expensive, and in India, it is often gifted to women on festivals or during an auspicious event usually by family members or acquaintances. Giving away gold is an important way to express one's love, care, and respect towards women. This highlights how power relations operate within popular culture that women without sons are unworthy of deserving anything precious. This gift demonstrates that a woman provides a gift to the family in bearing a son and can thus expect to receive valuable or expensive items or special respect and attention in exchange for this.

In some cases, women even pressurised their husbands to ensure that they have a son, and when men did not approve of the idea, it made the participants upset and depressed. Mira narrated her personal experience in this context:

I really wanted to have one son. But what is the point in thinking about that issue now? I could not do anything [sadness in her tone] as he [husband] was completely adamant that he would not try for a son. I wanted to take one more chance [to fall pregnant], and there was nothing wrong with it.

The second finding is that mothers explicitly want sons rather than not wanting daughters. Parents treated their daughters as equal to sons and provided them with comparable career and education opportunities. However, mothers wanted to make sure that their daughters bear sons to ensure their future support and security. This was

³ A fast observed by Hindu women in some regions of North India to ensure the long life of their sons.

the most important reason behind son preference mentioned by the participants. Sonia wanted to have a son mainly to keep her daughter protected by providing her a brother. Her articulation highlights the importance of this protection:

A son is not important to enhance a woman's status. The status gets enhanced even with the birth of a girl. But it surely creates a safer environment within a family, especially when the parents and sister grow old. It is like that this family has a son. It is the safety concern, rather than the status factor. A daughter does all the same things, but the safety factor is better with having a son, nothing else. We cannot send the daughter out at night time, but a son can go out during the night. For daughters, you have to depend on others [if there is no son in the family], but a son can perform chores more freely. These are the only restrictions for girls that we cannot send them out during the night because of safety concerns.

Sonia, in a similar vein to all the participants in this study, stated that daughters are equal, but at the same time she mentioned that daughters need protection as well as suggesting that they could be vulnerable as victims of different crimes. This is because, in India, especially North India violence against women such as rape, gang rape, and molestation are quite common (Kohli, 2012). Because of this, parents often feel afraid for their daughters and believe that having a male escort; usually a male family member, might provide women safety from these violent crimes. The majority of the participants, who had a strong desire to have a son, shared similar views for their daughters' protection. For instance, Tanu was in her mid-40s, and she shared similar views to Sonia. She explained that:

It is a tradition that there should be someone to take care of the sisters. No matter how many cousin brothers you have, a real brother is real. She [daughter] ties Rakhi [sacred thread that daughters tie at the wrist of their brothers] to her cousin brother as well, and he would help her even in the middle of the night if we would ask help from him, and he would always do this. Both of my sons [referring to her nephew] are good, but a real brother is real.

Tanu highlights that brothers play the role of a protector and that it is a social tradition. Similarly, Sana said:

Among us Hindus, there are so many festivals like Rakhi, which both daughter and son celebrate together. For my daughter, a brother was important and so she never had to think that she didn't have a brother.

Kanu was in her 60s she was highly educated, and had four children, three daughters and one son, with the wish of having a son.

So, I thought for them [daughters] that if they would have a brother for them where they wouldn't have to feel sad on Rakhi. They would have at least a place to visit after their parents' death.

The discussion of Rakhi⁴ in Tanu's, Sana's and Kanu's accounts contains a symbolic reference to the traditional socio-cultural duty of brothers towards their sisters and the social legitimacy of blood kinship. Many other participants had a son to provide a real brother to their daughters.

DISCUSSION

Both having a son and bringing dowry are culturally beneficial for women as individuals and raise their status in their affinal families, even though this highlights their socially subordinate position (Kabeer, 1999). But, dowry violence in contemporary times is being widely challenged by women, whereas the practice of son preference is not. All of my participants, for instance, considered dowry, unlike son preference, to be a severe form of violence against women.

Son preference has been normalised and naturalised to such an extent by the Indian women that only 1,165 cases of female foeticide have been filed in the whole country since the PCPNDT Act was implemented (Female Feticide, 2012). On the other hand, the reporting of cases of domestic violence and dowry abuse and murders are increasing. In 2007, for example, 8000 cases of domestic violence were registered, and it is important to note that the specific provision for domestic violence was implemented only in 2005 (Kasturi, 2008). Further, 8391 deaths

⁴ Rakhi is the festival of Hindus in which the sister ties a sacred thread (called Rakhi) around the wrist of her brother and prays for his long and happy life, and in return the brother promises to be a life-long protector and supporter of his sister.

were reported in India in the year 2010, which means one dowry death happens in every 90 minutes according to the report of Indian crime statistics⁵ (National Crime Records Bureau, 2011, p.195).

Dowry, as mentioned earlier, is commonly believed to be a strong reason behind son preference and daughter aversion. Smith et al.'s (2008), Unnithan-Kumar's (2010) and Mitra's (2014) studies among the rural and urban poor class South and North Indian women suggest that dowry and economic burden have fuelled daughter aversion. Unlike these studies, my research which looks at the educated North urban middle-class demonstrates that daughter aversion is not evident in this group; instead women want sons for their daughters or for their old-age or to enhance their status. Despite the prevalence of dowry practice the absence of dowry as a key reason behind son preference or daughter aversion is notable in the participants' accounts. This could be because in North India dowry is a vital way "of assessing and representing social status, honour and prestige" (Roulet, 1996, p.89). Also, nowadays urban middle-class daughters are highly educated and are earning enough that they are no longer an economic burden, but are able to contribute financially to their families (Belliappa, 2013; Kohli, 2017; Radhakrishnan, 2009). This means they can contribute towards their wedding and dowry expenses themselves. These changes are leading to an increase in daughters' status and the gradual decline of son preference. This situation can be viewed in the light of slowly improving child sex-ratios in Delhi and Haryana as recorded in the Indian Census 2011. For instance, in 2011, the female child sex ratio in Haryana increased by 15 points, rising to 834 from 819 in 2001 (Indian Census, 2001). Delhi has also witnessed a small increase in its child sex ratio rising three points, from 868 in 2001 to 871 in 2011 (Indian Census, 2001).

Ironically, despite these gradual changes in women's status, the women themselves played a key role in the legitimisation of their own socio-cultural domination. Tulsi and Rita, for example, did not question son preference at all, and termed it natural, indicating that sons hold more socio-cultural values than daughters. Other participants such as Sonia, Tanu, Kanu and Sana legitimised male dominance under the idea of male protection for women; and Rama did not challenge the patriarchal ideology rather she wanted to gain the upper hand by having a son. Eventually, women will lose opportunities to be socially independent or take the role of social protectors and challenge male supremacy in their everyday lives. Kabeer (1999) argues that the practise of son preference by women shows that women tend to internalise their own subordination within patriarchal societies. The internalisation and acceptance of subordination, the imposition of gender inequality by women themselves, could be understood as a form of symbolic violence. Among the educated urban middle-class son preference is a form of symbolic violence as women will continue to be subordinated by holding a lower social status than men even in contemporary urban middle-class settings where women are educated have access to paid jobs and have laws to protect themselves (Kohli, 2017). They have financial and educational resources to challenge patriarchal practices; however, they have tended to practice son preference because of the socio-cultural associated benefits of having a son. "Women may not only accept their subordinate role to fit the so-called 'norm'; they may also choose that role because they are more likely to be valued and gain social acceptance" (Durey, 2008, p.8). Women's complicity to conform to gender hierarchy may also be shaped by their perceptions of the consequences if they resist. Challenging the traditional patriarchal beliefs often results in women facing social resistance and criticism within their social networks and families, and in some cases it can even result in divorce (Durey, 2008; Kabeer, 1999).

Women endeavoured to accumulate support for their daughters by having a son. By providing brothers to their daughters under the umbrella of socio-cultural beliefs and traditional gender roles women garnered cultural and social capital within their networks which were then converted to symbolic capital. These forms of capital are gendered and mainly stem from practising son preference, and accepting male supremacy and women's subordination. Symbolic violence suggests that power-relations are concealed and naturalised, and that through this, inequalities are reimposed within society (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Köverová, 2010; Wacquant, 1998) in forms of popular values and beliefs. Gender hierarchy and patriarchal authority are reproduced and sustained in the daily lives of the urban middle-class in the name of care, love, protection and life-long support for sisters by brothers in urban India. These socio-cultural norms enforce the belief that women, no matter how much success they achieve in their career or education, will need men for protection in their daily lives.

Further, the popularity of small family has increased the use of ultrasound to determine the gender of the foetus among couples, as they want to limit their family size to two children (such as Tulsi and Tara) but want to have at least a son (Basu and Desai, n.d.; Unnithan-Kumar, 2010). Women are educated and employed, but this change has not resulted in the complete erosion of gender inequality and hierarchy among the urban middle-class.

⁵ The high rate of dowry death suggests that dowry cases are still underreported. It is common to see that reports of dowry death are often made in those cases by the girls' family where the parents were pressuring their daughter to adjust in her affinal family even she made complaints of repeated incidences of violence towards her for not bringing sufficient dowry. Or in those cases where women would hide the cruelty they would face after their marriage from their maternal families.

CONCLUSION

Gender inequality among the educated urban middle-class has undergone changes in modern times: girls are now being discriminated against before birth and not after birth. This marginal improvement signifies changing attitudes among the urban middle-class. The absence of daughter aversion among my sample suggests women's education and their financial contributions to the household is recognised and appreciated. Urbanisation, female education and employment are slowly changing the gender scripts so that daughters are increasingly perceived as being equally valuable to their families and societies.

The article demonstrates that physical violence is not necessary to control subordinated groups. Institutions such as family and marriage perpetuate the norms of gender inequality and reproduce them in daily interactions between men and women. The absence of a son leads family members and social networks to put pressure on women to have a son, affecting their reproductive choices. For example, participants considered socially constructed gender inequality as normal and natural and legitimised it through their son preference practice. As a result, the participants did not challenge their subordination and dependence upon men and instead considered themselves socially and biologically weaker and inferior to men.

Urban middle-class women have internalised their subordination to such an extent that they view their existence in relation to the men in their lives, be it in the form of a husband or a son or a brother. By accepting their subordinate status, women often receive socio-cultural benefits such as prestige and honour among their social networks and families, old-age support, financial support, and male protection. Simultaneously, they can protect themselves from forms of social criticism and resistance. These advantages increase women's status at the social level, but do not alter their subordinate position in society and the gender hierarchy.

Increases in female literacy enhance women's status which in turn curbs daughter aversion; however, these changes have so far failed to displace the practice of son preference. This demonstrates that traditional patterns of thinking are still prevalent and continue to define gender roles and practices especially among the middle-classes. Therefore, son preference, for the urban middle-class women is both a manifestation of symbolic violence and symbolic capital.

The limitations of this study are in the sample size: it is based on a small sample of 45 urban middle-class women's experiences in North India. However, it is clear these findings are relevant to women from different regions, castes, and classes in the rapidly changing contemporary Indian society. Further research is required to examine emerging trends in the context of son preference and daughters' status among the different class or caste groups in different regions of India. Hopefully, this work will inspire others to continue researching the intersection between gender, class, culture, and violence.

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Lenin's Lens: The Occupy Movement, an Infantile Disorder?

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ABSTRACT

This paper offers a theoretical critique of the Occupy movement by drawing on V.I. Lenin's work, *Left-wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder (LWC)*. This work emphasizes the importance of recognizing political power within institutionalized political systems, for example, trade unions and parliamentary democracy. We bring the ideas contained in this work to bear on the Occupy movement by drawing on 20 activist accounts from two UK Occupy camps to argue that the Occupy movement was an earlier phase of a developing political challenge to neoliberalism. In this respect, Occupy was an immature politics unlikely to lead to social change. However, recent research suggests that the creation of a new wave of 'movement parties' (della Porta et al., 2017) are a more organized and politically mature response to neoliberal austerity, which to some extent grew out of the mass movement assemblies like the Occupy movement. By applying Lenin's ideas to analyse the main political practices of Occupy, this paper argues that a Leninist viewpoint could offer some practical improvements towards the political strategy of new movements by being part of a coalition of activists and trade unionists, with the ultimate aim of working within parliamentary democracy.

Keywords: social movements, Lenin, occupy, protest

INTRODUCTION

This paper offers a theoretical critique of the Occupy movement by drawing on V.I. Lenin's work, *Left-wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder (LWC)*. This work emphasizes the importance of recognizing political power within institutionalized political systems, for example, trade unions and parliamentary democracy. We bring the ideas contained in this work to bear on the Occupy movement by drawing on 20 activist accounts from two UK Occupy camps to argue that the Occupy movement was an earlier phase of a developing political challenge to neoliberalism. In this respect, Occupy was an immature politics unlikely to lead to social change. However, recent research suggests that the creation of a new wave of 'movement parties', such as Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain, and Momentum in the UK are a more organized and politically mature response to neoliberal austerity, which to some extent grew out of the mass movement assemblies like the Indignados in Spain and Occupy in the UK (della Porta et al., 2017; Gerbaudo, 2017). By applying Lenin's ideas to analyse the main political practices of Occupy, this paper argues that a Leninist viewpoint could offer some practical improvements towards its political strategy by developing a proletarian hegemony through movement parties, which would include a coalition of activists and trade unionists, with the aim of working within parliamentary democracy.

This paper begins by outlining when, where and how the Occupy movement emerged. It provides key information on the way it was organised and especially the limitations of horizontalism. The next section discusses why Lenin's ideas contained in LWC are relevant for contemporary movement analysis. Here we engage with literature that makes a comparable point to this paper in terms of critiquing the Occupy movement. However, we

justify the use of Lenin by arguing his work recognises the importance of political power and the importance for social movements to be properly organised to implement a political programme towards social change. The next section details the methodology of the study, where we outline the main methods and sampling technique used to select respondents involved in two Occupy camps. Finally, we subject the Occupy movement to a Leninist analysis and claim that the Occupy movement represented an awakening, but it was amorphous and lacked structure and real decision making capacity to implement social change. We argue that a coalition with organised labour and the formation of a political campaign group – or what has elsewhere been termed a movement party- would help give form and shape to a new political movement that could work with democratic political parties within parliamentary institutions where real policies and decisions can be made to bring about social change.

THE OCCUPY MOVEMENT

The Occupy movement began on 17th September, 2011 after the radical subvertising magazine, *Adbusters*, put out a call to Occupy Wall Street. The location was chosen for symbolic reasons (following the financial crash of 2007-8) because activists perceived it to be where those responsible for the crash worked.

The first Occupy encampment was created in Zuccotti park (near Wall Street), New York, on the same date. The movement quickly spread to over 950 cities in 80 countries (Castells, 2012). It is well documented that it was a protest against the financial mismanagement of the economy leading to a global economic downturn and by extension the failure of western, democratic governments to control the crisis. The financial crash and subsequent austerity measures imposed by governments created the structural conditions for these protests, which led to the protesters interpreting their politics as resistance through an anti-austerity collective action frame (della Porta, 2015). The social demographic of Occupy included a significant number of what have been termed the precariat, those who in the era of globalization face precarious working conditions with little job security on flexible or zero hour contracts (Standing, 2011). As della Porta (2015) states the main social demographic activist base from the Arab spring through the US and European Occupy movement included young, unemployed or underemployed people. In fact, young people (20-30 year olds) have been the first to mobilize because of their precarious position within neoliberal labour markets and the related grievances this creates (Fuchs, 2014; della Porta, 2015).

Set within this context it has been argued that the Occupy movement mobilised a new generation of activists who demanded and created a new type of politics, one which 'ignored political parties, distrusted the [corporate] media, rejected all formal organization, relying on the internet and local assemblies for collective debate and decision making' (Castells, 2012: 4). Linked to the new type of politics was more use of new media than in the past, especially web 2.0 technologies, including Facebook and Twitter platforms. In recent years, since the alleged election fixing in Iran (2009) and the Arab spring (2011), a number of authors have commented on how such user-generated content has shaped political protests (Mason, 2010; Hands, 2011; Gerbaudo, 2012). For example:

Facebook is used to form groups, covert and overt- in order to establish those strong but flexible connections. Twitter is used for real time *organization* and news dissemination, bypassing the cumbersome 'newsgathering' operations of the mainstream media. YouTube and Twitter-linked photographic sites Yfrog, Flickr and Twitpic- are used to provide instant evidence of the claims being made. Link-shortners like bit.ly are used to disseminate key articles via Twitter (Mason, 2010: 75 cited by Gerbaudo, 2012: 3).

The twitter platform was used by the Hacktivist collective, anonymous, to distribute information through the #Occupy Wall Street. (Juris, 2012; Roberts, 2014). According to a survey of 500 US Occupy activists conducted in 2012 by the Occupy Research and Data Centre, 64% of respondents stated that they had used Facebook within 24 hours for Occupy related activity (Roberts, 2014: 175). In short, there was a critical mass of young, educated and technologically savvy protesters who were politically active with real grievances that helped create the Occupy movement.

According to a number of authors, the Occupy movement along with the Arab spring and the Indignados protests in Spain emerged because of the inequality created by structural conditions of neoliberal capitalism (Ancelovici et al., 2016). In addition to this, there has developed amongst some parts of the citizenry a distrust of established political parties (Graeber, 2013; Standing, 2011; Badiou, 2012; della Porta, 2015). In some parts of the western world, political elites were viewed as either responsible for the economic crash through a dereliction of duty, say in the UK and the USA, or, viewed as complicit and even possibly corrupt, for example, in Greece and Spain (della Porta, 2015). Encapsulating the gross inequality between social class groups, Graeber (2013) has been credited with creating the slogan, 'we are the 99%'. This refers to how the richest 1% hold and control the majority of wealth in US society- it became a slogan that extended to all Occupy camps around the world and other protests against inequality. This slogan became the motif of the Occupy movement, which clearly presents itself within an anti-austerity collective action frame. Linked to this inequality is the distrust of official political power and their

reluctance or inability to address wealth inequalities in societies. For example, the first page of Fuchs' (2014) book on Occupy draws on a set of anecdotes and quotes from activists who give their opinion on the crisis of capitalism, the first one states: 'For me, the Occupy movement is one important part of the catalyst which will bring change to this corporate / political bloodsucking system that is bleeding us all dry' (Ibid.:1).

Statements of discontent like the one above were also used by the political forerunners of Occupy, they were present during the Arab Spring, the Indignados in Spain, and the Greek protests. della Porta (2015) provides evidence of how these protest movements through their statements represent a crisis of political responsibility within advanced democracies. For example: a poster at the Indignados protest read, 'They call it democracy, but it is not', and the group at the Spanish camp outs- 'Real Democracy Now', which implies the one citizens have at the moment is not real, these are concrete examples of feelings of distrust of politicians and the political system amongst the population. During the Greek protests after tens of thousands of citizens mobilized in Syntagma square for three days, a call from Facebook was circulated stating 'any corrupt politician should be either sent home or to jail' (ibid.:2). Understandably, this distrust carried over into the way Occupy organized itself. It was one which desired to create something different from the organized, institutional political systems already in place. To some extent and in some camps this also meant a rejection of left-wing political parties and trade unions too (Roberts, 2014).

The Occupy movement was an important 21st century movement which captured the academic, (Castells, 2012; Pickerill and Krinsky, 2012; Graeber, 2013; della Porta, 2015) popular, (Mason, 2012, 2015) and activist imagination (Halvorsen, 2012). The fact that it emerged in over 80 countries and in 950 cities across the globe demonstrates that inequality is not located in just a few cities or countries and it is not imagined. Further empirical evidence of inequality is provided by Hardoon (2015):

Global wealth is becoming increasingly concentrated among a small wealthy elite. Data from Credit Suisse shows that since 2010, the richest 1% of adults in the world have been increasing their share of total global wealth' (p2)...In 2010, the richest 80 people in the world had a net wealth of \$1.3tn. By 2014, the 80 people who top the Forbes rich list had a collective wealth of \$1.9tn; an increase of \$600bn in just 4 years, or 50% in nominal terms (Ibid.:3).

The popular slogan used by the Occupy movement, 'we are the 99%', highlights a perceived wealth and power disparity and calls into question the efficacy of political democracy. As such, the Occupy movement was also a reaction to the lack of democratic accountability of politicians to prevent wealthy elites, specifically the financiers' reckless practices that led to the 2007-8 financial crisis (Elliot, 2011).

Occupy and Horizontalism

Due to the lack of perceived democratic accountability within western democracies especially after the financial crash the Occupy movement organized itself horizontally in a bid to move away from traditional political organizations, including institutionalized political structures such as trade unions and representative politics including parliamentary type political parties.

Since there were over 950 occupy camps in over 80 countries across the world it would be simplistic to assume they were all identical. Furthermore, some Occupy camps had different dynamics and demographic compositions to others, which is to be expected in terms of the different cultural customs and practices nationally, regionally and locally. However, there are some key political features of Occupy movements which were shared. The main point is that Occupy camps were organized horizontally. Horizontalism refers to the practice of non-representational and therefore non-hierarchical politics, that is, there are no *de jure* leaders and decisions over political tactics and strategy are reached through consensus. Secondly, the main organizing and decision making body was by way of a General Assembly (GA). The GA was the commonly agreed decision making body of the Occupy movement, a non-hierarchical and decentralized collection of people from the camp that is non-representative. Thirdly, the general ethos of Occupy camps drew on a 'do it yourself' approach (McKay, 1998; Bryan et al., 2007). This refers to taking an independent approach towards achieving political change, acting and thinking for oneself and taking personal responsibility for your choices and not leaving decisions to others but rather abiding by the principles of the Occupy camp that encourage independence. Fourthly, the practice of prefigurative politics, which refers to living the politics one desires now and not waiting for an ideal opportunity brought about by others (particularly leaders in institutionalized political groups, for example trade unions) to implement change or to make decisions and take action on your behalf. Fifthly, the practice of consensus-based decision-making, which is informed by the principles of non-hierarchical politics through the establishment of a General Assembly which was the main decision making body on Occupy camps. Members of the GA are members of the camp and all on the camp are welcome to contribute to the direction and future of it. Given camps are run on a basis of direct democracy, a number of working groups are set up to take responsibility for activities that facilitate the smooth running of the camp. These include security, cleaning, and campaigning, for example. However, decisions are reached through

consensus at these groups, not through majoritarian voting. Instead, members who wish to raise points, block, or support decisions use hand signals. This helps to support the flow of discussion and helps to stop shouting over the top of other people, it is hoped that this will encourage less confident people to voice their opinions without fear of being shouted down or their voices being drowned out by more dominant members. Since this process relies on consensus-based decisions, no decision can be passed without either full agreement of those present, or at least no one who is absolutely against the decision. The working groups, after reaching decisions on their activities, then take their decisions to the GA. The GA then hold a meeting to inform the rest of the camp of what has been decided. This is horizontalist decision making *par excellence*.

As a 21st century movement, the importance of Occupy cannot be overstated. It created an anti-austerity, master collective action frame, which demanded change across the globe. Its sheer size and spread in terms of the number of camps and across so many countries is one of the largest in history; to the extent it has been argued that the political power of the 99% might be revolutionary and truly transformative, which could lead us into a post-capitalist world (Mason, 2015). However, it is our contention that this is not the case since the Occupy movement did not have a coherent political strategy to change anything long-term for the better given the problems associated with their main political practice of horizontalism. It is for this reason we draw on Lenin's work in the next section.

Why Lenin?

Academically, social movement scholars are increasingly using Marxism as a theoretical resource to understand the latest conditions of protest (Barker et al., 2013; della Porta, 2015). Briziarelli and Guillem (2014) for example draw on Gramsci to explain how Occupy lacked hegemonic capacity by only working at the level of civil society and not operating at the level of the integral state. We would agree with this in the sense that not working at the level of the state i.e. outside of political state recognition has little chance of success as it is avoiding the necessary power structures needed to have citizens interests represented when it comes to decisions over the economy and perhaps stop financial crashes like the one that happened in 2007-8. Lenin in particular brings to bear some important ideas about how a more centrally organised political group structure could achieve a 'proletarian hegemony (working class predominance) through an organised vanguard' (Le Blanc, 2017:112)- that is a situation whereby citizens could direct the struggle but through a party representing the collective will of the people. Gerbaudo (2017: 191) makes a similar point when referring to earlier peoples assemblies that emerged in the 20th century that citizens craved organisation and wanted all power to the Soviets (workers councils) that could mobilise all the individual wills into a collective will. And the party could make decisions away from the 'turmoil of the crowd'.

That said, drawing on Lenin's ideas of establishing a party to represent citizens interests might be considered controversial because of the suggestion of elitism in his work and some of the choices he made to ensure the repression of opponents (Ali, 2017). Trotsky, (his ally and a key figure in the Russian revolution) was no less concerned about the possible substitutionism that could and did arise when the professional revolutionaries of the party substitute for the masses, the committee for the party and then the dictator for the committee. His fears became reality with the subsequent rise of Stalinism, the expansion of the gulag system and all the brutality that ensued (Trotsky, 1999). Then there are the failed examples of Marxism-Leninism such as the ultimate collapse of the Eastern Block since 1989. However, to answer these claims, Lenin's work has been rediscovered and reinterpreted to overturn some of the previously assumed elitism. Lih (2005) for example, goes into great detail on how Lenin's work has been simplified by previous historians referring to and relying on a few quotes from 'textbook' and abridged versions of *What is to be Done?* (WITBD), taking statements out of context and ignoring elitist statements from Lenin's political opponents, for example, the Mensheviks.

However, reference to Zizek (Lenin and Zizek, 2017) is useful here, since he argues we should not try to reinvent Lenin, but we should repeat him, especially since the collapse of the Eastern Block, circa 1990. It could be argued that trade unions could play a key role in developing socialist ideology to counter neoliberalism and challenge the inequality, debt crisis, financial mismanagement, and political crises that have occurred in recent times (Dorling, 2016; Graeber, 2011). This means criticising and moving beyond the way political groups like Occupy organise that could be considered post-ideological, that do not have a stable political vision or a plan to challenge the austerity that occurred after the financial crash of 2007-8. It should be made clear that Lenin's methods of political transformation are problematic, his treatment of 'counter revolutionaries' and the way in which he was very much part of the expansion of the gulag system should not be dismissed. Therefore, as Zizek has argued Lenin's work could be used objectively and within the horizon of human rights to avoid the painful experiences of the 20th century (Lenin and Zizek, 2017). Notwithstanding these criticisms, Lenin was an intellectual and a political strategist and therefore his writings, which were borne out of particular conditions, are still very valuable in that they can be used to analyse situations based on empirical realities of political negotiation and

compromise. LWC offers an opportunity to understand how political compromise and cooperation, coupled with political organisation and structure can be used to push forward a political programme that challenges elite power.

In LWC, Lenin's criticisms of various left-wing political groups including the German Left Communists and the Mensheviks after the Russian revolution, 1917, are underutilized in social movement studies and yet they provide a sound theoretical basis with which one can use to critique the action repertoires of contemporary activist groups. In this case, the Occupy movement and the political practices of horizontalism, which include the underlying position of no compromise with parliamentary politics, at best an ambiguous relationship towards trade unions (as they are seen as part of institutionalized political structures) and at worst rejecting their help; instead opting for the political practice of prefigurative politics and consensus-based decision making. Underlying Lenin's work is recognition of the importance of *political power* and that without strategically compromising with political power there is little chance of changing political structures that have led to inequality (Lenin, 1999). LWC can be used to understand how without a real structure for political representation and a structured plan of how to bring about societal change, the Occupy movement and indeed any other activist groups leave themselves open to attack from reactionary forces that have a very clear plan of how to derail progressive politics. This is what Lenin warned when he stated:

‘the dictatorship of the proletariat means a most determined and most ruthless war waged by the new class against a more powerful enemy, the bourgeoisie, whose resistance increased tenfold by their overthrow...’ (Lenin, 1999, Chapter, 2:1).

Lenin's warning above refers to how the bourgeoisie were reacting to an implementation of a dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia; he is arguing that the bourgeoisie's resistance increases tenfold when threatened with being overthrown. Although his work was based on an early 20th century political situation in Russia, it was rooted in what he called 15 years of political and ‘practical history’, which included the earlier revolution of 1905. Therefore, his theory is derived from real experience, and regardless of the time period it is a *classic* critique of those movements and parties who fail to acknowledge how important it is to organise and plan a clear political strategy which would involve forming a party with a range of political forces against elite hierarchies who wish to maintain power.

Before the methodology for the research is discussed there are two main points to bear in mind. Firstly, Occupy emerged in over 950 cities and in 80 countries across the globe. Therefore, this analysis is necessarily at a level of abstraction given the size of both the Occupy movement and the body of Lenin's work. There were political and cultural differences between camps across cities not to mention between countries, a paper of this type cannot hope to capture the various nuances that existed. However, there are certain central and key common features of Occupy camps in terms of their organizing and mobilizing structures and collective action frames that can be referred to and used for analysis, despite variations. These include the political practice of horizontalism and consensus-based decision making (CBDM). To illustrate some of the problems that arose on camps we have provided interview evidence from activists involved in two UK camps and accounts from academic literature on the Occupy movement. Secondly, Lenin's critique in LWC was aimed at the German Left Communists (GLC) and other groups, which were quite different from the Occupy movement. In some respects, the GLC would be more like a traditional left-wing political party. However, the aim is not to compare the Occupy movement with whom he was criticizing, but rather to apply some general points of his criticisms to an inexperienced political and social movement, and point out the mistakes they made by not recognising the importance of political power and that to affect change mass movements need to develop into a more mature political and organised form- a party that represent the interests of the many.

METHODOLOGY

To offer some empirical evidence which supports the theoretical analysis, 20 activists from two Occupy camps were interviewed by way of semi-structured interviewing technique in 2014; some of who were involved in an Occupy camp in a northern UK city and others in Occupy London, UK. All the interviews took place after the activists were no longer involved in Occupy and after the campouts had ended. In addition, a range of documents were consulted, both academic and journalistic to gather background information on the Occupy movement. The activists were sampled through two main ways. Firstly, through purposive sampling, one of the authors has contacts in a range of activist networks and through these was able to interview various ‘knowledge sources’ who were involved in the Occupy movement. Secondly, to extend the research, a snowball sampling technique was used by asking activists if they could suggest other activists who would be willing to be interviewed. Interviews were carried out using a recording device and were later transcribed. The interview questions were open ended and centred

around activists political biography, political values, motivations and affiliations, and their experiences of Occupy. The data was analysed in a qualitative and thematic manner.

A LENINIST CRITIQUE OF OCCUPY

In the following section we present evidence from empirical data and published material that suggests the political practice of horizontalism as used by Occupy lacked the necessary organizational and decision making mechanisms to produce any significant social change. Furthermore, because the political practice of Occupy eschewed formal political institutions and structures it was unlikely to gain any political traction to progress its politics towards achieving a more equal society/ world. It is for these reasons we claim that Occupy was an immature political movement. This is not meant to be used pejoratively, but rather to suggest that it was the beginning of an earlier phase of a challenge to neoliberal austerity. Through the development of 'movement parties' we are now seeing signs of political maturity since they contain a coalition of social and political forces that have emanated out of movements like Occupy which are attempting to build a counter hegemony. Whether these will be successful in the long term is another question beyond the scope of this paper and only time will tell; what is for sure though is the examples of movement parties like Momentum in the UK and Podemos in Spain have lasted significantly longer than Occupy and have gained popular support.

We now subject the data to a Leninist analysis by first outlining some examples of how Occupy was disorganized, then explain how organized labor in the form of trade unions offer important material and organizational resources for social movements that could help in the political development towards a new movement party. Linked to this, we claim that to advance a movement's political position from a camp out it is necessary to enter into parliamentary politics, perhaps through or working with an interlocutor movement party.

The Politics of Disorganisation

Occupy was a mass movement assembly as such was prone to disorganisation. This has been documented quite widely with a number of examples that suggest endless meetings with no concrete decisions being made which is a direct consequence of CBDM as part of the wider political practice of horizontalism. Here we present some empirical data to substantiate these claims and take forward our argument to suggest occupy was an infantile disorder. An interview with a key activist who was a trade unionist and helped set up one Occupy camp in the North of England, UK, outlines the problems he experienced with CBDM. Interestingly, even just trying to organize the General Assembly to start the decision making process was difficult. He states: 'the biggest problem about the General Assembly was implementing the General Assembly' (R1) (also see Ibrahim, 2015). This was because too many people had different interpretations over how it should work. And without any democratic mechanisms decisions could not be reached. He goes on to state that 'the same topics were discussed over and over again' (R1), which relates to the issue of 'reinventing the wheel'. It was also the case that when he suggested organising a voting system so decisions on how to organize could actually be reached, he was told 'no' by other members of the camp. Furthermore, this was not open for discussion. In this sense the camp was quite prescriptive and restrictive which seemed clearly at odds with open discussion. That is, whilst majoritarian voting is not desired, open discussion should at least allow the debate to be had. He pointed out that he felt that this was quite contradictory to the principles of open discussion and CBDM.

Another activist respondent stated:

People seemed to have a problem with any form of organization, a lot of people came in with individual ideas... they thought those ideas were the ideas that would take it forward, and you can't imagine how difficult it is when there's a room full of people all with their own ideas wanting those ideas to be the leading ideas in the organization and not understanding that people have to compromise and look for ways to move forward together (R2).

It is interesting to note that there seemed to be little compromise by some members of the camp who were dominant. Yet, there seemed to be little organization and actually achieving anything seemed to be impossible because there seemed to be no plan that could be decided upon.

He goes on to say that:

So the sort of anti-organization of it was really difficult and the mentioning of the word leadership caused terror amongst people. Although leaders naturally develop, well I say they naturally develop, they tended to be quite well educated, university graduates who had been able to articulate themselves and had a sort of higher understanding of politics. Maybe they'd been involved in some politics on campus and stuff like that. So they were able to establish themselves as leaders of it [the camp] which were detrimental to the whole thing really (R2).

The same problems have been outlined in the literature on Occupy. Smith and Glidden (2012), for example, state that while having no formal structure allows for spontaneity and open process, it also leads to a tyranny of structurelessness. In the Occupy movement, a lack of formalized structure meant that individuals or cliques tended to dominate the politics of the group. In relation to Occupy Pittsburgh, this was evident in the early months of encampment, as those who maintained a continuous presence in camps claimed a higher status during group decision-making. As well as possible flaws in terms of democratic practice there were issues of practicality- without agendas, specific times of meetings or an end time (some structure) meetings ran on and/or newcomers would discuss issues that had already been discussed. Gerbaudo (2017) has made a similar point from his research on mass movement assemblies including Occupy. In particular, how meetings can become endless and at certain times members of the camp chose to make decisions when other members were not there to challenge them. In this respect, CBDM was never meant or suitable for mass movements (2017:201). There are two issues here: one is colloquially referred to as ‘reinventing the wheel’ where the same issues are discussed over and over again. The other is when there are invisible hierarchies and no democratic accountability; decisions are made by *de facto* but not *de jure* leaders. Some of these issues have been documented in the civil rights movement and feminist movement in the 1970s (Freeman, 1972-3) as well as in more recent turn of the century anti-capitalist movements (Bramble and Minns, 2005), but it is surprising that they are still being played out well into the 21st century. This is where a Leninist analysis towards the implementation of structure and gaining insights from how a trade union organises might be instructive.

Trade Unions and Organization

The organization that a trade union can bring to a social movement is detailed in Lenin’s work when he argued that the party directly relied on trade unions and demonstrated how indispensable they were after the 1917 revolution and during the precarious dictatorship of the proletariat phase when capitalists and counter revolutionaries wished to stop and destroy the Russian revolution:

Without close contacts with the trade unions, and without their energetic support and devoted efforts not only in economic but military affairs, it would have of course been impossible for us to govern the country and to maintain the dictatorship [of the proletariat] for two and a half months let alone two and a half years (Lenin, 1999, Chapter 7: 2).

Lenin also points out how trade unions can provide educational and political development for citizens. He states how in political practice trade unions when working with social movements can carry out ‘propaganda, agitation, and timely and frequent conferences’ (Ibid.:2). They can help politicize citizens to be more aware of their material conditions and equip them with the knowledge to develop and improve on their action repertoires, in turn, this could help further positive social change when such skills are deployed. However, when decisions cannot be reached and arguing takes place on how to organize an action or event, a type of political entropy occurs whereby the political will and energy people once had for the movement dissipates, people leave and camps simply collapse.

Lenin goes on to argue how trade union support was paramount for the Bolsheviks, that they could not have retained power for two months let alone two years without the energetic support of trade unions. Interestingly, a good deal of UK Occupy camps collapsed in two months. The London camp, the longest running one in the UK, lasted four months before moving with fewer participants to Finsbury Square. It finally ended in June 2012. From another interview an activist recalled how one northern UK camp lasted ‘no more than six weeks’ (R3). This was after a split between those in the camp who wished to collaborate with the public sector trade unionists (who were organising a mass strike and demonstration through the city against the cuts in pension benefits for public sector workers imposed by the UK government) and those that did not and who wished to hold fast on non-cooperation with trade unions.

Although the way in which labour unions organize is at odds with the dominant practice of horizontalism, ‘[i]t was recognized that unions could be key allies and that they shared similar grievances to Occupy activists’ (Pickerill and Krinsky (2012: 282). However, collaborations only succeeded in a few places and even in those places cooperation broke down eventually. A case in point was Oakland Occupy, which worked with the International Longshoreman and Warehouse Union. Together, they organized a large general strike and action that closed several West Coast ports. However, disagreements over tactics, the need for leadership, and which issues should take priority emerged and these led to the break-up of the alliance.

On another occasion, there was also confusion expressed by some Oakland occupy activists who applied for a permit to demonstrate whereas others did not, thereby resulting in the criminalization of those that did not (Roberts, 2014). The lack of planning (structurelessness) in regards how action should be coordinated is an inherent problem for horizontalist politics, since there are multiple perspectives, multiple goals and differences of opinion on how things should proceed. There is often no real plan for a future action, as plans are seen as restrictive, and

prefigurative politics is the general strategy. The resultant affect can be a collapse in certain circumstances or like the Oakland case an unintentional undermining of fellow activists. No clear leadership structure often results in confusion and/or splits like the case of the northern, UK camp mentioned earlier.

Building on this argument, to ignore the organizational power of labour with which a coherent political programme can be brought about is to ignore the power geometry of political struggles. A major source of power within a social movement is its ability to deploy resources and sustain itself during a political campaign (McCarthy and Zald, 1977).

Creating alliances with the labour movement can bring much needed resources to a campaign or struggle both at the macro level of framing the struggle and at the micro level in providing some basic and much needed resources on the ground. This was the case during the Occupy camp in the North of the UK. According to one activist who was interviewed, 'trade unionists brought food and torches to campers and opened up their offices to allow them to use their shower facilities' (R4). Whilst these examples of cooperation at the micro level do happen, at the level of organization however, political compromise and cooperation between activists and trade unions were short lived. Therefore, we argue what is needed is a 'movement party' which could bring together the spontaneity of new movements and the structure and organisational power of trade unions. This way at the macro level of framing struggles, trade unions and movement activists could have their respective collective action frames aligned under an anti-austerity collective action frame. This could result in a broadening of their own politics so they recognize how each other's struggles are caused by financial neoliberalism and decide how they can work together towards a shared political objective. This in turn could create an alliance whereby they lend support and resources (intellectual and material) to each other and raise issues in different forums thereby creating a confluence of ideas attracting a wider populace.

This again is where Lenin's work is instructive. He outlines how trade unions have the power to call upon a vast number of members and mobilize towards a strike. If grievances escalate, Lenin has argued, a situation of an 'economic strike can turn into a political strike' (Lenin, 1999). This means moving beyond a narrow economic benefit towards a greater political and societal transformation. The anti-austerity collective action frame produced by the Occupy movement did create what has been termed 'togetherness' in certain instances but not 'solidarity' (Cambell, 2011 cited by Roberts, 2014: 179). This means that the coalition of forces sharing the same grievances came together at certain times but there was no unified political programme because the model of horizontalism does not allow for the building of alliances with other groups that have different ways of organising. An opportunity to build alliances was lost for example in the UK when trade unions organized a mass public sector strike over pension reform in November, 2011. Although both groups were campaigning against aspects of austerity there was little meaningful collaboration between them. This is where a movement party representing the interests and perspectives of different groups could and have brought diverse groups together under a broad leftist ideology arguing against austerity- this in turn could develop as a political force to challenge neoliberalism.

Although we have levelled a critique at Occupy, it is also important to draw on a critique of trade unions too at this point. Lenin (1973) was aware how unions were susceptible to what he termed a 'trade union consciousness' and therefore sometimes unwilling to go beyond the immediate demands for better pay and conditions, which could exclude movement activists who are not part of a trade union. Therefore, it could be argued that trade unionists are reactionary to some extent. This is where a Leninist analysis (1973) from *What is to be Done?* (WITBD) is useful. He argued that professional revolutionaries in the form of a party organization are what is needed to lead workers beyond immediate rewards into an emancipatory communism. A contemporary form of what Lenin was arguing for is what we call a movement party that represents all interests of those who are disenfranchised by neoliberalism; this is a party that contains a range of social and political forces with the hegemonic capacity to push forward an anti-austerity agenda. It can include trade unions and political activists who may have differing strategies and ideas but within a movement party working for change are able to unite and develop solidarity.

This brings the paper on to the next part of the Leninist framework, and how participation in bourgeois parliaments is necessary since it is in the parliamentary forum that a movement party can gain traction. However, this means understanding the importance of political power in the form of parliamentary institutions and working at the level of the state and not just civil society.

Participation in Bourgeois Parliaments

The question on whether to work with bourgeois parliaments arose for Lenin and other communists, just like it does today. There is an inherent distrust of institutionalized political organizations amongst a good deal of horizontalist type movements and Occupy was no different. Hence, Lenin dedicates a chapter in LWC which asks 'Should we participate in bourgeois parliaments?' His answer is yes and is based on the practicalities of working with political organizations that have institutional power. In essence, his view is that political power is necessary for advancing a political cause. It is an essential power structure that can shape and determine how and where

resources (campaigns, education, and propaganda) might be needed to best convey the ideological vision of a political group.

Lenin at the time understood that there were arguments for not participating in bourgeois parliaments put forward by the German left communists (GLC). The GLC argued that such parliaments were 'historically and politically obsolete'. Lenin recognized that this propaganda statement by the GLC was necessary to move the masses into thinking more radically beyond the dominant political mode available to them. He divides the GLC statement up between being 'historically obsolete' and 'politically obsolete' (Lenin, 1999, Chapter 8:2). In the first sense he agrees that the era of a dictatorship of the proletariat has begun thus rendering parliament obsolete, but he states that this is a 'far cry from overcoming it in practice' (Ibid.:2). That is, it still exists and is one of the main loci of power in society whether 'from the standpoint of world history' or not. Whilst socialism is still evolving and would be a better political system he argues that we have not yet reached the final stage. As such, the real and concrete power structures of bourgeois parliaments are there and they have a strong grip on power over decision-making. His view is that political groups should still work with them whilst they are a central power structure in society even if they are reactionary. In fact, Lenin argued it's precisely because they are reactionary that activists who envisage a better society should work with them. Lenin argued activists should work with reactionary institutions more generally:

because in them there are still workers who are stupefied by the priests and by the desolateness of village life: otherwise you run the risk of becoming mere babblers (Lenin, 1999, Chapter 8:1).

Of course, Lenin here is referring to an early 20th century situation. Applied to today, the general principle of working with those beyond the Occupy camp to build a stronger activist base could help bring about societal change. There is also the danger of not working with trade unions, and other politicians too, as Barker (2013) has argued. If the left abandons the working class, say in trade unions, parliament, or other 'reactionary institutions' it leaves them open to conservative or reformist forces (2013: 58).

In regards the view that parliament is politically obsolete, Lenin claims this is a major theoretical error of the then left wing factions in Germany since the position of the left is not strong. He adds that parliament cannot be possibly politically obsolete 'when millions and legions of proletariat are still in favour of bourgeois parliament and are downright counter-revolutionary'. He further claims that the GLC is mistaking 'their desire, their politico-ideological attitude, for objective reality' (Lenin, 1999, Chapter 8: 2). Lenin is therefore more than aware that in order for it to gain hegemony, a mass social movement must move beyond closed and narrow confines of its own membership and make links to other movements and institutions. As a Marxist, Lenin hoped that the working class would gain political consciousness as a social and class movement when:

workers learn, from concrete, and above all from topical, political facts and events to observe *every* other social class in *all* the manifestations of its intellectual, ethical, and political life; unless they learn to apply in practice the materialist analysis and the materialist estimate of *all* aspects of the life and activity of *all* classes, strata, and groups of the population (Lenin, 1973:50).

Here, Lenin is suggesting that workers need to recognise and build on a relatively simple fact. Under capitalism, which in Russia at the time Lenin was writing was still trying to compete for dominance with feudal social relations, labour is constituted at a concrete level through which it produces use-values. Yet, labour's concrete existence is also incorporated into abstract and indifferent social relations in the guise of homogenous bundles of commodities constituted through labour power and socially necessary labour-time. Labour therefore acts as the structuring principle for the totality of capitalist social relations, and secures the relationship between concrete and abstract forms of life in capitalism. That is to say, and building on Marx, labour is not a static socio-economic category for Lenin, but represents the shape, form and movement of society – indeed, labour is a form of society (Neary, 2002:176). And this is why those socialists who wish to see a radical transformation in society had to move beyond their own party dynamics and work with representative democratic institutions across society.

It is here that parallels can be drawn between horizontalist politicians such as Occupy and GLC because of their pure attitudes towards political organizing. Just as the GLC argue that bourgeois parliaments are obsolete, Occupy were doing the same by subscribing to prefigurative politics and wanting to work outside institutionalized power structures. What is obsolete to activists subscribing to horizontalist politics might 'not be obsolete to the masses' (Lenin, 1999, Chapter 8:3). It is also the case that there are left-wing groups and trade unions with many grassroots activists from political parties who campaigned on an anti-austerity agenda. Working with these local groups could have been an opportunity for the Occupy movement to align their interests with these groups, who have a direct link with parliamentary political groups. If we take Momentum in the UK for example, a grassroots activist campaign group that evolved out of the election victory of Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party leadership campaign in

2015, we can see that if activist groups like Occupy were to emerge again, a future collaboration with Momentum could strengthen both of their political positions.

Of course, it is the case that some parliamentary politicians are reactionary and might not cooperate with activists, even grassroots activists of the same party. However, as Lenin (1999) states, political groups still need to work legally with even the most reactionary institutions because it is within these that you will find workers who are exploited and could be valuable allies. This is where Occupy, the grassroots political party activists and trade unions could work with reactionary groups to transform them. Trade unions and party politicians in this instance have direct contact and have much experience in campaigning, which could be utilised.

In our interviews, there was one instance where an Occupy activist recalls how he compared the lack of experience of an Occupy activist with that of a seasoned trade union activist. The former seemed to lack 'know how' and 'leadership':

During the pension strike, the members of the Occupy camp were invited to come and speak and the Trade Union were really praising them and saying 'we're so proud.' 'I heard this brings a new element to our fight for pensions' ... 'we want your support'. But when the 'leadership' of the Occupy Movement stood on the Town Hall steps, it was like a child speaking next to the rest of the [trade union] movement that were speaking. They really had no idea of what was really happening. It was quite [a] difficult experience. If you were looking for leadership from that platform, you wouldn't have looked to the people from Occupy for any form of leadership (R5).

Therefore, we contend that if Occupy activists were to work with the trade unions and political parties from the left under a coalition or movement party, a political frame could be created to help mobilize fellow citizens from all sections of society to become what McAdam (1982) calls 'cognitively liberated' through the framing of their situation as a political struggle.

CONCLUSION

The title of this paper, which asks the question if the Occupy movement was an infantile disorder was not meant to be disparaging, rather, it is to ask if there is a certain political immaturity given the newness and inexperience of Occupy. Occupy was very much a 21st century political experiment in direct action and participatory democracy. Underpinning the politics of Occupy is a certain idealism, which comes from a variety of thinkers. One such activist and academic who is a proponent and a key influence for this type of political practice is Holloway (2002, 2010). He has argued that it is time to 'learn the new language of a new struggle'; and given the inequities produced by capitalism 'the need for radical social change is more pressing and more obvious than ever, but we do not know how to bring it about' (2010: 10). He recalls the failed political experiment of 'Oaxaca (in 2006) where people took control of the city for five months, but then were brutally repressed' (2010: 10). This type of repression is not new, and earlier we stated that it is what Lenin warned when elites feel threatened. Horizontal, leaderless political groups are vanquished and are constantly attacked by *organized* opponents whose determination increases when alternatives outside of robust political institutions emerge. The main reason progressive groups are repressed is that they have no legal power or organized critical mass from which to draw on. Holloway (2010) persists that his solution is 'to crack capitalism in as many ways as we can and try and expand and multiply the cracks and promote their confluence' (2010: 11). His approach is admirable but this is where the notion of naivety arises; oppressive regimes and reactionary, institutionalized politicians can resist pressure from a disorganized and unorganized group much more easily than from an organized one and having the panoply of the state to hand can expedite the organized effort to crush it.

Although Occupy was not crushed it did collapse and fade because a lack of resources, organisational as well as material, and there was no real political articulation between Occupy activists largely confined to camps and the masses. This is where the trade union movement and parliamentary grassroots activists could have been helpful since they often have connections and contact with citizens in a variety of locations (including the workplace and on the streets) who are less politically engaged, on a regular basis. It is for these reasons we argue that Occupy was an infantile disorder because it was unwilling to adapt to political realities and strategize beyond camp outs and towards long-term goals and consider how a broader populace could be reached.

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