

The background of the cover is a deep blue with a complex, textured pattern of fine, intersecting lines and larger, more pronounced brushstrokes, creating a sense of depth and movement.

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## PREFACE

Welcome to Volume XXIX of the Social and Political Review. Since its foundation, the SPR has played a vital role in encouraging and showcasing exceptional student achievement in Trinity College Dublin, and I am proud that this year's edition continues a long-standing legacy of promoting and honouring academic engagement with some of the most pressing social and political issues of our time.

Amid the ongoing chaos of Brexit, the continuing rise of populism across the world, and the many consequences of unchecked national and international inequalities, 2019 is not an easy time to be a student of Political Science or Sociology. Nonetheless - or rather because of these daunting challenges - it is crucial that we persevere. This is a time when differences are often weaponised, and it is up to us young people to question this trend as we prepare to leave university and start shaping the world around us. The contributions in this volume do exactly that. They cover a wide range of urgent issues, from challenging the discrimination of non-citizens in Ireland to questioning the rules of our neoliberal society, and from seeking to explain an atrocious genocide between two ethnic groups to exposing the social realities of precarious work as opposed to quality work.

Students from across the academic spectrum in Trinity submitted thought-provoking and riveting pieces for this year's edition, and I congratulate all those whose work is published here. Sincere commiserations to those who were unsuccessful due to the outstanding number of excellent submissions this year.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Editorial Board of this year's Review for their hard work and dedication, as well as for their invaluable insights and critiques. I would also like to extend special thanks to our wonderful design editor, Carla, as well as Sophie, our General Manager, and Roisin, our Financial Officer. Their dedication made the production of this year's SPR possible, while their company made it enjoyable. It has been my pleasure to work with such an astute and committed Editorial Board. I also want to thank the Departments of Political Science and Sociology, who have been, once again, generous in their support of the Review.

It has been an honour to serve as Editor-in-Chief of the 29th year of the Social and Political Review. I very much hope you will enjoy reading this volume as much as I have.

Michaela Kalcher  
Editor-in-Chief





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# The Creation of ‘the Citizen’ Requires at the Same Time the Active Creation of ‘the Non-Citizen’. Ireland as a Case Study

Comhall Fanning

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## Introduction

The above statement shall be examined using Ireland as a case study, while making occasional comparisons with other jurisdictions to demonstrate the universality of certain sociological processes. Two key trends will be examined: first, the use of citizenship laws and asylum processes to actively construct a ‘non-citizen’ who does not belong in the Irish state, compared to ‘the citizen’ who can take comfort in their sense of belonging founded on the exclusion of others from the nation-state. Secondly, the notion of an ‘ideal citizen’ will be examined. In Ireland, ideal notions of a WHISC (white, heterosexual, Irish-born, settled, Catholic) citizen were created during the nation-building process of the Irish Free State (Crowley et al, 2006, p. 7-8; Bryan, 2010, p. 3). These beliefs have been used to exclude members of the LGBTQ+ community, non-Catholics and, perhaps most palpably at present, members of the Travelling Community. Sassen (2002) views citizenship, in its narrowest form, as describing “the legal relationship between the individual and the polity” (p. 7). Marshall sees citizenship as a collection of civil or legal, political and social rights (Crowley et al., 2006, p. 5). By granting ‘the citizen’ this set of rights, a ‘non-citizen’ is created when actively excluded from these rights.

“Mr Howlin [leader of the Irish Labour Party] said [...] that it is a sad day for Ireland when ‘local campaigns are required to ensure children can stay in our country’” (Burns, 2018). This has been the case in Ireland since the 2004 Citizenship Referendum. Scholars tend to agree that the redefinition of citizenship laws in Ireland was shaped by immigration (Gilmartin, 2015, p. 133), which effectively prompted a desire to create fixed notions of Irish citizenship (Crowley et al., 2006, p. 4). By removing *jus soli* citizenship, Ireland stated that those born to foreign parents are not ‘Irish’, thus actively creating a ‘non-citizen’. We see examples of exclusion in Ireland respectively along the lines of asylum seekers in Ireland being unable to obtain driving licences (Hillard, 2018), asylum

seekers experiencing difficulties when registering to vote in local elections (Gilmartin, 2015, p. 136) and in visa policies which deny non-EEA low-skilled workers access to the HSE (Health Service Executive – Ireland’s public healthcare provider) and social welfare (Crowley et al., 2006, p. 12). Punitive measures used by the Irish state, like DP (Direct Provision), segregate asylum seekers from ‘the citizens’ (White et al., 2012, p. 43) and discourage asylum applications (Crowley et al., 2006, p. 19). Although post-nationalists argue that the importance of citizenship has diminished in an era which recognises universal rights of personhood (Koopmans et al., 2005, p. 236), I argue that citizenship remains a divisive issue which facilitates discrimination and actively creates a ‘non-citizen.’ Indeed, when citizenship is combined with the provision of welfare and healthcare, it could be viewed as the right to survive.

### **Constructing migrants as ‘non-citizens’ in contrast to ‘the citizen’**

Crowley et al. (2006) argue that the Irish citizen constructed during Free State nation building was white, Gaelic and Catholic (p. 7-8). Following rapid change in immigration patterns in the 1990s and early 2000s, there were a growing number of Irish residents who did not fit this imagined conception of Irishness (ibid., p. 3-5). Ireland’s citizenship laws meant that people born in Ireland, who did not meet this perceived standard of the ideal citizen, were still legally viewed as citizens in the eyes of the state. The state’s notion of ‘the citizen’ was under threat. Refugees and asylum seekers were thus portrayed as a problem and citizenship reforms were deemed necessary to stop a practice of ‘baby tourism’ allegedly overrunning Irish maternity hospitals (Fanning & Mutwarasibo, 2007, p. 447; Crowley et al., 2006, p. 3). However, the masters of the Coombe and Rotunda, two maternity hospitals in Dublin, distanced themselves from this narrative used by government and instead asked for more funding (Fanning & Mutwarasibo, 2007, p. 447). By using a tactic which focused on one of Marshall’s social rights of ‘the citizen’, the social right of healthcare, the government actively created a ‘non-citizen’ by inferring that asylum seekers did not have the right to access ‘the citizen’s’ healthcare services. Considering rising healthcare inequalities in Ireland around this period, which Burke (2010) views as a “natural outcome of the PD [Progressive Democrats]/Fianna Fáil [coalition government from

1997 to 2007] neoliberal economic orthodoxy that prevails then and now” (p. 57), the figure of the asylum seeker could be viewed as a convenient scapegoat for a government failing to provide proper healthcare services under a neoliberal model.

Asylum seekers, mainly from Africa and Asia, were the main target of the 2004 referendum campaign, even though the majority of migrants arriving in Ireland were returning Irish emigrants or white Europeans (Crowley et al., 2006, p. 15). This makes it clear that the government focused on visible difference in culture and skin colour to encourage the electorate to create a ‘non-citizen’. The children of asylum seekers would not fit the imagined concept of whiteness and Irishness. ‘Commonsense citizenship’ was a slogan employed by the government, which they argued would fix a ‘loophole’ in citizenship laws (Fanning & Mutwarasibo, 2007, p. 447). This narrative actively constructed a definition of ‘the citizen’ whom the government viewed as worthy of Irish citizenship: the ethnically Irish. Throughout the campaign, a populist narrative was used to create “distinctions between mainly mono-ethnic nationals and non-nationals” (ibid., p. 441). Lentin (2004) draws on Goldberg’s theory of modern states as ‘racial states’, which exclude to create homogeneity, to explain the tactic used by the Irish government (p. 7). Many of the pieces written for the media by Michael McDowell, Justice Minister during the referendum campaign, used discourse which ‘othered’ non-nationals (Brandi, 2007). Brandi argues that McDowell constructed this ‘other’ as a “problematic presence” and reinforced the conception of “migrants as abusers and criminals” (ibid., p. 41). The government campaign argued that the question being put to the people was one which was “simple” (ibid., p. 33). This supports the notion that those who are entitled to be ‘Irish’ has a simple answer: those who are white. This referendum legally enforced imagined notions of what it means to be a citizen of Ireland, thus creating a ‘non-citizen’. The rights of ‘the citizen’ were removed from many ‘non-citizens’, who were portrayed as transient and not belonging to the nation-state, following the overwhelming support of the electorate for the referendum. Recent attempts by the Labour Party to introduce a bill to grant citizenship to Irish-born children of migrants after three years, being refused support by government and described as a “knee-jerk

reaction” by the Justice Minister, Charlie Flanagan (Bray, 2018), underline that the Irish state still views non-ethnically Irish, yet Irish-born children as other to ‘the citizen’. Furthermore, this trend is not unique to Ireland. Donald Trump’s false claim in October 2018 that “[The US is] the only country in the world where a person comes in and has a baby, and the baby is essentially a citizen of the United States [...] It’s ridiculous. It’s ridiculous. And it has to end.” (Laughland, 2018) paints a similar image to the rhetoric used by McDowell and arguably also Flanagan: that migrants abuse citizenship laws and damage the integrity of the nation-state.

‘The citizen’ is constructed as having social, political and civil rights (Crowley et al., 2006, p. 5). The fact that asylum seekers are denied these rights actively creates ‘non-citizens’. Scholars argue that DP is designed to “segregate out populations of asylum seekers from the host community” (White, 2012, p. 43). ‘The citizen’ has the right to live where they choose; however, with the introduction of DP, asylum seekers lost this right and the right to access the main social welfare system (Burroughs & O’Reilly, 2013, p. 62). Removal from the mainstream social welfare system and being unable to provide for oneself creates social gaps between ‘the citizen’ and ‘non-citizen’, thus entrenching the model of exclusion. A recent example of a mother being denied a slice of bread to feed her sick child in a DP centre (McGreevy, 2018) highlights this divide. It is hard to imagine a situation in which ‘the citizen’ could face similar treatment. Arguably more extreme, US Attorney General Jeff Sessions’s announcement in April 2018 of a “zero tolerance policy” allowed for so-called illegal migrant parents to be detained by immigration, whilst their children were put into state care resulting in thousands of family separations (Holpuch, 2019). It is equally difficult to envisage a situation in which ‘the citizen’ would be treated in a similar manner. Austria has also employed harsh measures to discourage asylum, including the passing of a law to cut the welfare benefits of asylum seekers who could not speak B1-Level German (Rief, 2018). Having to take a language test to access welfare which ‘the citizen’ can access automatically actively creates the ‘non-citizen’. Castles & Davidson (2000) maintain that asylum seekers are some of the most socially and legally disadvantaged in Western states (p. 73). This is no accident; labelling asylum seekers as ‘other’ from ‘the citizen’ has allowed

governments to justify their exclusion from mainstream society and thus stigmatise their very existence. Demonisation, seen in McDowell's comments that many asylum seekers use "cock and bull stories" to enter Ireland (RTÉ, 2005) further creates a 'non-citizen' in sharp contrast to 'the citizen', who is fortunate enough to be Irish and not have to justify their existence within the state. This validates segregation and mistreatment of asylum seekers. The recent arson attacks on buildings in Donegal and on the Roscommon-Leitrim border due to be used as DP centres (Maguire, 2018; Pollak, 2019) shows how 'the citizen' can internalise this comforting reassurance that they exclusively belong in the state and use it to justify an attack on the 'non-citizen'. Contrary to the post-national concept of citizenship, this proves how important citizenship is. A 2009 ESRI (Economic and Social Research Institute) study found that those who have Irish names on CVs are more likely to be called for interview than those with foreign names (Pollak, 2018). O'Connell (2018) attributes the lack of labour-market involvement of African migrants to the fact that 73% have been in DP, meaning that they spent significant periods of their lives out of employment, making them the most disadvantaged group in the Irish labour market, despite being relatively well-educated (p. 14-21). Although asylum seekers have recently been granted the right to work, their employment rights remain restrictive (Khambule & Mulhall, 2018). By limiting the right to work of asylum seekers, one of the key rights 'the citizen' has, the government creates a 'non-citizen'. This places asylum seekers in a disadvantaged position in the labour market once their asylum claim is granted, which may lead to them having to claim social welfare, creating a public image of the 'non-citizen' as lazy—even though this is caused by the after-effects of government policy.

'The citizen' of Western nations is characterised as having freedom to travel (Mau et al., 2015, p. 1192). Many states juxtapose the desire for their citizens to travel freely with blocking those from other states from entering their territory. Ireland actively creates the 'non-citizen' in this manner as 42,000 people were denied entry into Ireland between 2002 and 2009 (Burroughs & O'Reilly, 2013, p. 63). The 2003 Supreme Court ruling, which stated that the parents of Irish citizens did not have a constitutional right to residency (Howard, 2009, p.164) also stripped non-EEA parents

of Irish children of the right to remain in Ireland, one of the main rights ‘the citizen’ has. The courts played a large role in constructing the ‘non-citizen’. White et al. (2012) also point to media focus around immigration on those who are ‘different’ (p. 20), which leads to stigmatisation and ‘othering’ of differences. 90% of Irish primary schools are under Church administration (ibid., p. 30). This actively creates an image of ‘the citizen’ as Catholic and shows a lack of desire to accommodate the imagined ‘non-citizen’ who may have a different faith or be of no faith. Fanning & Mutwarasibo (2007) cite a 2002 study which found that “almost 70% of Irish people believed minorities abuse social welfare” (p. 451). This creates an image that those who are not in the imagined WHISC majority are not entitled to welfare and are thus viewed as ‘non-citizens’. Political exclusion is also experienced by migrants in Ireland. Gilmartin (2015) identifies voting rights as a “formal statement of belonging” (p. 138); yet, Fanning & Mutwarasibo (2007) note that no Irish political party adopted measures to include non-nationals in the 2004 local elections and that some asylum seekers experienced problems registering to vote (p. 443). Using voting rights, Ireland actively constructs ‘the citizen’ as an Irish citizen, who lives in Ireland. This leads to the creation of a ‘non-citizen’ in terms of political involvement, an important measure of belonging, and infringes upon the political rights Marshall attributes to citizenship.

### **Constructing ‘legal’ citizens as ‘non-citizens’ compared to ‘the [ideal] citizen’**

Ireland actively maintained the WHISC ‘citizen’ by criminalising homosexuality until 1993. The marriage equality referendum in 2015 demonstrates how Irishness is constantly changing (Gilmartin et al., 2018, p. 69). Richardson (1998) points to how homosexuality is often affiliated with partial citizenship as couples may not have full recognition of their relationship (p. 89). Although much of this has changed since Richardson’s 1998 paper, it provides interesting examples of the extent to which states have gone to construct heterosexual people as full citizens, thus constructing homosexuals as ‘non-citizens’. Indeed, homosexuality used to come with the charge of treason in many Western states (Richardson, 1998, p. 91). However, Ireland is far from the only country guilty of constructing ‘the [ideal] citizen’. Trump has mocked disabled

people, been actively misogynistic and racist, and banned transgender people from serving in the military, which “marks transgender bodies as both unfit to serve and incapable of representing the country” (Gilmartin et al., 2018, p. 72). Yet, Trump claims that his immigration reforms will improve life for Americans (ibid., p. 72). This seems extremely paradoxical as his other actions have actively created ‘the citizen’ as white, heterosexual, and male. This has constructed an environment in which LGBTQ+ people, disabled people, and women are viewed as second-class citizens, or possibly even ‘non-citizens’. In other words, his policies may improve life for a small number of Americans but will be detrimental to the majority. Ngai (2007) points out how historically US citizenship was denied to those not ethnically white and European (p. 2521-24). Trump’s policies may be viewed as an attempt to return to this situation.

The Travelling community in Ireland has also routinely been constructed as the ‘non-citizen’ through state promotion of ‘the citizen’ as someone who is settled. Mac Laughlin (1999) argues that “Travellers are still sometimes viewed as pathologically unfit for Irish citizenship” (p. 129). Although written twenty years ago, little appears to have changed in terms of social attitudes; Peter Casey coming second in the presidential election last year on a platform of anti-Traveller racism illustrates this. The state has given preference to ‘the settled citizen’ through road ‘improvements’; which removed Traveller, i.e. ‘non-citizen’, settlements (ibid., p. 142). Travellers were often not provided with alternative living sites (ibid., p. 142); this shows how government policy actively sought to improve life for ‘the citizen’, whilst removing fundamental social rights from ‘the non-citizen’. Lentin (2004) draws on a 2002 Bill which gives Gardaí the power to arrest Travellers camping on public or private land (p. 8). This shows a clear preference for a settled way of life. Travellers see housing as a nomadic entity, whilst most of society follows the rules of private property, as does the state. Therefore, this does not fit with the view of ‘the citizen’. The state thus actively creates ‘non-citizens’ by criminalising cultural tradition.



## Conclusion

We can see that constructions of ‘the citizen’ are fluid. We now accept LGBTQ+ people almost entirely in Ireland, but actively demonise asylum seekers and Travellers and deny rights to first-generation Irish people as ‘non-citizens’. Some groups may move into the realm of ‘the citizen’ at times, but, by definition, “the modern state’s model of inclusion has always led to exclusion” (Castles & Davidson, 2000, p. 81). The Irish state seeks to portray the need to protect its citizens from dangerous ‘outsiders’ who do not conform to its view of the ‘the citizen’. Irish attitudes to the Travelling community encapsulate this well. The state also sees its role as protecting ‘the citizen’ from dangerous outsiders, which also serves the purpose of reassuring ‘the citizen’ that they belong. Increased securitisation of the border and thickening the border to include refugee camps (Agier, 2009, p. 40-43), or in Ireland’s case, DP centres, shows a desire to dissuade the alien ‘non-citizen’ from seeking entry to the nation-state. If they do seek entry to the nation-state, they are segregated from the citizen body geographically and socially and ‘othered’ by media and political discourse. Marshall sees citizenship as involving political rights; this is significant as migrants in Ireland have been hindered in exercising their franchise in the past. By not engaging with migrants, the political establishment in Ireland actively creates the ‘non-citizen’. It will be interesting to examine migrant involvement in this year’s local elections. Taking a cursory look at the candidates being fielded by the main political parties, an ethnically homogenous picture is painted. However, the Social Democrats is running a candidate, Ellie Kisyombe, originally from Malawi, who has been living in DP since 2011 (Social Democrats, 2019). The Times (Ireland Edition) published an article in February 2019 alleging that there were inaccuracies in her immigration ‘back story’ (Tighe, 2019). The article questions Kisyombe’s right to be in Ireland and hence could be read as an insinuation that by not conforming to the imagined concept of whiteness and Irishness, Kisyombe is incapable of representing her district at a local level. Although referring to the British context, Kundnani’s (2001) argument that “as soon as asylum seekers are described as ‘illegal immigrants’, it is a small step before the debate spills over to the issue of immigrants generally” (p. 50), is certainly relevant when considering The Times (Ireland Edition)’s article. The Irish state

has also created 'non-citizens' by denying social rights, like welfare access, to asylum seekers. The fact that young adults from non-EU countries must pay full third-level fees (White, 2012, p. 31) sends a clear message about their future in the state. Migrants are viewed as temporary, economic assets, who do not have the right to remain indefinitely. This shows that the post-national view of citizenship is flawed. Gilmartin et al. (2018) argue that Varadkar [current Irish Taoiseach] and Trudeau [current Canadian Prime Minister] attending Montreal pride together paints an image of "inclusive citizenship" (p. 74). However, I question how accurate this is given that Varadkar stands over a system of DP and campaigned for the Citizenship Referendum, which in clear legal terms created the 'non-citizen'. The UN Migration Pact, ratified in December 2018, was not signed by some states, like the US and Hungary, due to what they claim is a lack of distinction between 'legal' and 'illegal migration' (McLaughlin, 2018). This shows us that states' desires to categorise migrants and create a distinction between those 'worthy' of residing in the nation-state and those who are not remains strong. This feeds into the discourse of exclusion and creates a 'non-citizen' who does not have the same rights as 'the citizen'. 'The citizen' designation is designed to exclude; yet, its composition is fluid, hence some group will always be on the receiving end of exclusionary policies. Despite this article's use of Ireland as a case study, examples from other jurisdictions throughout have been used to show that these trends are not unique to Ireland.

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# **When the Most Common is not the Most Powerful: Why the Rise in Social Spending cannot be Explained by the Robert-Meltzer-Richard Model**

Mark Finn

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## **Introduction**

This essay shall argue that the rise in social spending cannot be completely explained by the Roberts-Meltzer-Richard model. It shall do so by first defining the model and showing that it expects government size ('size' refers to the level of spending) to have a positive relationship with inequality (Meltzer and Richard, 1981). It shall then show that the empirical results of this model are mixed, meaning it cannot fully explain the rise in social spending, before providing three explanations for why the model is incomplete by questioning three of the assumption it makes, namely that politicians cater to the median voter, that a majoritarian system exists and there is a unidimensional policy space, with a universal franchise of self-interested voters. It shall then provide alternative explanations for the rise in social spending before concluding.

## **The Roberts-Meltzer-Richard Model**

The Roberts-Meltzer-Richard Model attempts to explain the growth in size of government, measured in 'the share of income redistributed by government, in cash and in services' due to voters' demands for redistribution (Meltzer and Richard, 1981). It is based on Meltzer and Richard' 1981 paper which in turn is based off the work of Roberts in 1977.

The Meltzer-Richard model makes a number of assumptions. Firstly concerning government, it assumes that the only functions of government are taxation and redistribution and that government has a balanced budget (thus, all tax collected is redistributed rather than, for example, servicing debt) such that  $r=ty$  where each figure corresponds to individual levels of redistribution received, tax rate and income received, respectively (Mueller, 2013). Secondly, concerning voters, it assumes that

voters get utility from two factors: leisure and consumption and can spend their time engaged in either labour or leisure. Voter want to maximise utility, such that they want a tax rate not so high so as to mean they do not get sufficient income from their labour but not so low so that they do not receive too little redistributed income (Meltzer and Richard, 1981; Mueller, 2013). Thus, the exact tax rate for each voter which maximises their utility is different, depending on their level of income.

Each voter is faced with the same income function,  $y=nx$ , where  $x$  refers to their productivity and  $n$  is the number of hours worked; if  $n$  is constant for all voters, those who receive higher incomes have a higher value of  $x$ . Tax is assumed to be a flat rate on income. From this, each voter will have a different ideal value of tax; those who do not work ( $x=0$ ) will prefer a higher rate so as to maximise their income from redistribution, whereas those who work and have high values of  $x$  will prefer a lower rate of tax, so as to maximise their income earned from labour. The utility from redistribution rises at a diminishing rate as income rises, until income earned is at such a level to provide a greater level of utility than would come from redistribution. Voters, who are also assumed to have perfect knowledge, will therefore vote for a rate of tax which maximises their own utility however they dismiss the idea that voters are completely myopic, thus they are aware that a certain degree redistribution is required; rather than those with higher incomes voting for no redistribution, they vote for a limited degree of it (Meltzer and Richard, 1981; Mueller, 2013).

This model is applied with the Median Voter Theorem first proved by Roberts (Mueller, 2013), although based on earlier work from Black (1948) and Downs (1957). The theorem states that on any policy issue decided by election, the median voter is decisive (Black, 1948) however it relies on the assumption of single peaked preferences, from which there can exist a Condorcet winner (Mueller, 2013). Downs applies this to party competition; similar to Meltzer and Richard, he assumes that voters act in a self-interested manner in a unidimensional policy space where there are two parties competing in a majoritarian system. Roberts applies this model to tax, demonstrating that pre-tax income is monotonically increasing due to productivity (i.e. it is independent of the



rates of taxation and redistribution) providing critical support to Meltzer and Richard (Roberts, 1977). If Robert's theory holds, then there exists a Condorcet winner in determining the rate of tax (and therefore the rate of redistribution), the winner being the Median Voter (Meltzer and Richard, 1981).

### **Government size and inequality**

Income inequality, in basic terms, refers to a difference in quantities of income possessed by different citizens. The level of GDP or population levels are independent of income inequality, as income inequality measures relative differences between individuals; despite high GDP, the USA has a high level of income inequality (Stevans, 2012). Meltzer & Richard argue that there is a positive relationship between government size and income inequality. They argue the the extension of the franchise over the last two centuries has resulted in the increase in government size (Meltzer and Richard, 1981). This relies on three assumptions: politicians will enact the policy requested by the median voter; a majoritarian system exists; and voting involves a universal franchise and that decisions are made solely on the basis of the proposed tax rate (Down's unidimensional policy space assumption) and done from a self-interested perspective. An increase in the franchise has meant that the median voter is a lower-income voter, thus, the level of redistribution has increased.

### **Empirical Evidence**

The general increase in government 'size' throughout the 20th century has been well documented. Government expenditure, as a percentage of GDP, rose, on average, from 10.8% to 45% from 1870 to 1996 in OECD countries (Tanzi and Schuknecht, 2009). At the same point the franchise was extended in Western countries throughout the 20th and early 21st centuries (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2000); it occurred in two stages, firstly extending the 'economic franchise' and secondly extending the franchise to women which were mostly completed by 1920 and 1945, respectively (Aidt, Dutta and Loukoianova, 2006). Thus, the initial readings of these results could lend some credence to the model.

However, this rise in government size may not be solely explained by the

model as empirical testing of the model yields mixed results. Testing of the model within the US with a time series of federal spending which provides support for the model (Meltzer and Richard, 1983). These results are reaffirmed by Lijphart, who analyses data on income share amongst voters and non-voters, arguing that low turnout results in socioeconomically biased turnout (resulting in biased policy-making) and that increased voter turnout corrects this bias (Lijphart, 1997). However, the data on US federal spending was taken by Meltzer and Richard at time when welfare spending and income inequality were growing at consistent rates, meaning the variables would exhibit a high degree of correlation, thus these results may simply identify institutional changes which occurred over the time period (Gouveia and Masia, 1998). This problem is overcome in analysis on US state spending from 1979-1991, which employed a fixed-effects methodology, with time dummies capturing changes over time that are not explained by the explanatory variables and state dummies to capture variance between states (ibid). The results from this research (which account for possible migration of voters from state to state as well as the federal structure of government within the US) demonstrates no support for the model (Gouveia and Masia, 1998). A revised version of the model accounts for the differences of a general growth in government 'size' as opposed to an increase in explicitly redistributive policies (Husted and Kenny, 1997); their analysis, when the results are differentiated, lends support to the model in terms of pure redistributive policies but not to general increases in government 'size', measuring this by examining the change in redistributive policies following the reduction of barriers to voting in the US which affected lower-income voters, namely a poll tax and literacy test (ibid). Conversely however, analysis on a sample of 110 observations from the Luxembourg Income Study demonstrates little support for the model within countries alongside noting that differences between countries could not be explained by it (Luebker, 2014). The differences between countries are further elaborated by Larcinese; this analysis of 41 countries demonstrates that whilst an increase in the franchise and the number of citizens voting has some explanatory power in the 'size' of the government, that this does not account for state specific factors (Larcinese, 2007). Specifically, unlike much of the literature in the area, this paper includes developing countries in its analysis where state

capacity, or a lack thereof, may partially explain the level of redistribution. Finally, time-series data on US elections has demonstrated that the level of inequality has a non-linear relationship with turnout but that extremely high or low inequality tends to increase turnout (Radcliff, 1992); thus a certain degree of inequality may be needed for the model to hold.

This variation implies that the rise in social spending cannot be totally attributed to the model. In order to explain this variation, this essay shall now examine three shortcomings of the model, which contradict the three assumptions made by Meltzer and Richard: that politicians will enact the policy requested by the median voter; a majoritarian system exists; and that voting decisions are made solely on the basis of the proposed tax rate (a unidimensional space) and done, by all citizens, from a self-interested perspective.

### **Assumption 1: Politicians enact policy requested by the median voter**

The model assumes a certain degree of direct action from politicians in response to the demands of voters i.e. a demand for redistribution will necessarily lead to it occurring. Whilst this make a certain degree of intuitive sense due to the electoral incentives politicians have, empirical evidence does not support this view. Politicians cater to other actors besides the median voter (Gouveia and Masia, 1998), such as economic elites, and their party's voting and donor bases.

In the US, polling data on 1,779 policy issues from 1981 to 2002 was collected, with responses from those who are 'quite poor', 'median' and 'fairly affluent' being separated as well as proxies included to determine interest groups' viewpoints on the various issues (Gilens and Page, 2014). This data was regressed on whether the policy change proposed occurred within four years of being asked; the results showed 'near total failure' of the median voter and other majoritarian theories with policies being preferred by business groups and economic elites being preferred (ibid); whilst politicians may have some incentive to cater to their median voter, they are more likely to act in accordance with the preferences of high-income voters or other lobby groups; for example, empirical data demonstrates the power that specialised lobby groups, such as the

agricultural lobby, have on European Parliament decisions (Schneider and Baltz, 2003). Furthermore they may preference for the views of their party base, which may not be the median voter. Additionally, the data highlighted by Gilens and Page can be extrapolated to party donors (economic elites) meaning politicians again may have an incentive to cater towards to those voters' interests over the median voter.

If the assumption that politicians do not cater to the median voter is ignored, this does not guarantee necessarily guarantee a rise in social spending. Voters do not vote in a unidimensional space and so, whilst they may cater to the median voter, there is no guarantee they will prioritise redistribution issues over other issues on which they were elected. Indeed, due to a lack of time in office and a lack of resources to spend, policy decisions may be zero-sum. It may also be the case, in the case of developing countries examined by Larcinese, that the will may exist to redistribute but there is a lack of capacity to do so.

### **Assumption 2: Majoritarian system**

The second problem of the model is that it assumes a majoritarian system of election; such a system allows the median voter to dominate (Meltzer and Richard, 1981). A simple majoritarian systems could increase the incentive to cater towards the median voter, however this ignores the reality that not all electoral systems are majoritarian, and thus the preferences of the median voter are ignored. The results of Larcinese and Luebker show variance between countries of the success of the model, implying that country specific factors, such as the electoral system have an impact on the plausibility of the model. The electoral system is likely to undermine the preferences of the median voter due to two factors: the effect of constituencies and the effect of party coalitions. Even in majoritarian systems, constituencies may exist and certain ones will be prioritised above others as they are viewed as being more electorally important; within the USA, Presidents tend to direct more funding towards swing-states as the votes in other states are either safe or unattainable (Hudak, 2011) necessarily at the expense of policies desired by the median voter. Secondly, party coalitions can result in the preferences of the median voter being ignored. Coalitions between parties will result in compromising on

certain policy issues, meaning politicians may have to trade off the desires of the median voter with the desires of their coalition partners; the same logic holds in dealmaking with politicians not in the coalition (Iversen and Soskice, 2008).

### **Assumption 3: Unidimensional policy space and a universal franchise of self-interested voters**

There are three problems with the assumption made about voters in the model: the policy space is not unidimensional; not all voters vote and those that do, do not always vote in a self-interested manner. The first problem is obvious and admitted by Meltzer and Richard; decisions on who to vote for are made on a variety of issues that the candidate puts forward (as well as other factors such as party loyalty) and later results would indicate that personal finance is not a primary concern (Feldman, 1984). The second assumption of universal suffrage also does not hold. Multiple empirical studies have demonstrated that universal suffrage does not exist, due to low voter turnout (Hill, 2006). A meta-analysis of 90 empirical studies demonstrated, that whilst the explanations in voter behaviour are multifaceted, that individual educational attainment (typically correlated with class) and individual income tend to be strongly positively correlated with likelihood of a person voting (Smets and van Ham, 2013). This latter fact is particularly troubling for the model. The policies which tend to reduce inequality tend to be focused on those with the lowest incomes. Indeed these tend to be the only policies which would reduce income inequality, thus supporting the model; income replacement, unemployment insurance and other insurance all having significant negative relationships with inequality whilst pension and healthcare spending (which affects more than just the lowest income voters) displays no relationship (Moene and Wallerstein, 2003); these results are echoed in the literature elsewhere (d'Agostino, Pieroni and Procidano, 2016). As such, in order for the hypothesis of income inequality to fall with the increase in the franchise, it must be assumed that voters with the lowest incomes will vote, which is not the case.

The third problem is the assumption of self-interested voting, on which the model relies (Meltzer and Richard, 1981). Even if there

is universal suffrage such that the median voter's voice can be counted, there is no guarantee that the preferences put forward in the ballot box would be self-interested ones when it comes to redistribution. The field of behavioural economics has routinely questioned the assumption of homo economicus noting that blind self-interest is not sufficient to explain individual decision making as it ignores factors such as altruism, the role of social norms and notes that the assumption of perfect information enabling rational action often does not hold; a key example of this is voting low-income voters who vote for conservative parties, which is often against their economic self-interest (Luebker, 2014). Feldman's review of the literature on the question shows that electoral decisions are at best moderately impacted by personal financial considerations (presumably due to the fact that voters will also vote based on social policies, international policies, party loyalty etc.). Furthermore, it is noted that it is only when government policies directly impact on the financial wellbeing of voters and responsibility for this loss or gain is attributed to governments will they be more likely to vote from a rational self-interested perspective, with most evidence demonstrating that such conditions do not exist (Feldman, 1984).

### **Alternative explanations for the rise in social spending**

The above three problems with the Roberts-Meltzer-Richard model highlight that the model cannot fully explain the rise in social spending in the 20th century, reaffirming the mixed empirical results. Social spending is therefore, likely determined by other factors. It is important to note that 'social spending' may not refer to policies which curb inequality but may be the provision of public goods which also benefit voters above the median voter as provided by the examples of spending in Tanzi and Schuknecht (2009), Moene and Wallerstein (2003) and d'Agostino, Pieroni and Procidano (2016). Thus they may be in the interests of economic elites (a group intersecting with party donors) and, if politicians cater to these groups above the median voter, the level of spending may have increased. Similarly, the level of spending may have increased but this spending may have been directed at key party bases or swing constituencies or that income may be allocated to reflect a deal made by coalition parties. It may the case that the needs of lower-income

voters have not been completely ignored, however this may be more a case of their interests happening to align with the interest of the economic elite, which may help to explain some of the positive empirical support for the model (Gilens and Page, 2014). Finally, redistribution may have occurred due to voting by actors besides the median voter. Wealthy voters may support redistribution for altruistic reasons (Luebker, 2014) or may support for parties for reasons besides redistribution, who happen to also introduce redistributive policies.

## **Conclusion**

The Roberts-Meltzer-Richard model theoretically predicts that inequality will decrease with an increase in the franchise as the median voter will vote for policies which redistribute income toward them. Whilst the level of state spending has risen over the 20th century (Tanzi and Schuknecht, 2009), the reasons for this may not be completely explained by the model. Of course, to some extent politicians may act in accordance with the views of the median voter to redistribute income, ignoring the interests of other voters, their party and coalition partners. Similarly at times, voters may vote in a self-interested manner for redistribution. Both of these factors are indicated by some empirical support of the model. However the problematic assumptions of the behaviour of politicians, a majoritarian system and the behaviour of voters cannot be ignored. The reality is that there are a myriad of factors which can affect the what legislation politicians introduce, thus one model cannot provide an accurate account of how all these factors play out.

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# **Smells Like Teen Spirit: How do Adolescent Girls Reflexively Construct their Identities within the Habitus through Consuming Music?**

Órlaith Hennessy

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## **Introduction**

The process of building identity is specifically important at the adolescent stage of life, but at this stage it is done while adapting to personal social norms and relations as well as to the wider social world (Brown et al, 1994). Therefore, the debate surrounding habitus and reflexivity in regard to identity construction is particularly relevant to the adolescent, because as their freedom and independence to make more choices increases, so too does their exposure to macro social norms and expectations. Reflexive living is when 'people have to turn to their own resources to decide what they value, to organize their priorities and to make sense of their lives' (Heelas, 1996: 5, cited in Adams, 2006), which defines teenagers' growing autonomy as they experience adolescence. The Bourdieusian concept of habitus focuses on the external determinants and social structures that control behaviour, behaviour which is carried out unthinkingly by the social actor (Adams, 2006). This explains the learned behaviours and societal-level norms that teenagers are pressured to act within the confines of. More recent literature proposes that habitus and reflexivity are not mutually exclusive determinants of identity, thoughts and behaviour; but that the two can be hybridized and considered to be in dialogue with each other (Adams, 2006). Adams develops on this proposal by underlining the difficulties to engage in pure reflexivity when constricted by gender roles, and the effect they have on identity (2003).

This essay intends to analyse the identity construction of adolescent girls, with the use of music, through both habitus and reflexivity theories. Music plays a significant role in the lives of adolescents (DeNora, 2000, cited in Lincoln, 2005; North and Hargreaves, 1999) and acts as both an expression of unique identity, as well as a method of seeking peer approval and group membership. Christiansen and Peterson (1988) hypothesise that music offers more satisfaction to girls than boys, which, although is

somewhat generalisation, suggests that there is an important line between young female identity and music. Its influence on adolescents partly stems from its accessibility and mundanity, as it can easily be a component of everyday life and routines; but because of this factor its role can also be easily overlooked.

This essay will first offer an overview of theories which propose a habitus-reflexivity combination, as well as literature which contributes to this discussion. It will then demonstrate the ways in which music is a mechanism for both habitus and reflexivity in the identity construction of adolescent girls – in the bedroom, as a social mechanism, and as a political issue, using empirical data.

### **Theoretical Background**

Before examining how music informs the identity construction of teenage girls with empirical data, it is important to note existing theories which underline this. This section will outline the primary theories relevant to this essay, surrounding the modern societal relationship between habitus and reflexivity, with roots in Bourdieu. It will also extract elements of complementary theoretical work, including Simmel's fashion, Silva's emotional capital and Coskuner-Balli and Thomsson's work on capitalising consumption practices. Firstly, habitus and reflexivity as structures and processes that shape identity and practices are being addressed as reflexivity becomes supposedly more dominant, particularly in the modern western world. However, several writers have discussed the concept of habitus and reflexivity in dialogue with each other, rather than theorising that the two exist and operate separately. This challenges Bourdieu's classic deterministic habitus which ultimately controls individual's actions – although acknowledging the role of action in structure - or the loose reflexivity, which assumes the availability of choice in the identity construction of modern individuals (Ad ins, 2003). Adams identifies the need for a more adaptable definition of reflexivity with 'degrees that adapt to changing social structures' (2006:513). A new approach is deemed necessary to respond to the complex nature of the interactions between individuals and social structures, which form identity collaboratively. Ad ins (2003) writes that reflexivity has

become ingrained within our habitus, implying that they should not be discussed as independent or isolated concepts. Reflexivity is not universal as it requires certain levels of resources and privilege. She applies an examination of habitus with an acknowledgement of gender that is omitted by the original theories of both habitus and reflexivity, naming gender as one aspect of identity that sometimes cannot be reflexive, as there is certain habitus that always comes in tandem. Thus, 'reflexivity... is a habit' (2003:22). An example used is the increased opportunities for women to participate in the labour market enabling reflexivity and choice; but simultaneously women are required to inhabit typically feminine roles at work, as well as undertaking the emotional and domestic labour in the home, demonstrating the habitus simply being transferred across fields (Adams, 2003). Adams also details the use of reflexive gender performances in the workplace to gain 'world place capital' (2003:33); or, using the privileges of reflexivity to exploit the conditions of the habitus. Again, reflexivity and habitus are demonstrated as interacting. This can be linked with Coskuner-Balli and Thompson's analysis of 'stay-at-home fathers' accommodating for their loss in cultural capital after the assumption of this role by consuming in a particular way and reframing their identity (2016). These men, though reflexively making the lifestyle choice to replace work with fatherhood, use, and feel obligated by, the masculine habitus to reconcile their loss of cultural capital.

Additionally, Simmel's work on fashion describes the conflict 'between socialistic adaptation to society and individual departure from its demands' (1957:542), which draws a parallel with the habitus-reflexivity dynamic. However, while Simmel defines fashion as irrational, translating it in terms of habitus and reflexivity reframes it as the individual struggle to balance independent choice with surrounding social structures.

Finally, Silva emphasises the gender aspect of consumption and identity in her theory of emotional capital, with a focus on the home (2007). She underlines the important connection between consumption and identity, particularly for 'woman's strategies of emotional investment' (2007:141), and criticises the absence of the role of emotions in Bourdieu's habitus. The connection between habitus and reflexivity arises once again

as she discusses the assumption that individuals are passive receptors of advertising, when it can be argued that consumption practices are also an expression of unique identity. The common thread between these theoretical elements is the argument that habitus and reflexivity can be understood complexly and as complementary parts of one concept, as opposed to contradictory ideas. This leads into the primary focus of this essay, which is how adolescent girls, through both the habitus they embody and through reflexivity, shape their identity through the consumption of music.

### **Empirical Data**

The empirical data used to demonstrate these theories was collected from several secondary sources. These included individual interviews, focus groups and surveys used in articles on the topic of adolescent girls and music.

### **Adolescent Girls and the Consumption of Music**

As explained in the introduction, and as multiple texts on the topic of teenage girls and music reference, there is an important link between this and identity construction. This section examines this link, with the underlying theory of hybridizing habitus and reflexivity, in the areas of music in the bedroom, music as a social mechanism and music as political.

### **Music in the bedroom**

The private sphere has historically been a central space for women, and despite modern developments in access for women to the public sphere, the home is still a significant space for girls today. Brown et al (2004) notes the strong importance of the bedroom as a site for identity construction for girls. However, it should also be acknowledged that access to a private space, in this case, the bedroom, is a privilege, and the subjects of the empirical data under examination here are included in a set of privileged individuals.

In Lincoln (2005), the author addresses music's role in the private space of the teenage girl by defining it as a medium which shifts the

boundary between private and public, and the act of consuming music as 'both an individualised and unifying practice' (2005:400); as well as a transformative force on the mundane bedroom. Widespread access to personal technologies within the room enables more of the outside world in than for previous generations, through social media, but also through the widened access to music that this brings. Baker (2004) also notes that particularly younger girls have restricted access to the public space, and so the private sphere, which is composed of the bedroom for many, is where they can engage in activities more freely. Therefore, at a foundational level music enables the adolescent girl to be reflexive, in her own space, even when constricted by the habitus of her gender identity, by opening the bedroom to the public sphere in her desired manner.

The bedroom embodies the evolving identity by containing past artefacts such as photographs, which trigger memories and reference past identity (Lincoln, 2005), as well as offering a space to continue to build identity through practices such as listening to music and consequently creating a certain atmosphere. Brown et al (1994) describes the bedroom as a location where material culture, personal space and identity converge, acting as a reference point for interests to reconfigure general identity. Music allows adolescents to create a fluid space in their bedroom by changing the atmosphere, exploited particularly to transition the mood, for example, prior to socialising or when carrying out schoolwork in the bedroom (Lincoln, 2005). The identity constructed in this manner is neither fully static or constantly shifting; it is rooted in the hybridization of habitus and reflexivity discussed earlier.

The bedroom also offers a vital element of privacy that allows adolescent girls to access music to its full potential. Lincoln (2005) describes young girls borrowing music media from parents or siblings, but listening to it in the solitary space of their own bedroom, to have an independent first listen. Generally, it provides a safe space for the girls to explore and configure their tastes with no shame or critical judgement, particularly with access to their own source of music such as a stereo or on the Internet. In Baker (2004), the girls in the sample are mocked by their families for their taste in music, but in their bedroom can consume

freely without shame, and can see a brief independence from their family while within the home. This exhibits the situational dimension of the acceptability of certain practices (Halier, 2017), as the girls would only participate in certain musical practices when alone in their private room. The act of singing along to the music, enabled by the privacy of the bedroom, is presented as reclaiming the music (Baker, 2004). However, there is also an awareness of what can take place in the bedroom, such as acceptable volume levels, exhibiting boundaries to the girls' reflexivity. Finally, as personal technology grows more accessible and more complex, it becomes more important in adolescent music consumption. This is particularly relevant within the bedroom as it is one space young people have private access to experiment with this technology without supervision. In terms of reflexivity, advances in technology offer more ways for teenagers to construct their identity, with access to a greater variety of music; to others online who have similar tastes; and to connect and share music with existing peers. The Internet has also allowed musicians to share more of the musical process, as well as their personality and lives, with listeners, which has changed the dynamic between creator and consumer.

In summary, these instances exemplify the reflexive choice the girls have access to through music in the bedroom, but within certain limits and structures.

### **Music as a social mechanism**

Outside of the bedroom, music also plays a significant role in how adolescent girls navigate social relations and accordingly, negotiate their identity through the habitus and reflexively. The associations of consuming a certain type of music are evaluated by adolescents to make certain judgements about others (North and Hargreaves, 1999) Johnstone and Katz theorised the essential role of personal relations in musical trends (1957), while Christiansen and Peterson discussed the different significance and stigmas of certain music to boys and girls (1988). This echoes Bourdieu's *Distinction* when he describes how certain social practices socially classify those who participate in them (1984). This is arguably a form of cultural capital that adolescents can use to leverage the projection of a certain identity and taste to peers, while also maintaining

personal taste and authentic identity.

Consequentially, the logic of Coskuner-Balli and Thompspon's work on capitalising consumption practices (2016) translates across to the use of music to reflexively build a certain musical consumption, but so as to habitually gain approval of others and assume certain socially valued roles. Silva (2007) also references the role of use and exchange value in consumption, describing the way that consumption offers women a means of 'emotional investment'. These studies relate back to Ad ins' writing on women's use of both reflexivity and habitus to gain wor capital. In a similar way, teenage girls can consume music from freedom of choice, but also to gain access to group membership, alongside others listening to the same music. This is evident in the popularity of online fandom surrounding boy bands, but also other types of music.

However, in a reflexive manner, membership is not necessarily fixed, and can evolve as identity does. The access young people have to wide ranges of music and media in general has enabled a more diverse taste in music for each individual, and with that, more diverse group memberships (Bennett, 1999, cited in Lincoln, 2005). This allows adolescents to reflexively shift between 'fields' of the habitus within their tastes but continuing to imitate others who consume the same music. Such a pattern echoes Simmel's summary of fashion as allowing both the safety of imitation and the expression of individuality (1957).

This association of certain music genres with certain identities can have a positive impact on adolescents. North and Hargreaves (1999) write that if an adolescent admires the characteristics they assume a fan of a certain music type possesses, then consuming the music brings them closer to realising these characteristics, and their ideal self, which can positively effect self- esteem. In addition, they conclude that adolescents consider others who consume similar music positively due to in-group favouritism, without negative feelings towards those outside of the group. Therefore, while social structures and forces are what incentivise adolescents towards belonging to a group, it is to adopt features and an identity that they can autonomously choose and engage with.



Music also acts a social mechanism that contributes to identity construction in how it enables the creation of a social space under the control of adolescent girls. As discussed in the section on the bedroom, it is an important space for the girl to exercise her identity and privacy. Lincoln (2005) describes how the girls in her study used music to create an atmosphere not only for themselves, but for when in the company of others in their bedroom. It transformed the room into a transitional space before going out clubbing, or as a relaxed space to converse in. Therefore, while adolescent girls may engage with music in a way that is structured by social forces, they also do so for their own satisfaction and self-improvement.

### **Politics of Music**

Teenage girls as consumers of music can be framed as a political issue, for them as individuals and for society on a macro level. Despite this demographic being a significant source of income and support for certain musical artists, especially for some of the most commercially successful of recent decades, they are often dismissed as ‘fan girls’ without critical weight (Pecknold, 2017). The music industry also has been seen to exploit and influence teenage girls with the marketing of manufactured songs targeted at young girls by male musicians and creating an idealised image of women in songs and music videos. McRobbie and Garber’s study on the adolescent girl and the bedroom centres in on the romantic attraction of male musicians for the girl, rather than her relationship to the music itself (cited in Lincoln, 2005). Considering the wide consumption of music by adolescent girls, and its role in identity construction, there should be an awareness of how this music is sold to them and what messages are sold within it.

Contradictory to the popular perception of teenage girls as unthinking consumers of music, on an individual level, they exhibit awareness of their consumption as a choice and can prescribe meaning to it. Pecknold (2017) in her interviews with young girls demonstrates their critical process as consumers of music, and condemns the disregard for girls as critical consumers of music as it is an important way in which they become political actors. The girls in this study have standards for

the artists they respond positively to, seeking authenticity of music and appearance. They judged appropriate role models, expressing admiration for Lady Gaga who “performed...dressed as a boy” (2017:76) and actively condemning Selena Gomez for adopting a falser image than before: “She’s on temporary ban on my MP3” (2017:78). Pecknold describes how the group used discussions around music to explore issues of girlhood, sexuality and safety in social spaces (2017:73). Evidently, although the girls may be habitually limited in the music they are exposed to or as the targets of certain music by the industry, they can still make reflexive judgements and choices about the values they wish to support in an artist and in music.

Pecknold addresses the whiteness of her focus group and of the representations of womanhood they elevate (2017). The hegemonic identity represented in music is another political aspect of the medium, which can manipulate the values and ideals of the consumers; in this case, adolescent girls. Research surrounding this can itself reflect a lack of diversity. Maxwell et al (2016), however, focus in their research on the feelings of African American girls towards colour in response to rap music, which is demonstrated to perpetuate positive images of light-skinned black women, and negative feelings towards dark-skinned black women. This was clearly understood by the African American adolescent girls who consumed this music and affected their attitudes towards their own skin colour, which exemplifies the influential power of music on identity perception, particularly on adolescent girls.

## **Evaluation**

While this essay has endeavoured to engage in an overview of the identity construction of adolescent girls through music, it is acknowledged there are certain omissions that future research should resolve. The empirical data implemented here is dominated by white, western subjects which does not give a fully accurate depiction of the demographic the essay has attempted to describe. If adolescent female consumption of music is to be considered seriously, a more diverse sample of adolescent girls would strengthen this effort.

In addition, the role of technology is becoming more significant in this field of research as it continues to offer more ways of consuming music and to more people. This could be predicted to extend reflexivity by creating even more choice in consumption, and more combinations of taste to construct identity with. Technology especially plays an important role for young people, who are faced with innumerable amounts of content at once and must navigate this appropriately in accordance with their peers and the social world, but also adhering to personal reflexive choice. Therefore, this tool should be examined closer to understand its influence on this area of study.

## **Conclusion**

As evident in this essay, there are several routes through which adolescent girls construct their identity reflexively, within their habitus, through the consumption of music. Within the bedroom, they can privately and independently navigate wider societal culture, and adapt this for their own tastes. In a social context, music consumption enables girls to enter into group memberships, bring them closer to their ideal self in some cases, and providing a sense of belonging; as well as enabling them to differentiate and distinguish themselves from others as they mature, such as from family. Finally, music offers adolescent girls a site to begin as political actors, by socially critiquing the music they consume and the artists and industry who produce it. Overall, the data dealt with in this essay supports the theory that habitus and reflexivity can be hybridized to understand identity building. Future research should focus on the experiences of minority adolescent girls, outside of white and western perspectives; as well as the effect of advancing technology on this process of female adolescent identity construction.

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## Ancient Tribal Animosity? Explaining the 1994 Rwandan Genocide

Fiona May

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Genocide is a modern phenomenon requiring a strong state and acceptance of group identification which unlike other forms of violence, is one-sided in the killing of a large ethnic group (Prunier, 1997:238-9). Such was the scale of violence in Rwanda that estimates of the deaths in 1994 vary from between some 500,000 and 850,000, and this paper sets out to explain how this violence originated. The argument is that the primordialist notion of 'ancient tribal animosity' does not suffice as an explanation but rather, this paper contends that it was psychological mechanisms which were to blame. In this context, this means the construction of two exclusive and incompatible Hutu and Tutsi identities and Hutu elite activation of fear as a group emotion, which produced genocide because the Hutu were able to morally disengage from the normal self-sanctions that would inhibit such violent behaviour. Other factors include the political instability caused by the invasion of the RUF in 1990, economic crisis and foreign intervention, however a comparison with twin neighbouring state Burundi will demonstrate that the psychological mechanisms were the key to creating conditions for genocide.

In investigating why genocide in Rwanda, a starting point is the primordialist argument that it was down to 'ancient tribal animosity', which this paper dismisses as a valid explanation. The general crux of primordialism is the idea that individuals have a single fixed ethnic identity, with Clifford Geertz (1994:40-5) pushing this further in arguing that new states especially are abnormally susceptible to serious disaffection based on primordial attachments. It emphasises the idea that identity is overpowering and thus people cannot overcome it, with the nature of these differences inevitably leading people to violence. In the Rwandan context, this implies that the Hutu and Tutsi races possessed long existing identities which had experienced considerable turbulence over the centuries and their failure to identify as Rwandan after independence in 1962 made genocide the inevitable outcome of this conflict. Yet there are

several problems with this primordialist account, most importantly the fact that one can have multiple identities and the large majority of these coexist peacefully. For example, in Rwanda people possessed class and social identities in addition to ethnic identities (Uvin, 1999:253). Also, the fact that Tutsi only arrived in Rwanda in the fourteenth century with tensions first arising in the nineteenth century hardly qualifies as ancient. Furthermore, this argument implies that any violence should be two sided and thus fails to explain why genocide. Alternatively, the constructivist school of thought puts forward a more convincing story, with Fearon and Laitin (2000:848-9) rightly asserting that social categories are not inevitable, unchanging and fixed, but rather constructed, fluid and dynamic. Depending on the conditions, the meaning and rules of an identity change. Thus, Hutu and Tutsi identities can be seen as a social construction, putting forward a strong case for the argument that the elites mobilised nationalist feeling and took advantage of unfortunate circumstances. Identities were activated and weaponised, with the political and economic instability in the run up to 1994 leading to Hutu seeking protection in the absence of central authority (Hale, 2004:461). Furthermore, Van der Beghe (1994:57-62) makes the argument that ethnicity is primordial only in so far as it is believed by the members of the group – in the end it was the belief that these incompatible all-consuming identities existed rather than the reality of the situation. The high rate of inter-marriage in itself not only dispels the idea of ancient tribal animosities, but also demonstrates that if the two races were willing to marry, then something had to have changed to create conditions for murder and this is where psychological mechanisms come into play.

When this paper refers to psychological mechanisms, it means the effect of a process on the mind or emotional state of a person, and it was this that was the most instrumental factor in causing genocide in Rwanda. This can be seen in the case of the Hutu and Tutsi, with Hintjens (1999:247) pointing out that not only was the genocide a last ditch attempt by an increasingly autocratic and unpopular Hutu regime to hold onto power, but that this was planned and even an open secret. For example, references were made by the radio station RTL M to 'a little something coming for April', when the violence ensued. However, in order for this

to work, identities had to be actively hardened in preparation and if the RTLM through the radio was the key mouthpiece of those involved in planning the genocide, it needs to be further explained how these identities were mobilised by the elites. Frances McDoom (2012:23-31) outlines four key important psychological mechanisms in play specifically in Rwanda which explain the ability of security threats to mobilise the social groups against each other resulting in violence – boundary activations; outgroup negativity; outgroup homogenisation and in-group solidarity. Boundary activations refer to the framing of the Tutsi threat as ethnic, outgroup negativity resonated existing negative beliefs that the threatened in group (Hutu) had against the threatening outgroup (Tutsi); outgroup homogenisation manifested itself in the unwillingness of Hutu to distinguish between any individuals that did not belong to the group – this made it easier to see them all as the enemy; and in-group solidarity was the idea that as the Tutsi threat grew, so too did Hutu in-group solidarity and thus everyone had to choose a side. However, the puzzle to be solved in the remainder of the essay is as the main perpetrators of genocide, why normal people followed the elites and how they were able to commit such atrocities.

Part of this explanation comes down to the paradox of the fact that despite facing severe economic hardships, Rwanda was still a strong authoritarian state. Rwanda was previously known as the Switzerland of Africa, demonstrating that it was by no means a typical weak state that would be prone to violence as Migdal (1988) would argue, nor was it comparatively used to facing economic hardship before 1985. However, Olson (1995:127) correctly states that it degenerated from a ‘rare example of an African nation successfully adapting to difficult circumstances’. A decline in coffee prices in 1985 led to widespread poverty, unemployment and a lack of education which created the conditions for unrest. On a practical level, given the economic need and hunger people felt, it is unsurprising that they were more respondent to propaganda and the media, which made the psychological methods employed all the more effective. Yet the key thing to note is that despite the economic hardships which made Hutu more susceptible to elite activation, the Rwandan state was still strong enough to implement genocide, using media

manipulation to permeate society. This was exacerbated by the fact that Rwanda had failed to embrace the entire polis, with Tutsi largely excluded from the army and government positions. Posner (2004) argues that this is a key condition under which cultural cleavages become politically salient, showing from his study of the Chewa and Tumbuka in Malawi and Zambia that it is the size of the group which matters, with the two respective groups in Malawi being large in relation to the population as a whole making them viable bases for coalition building. Thus, in the case of Rwanda, given the Tutsi made up a sizeable minority of the population at 15%, they should have been included in the country's national political arena to make conflict less likely. Although this in itself wasn't a major factor, the fact that they were then forcibly included as a result of the Arusha Accords in 1993 made it easier to activate McDoom's mechanisms of boundary activation and outgroup homogenisation, and played into the idea that they were a threat to Hutu power. In practice this was not the case, but it had the twofold effect of giving Tutsi little opportunity to discover or react to Hutu plans, whilst activating the fear and paranoia which would make people act.

The exclusion of the Tutsi was exacerbated by increasingly anti-Tutsi policies, creating in-group solidarity and out-group negativity. For example, Tutsi access to higher education and employment opportunities were restricted. These policies were enough to cause violence in the form of the invasion of the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) in 1990, ensuing until the signing of the United Nations sponsored Arusha Accords in August 1993. The role of the RPF in genocide can be understood through Posen's (1993) security dilemma, whereby they created a threat and sense of disorder with the absence of central authority, allowing the ethnic mobilisation by the elites to take hold. A relatively large chunk of the literature on Rwanda stresses the failures of the United Nations and relationships between external actors and the Hutu government as being to blame for genocide, yet as previously stated, genocide is a systematic, organised project implemented by the state, and any explanation that does not put this at the centre cannot accurately explain it (see Des Forges, 1999). Instead, the most that can be said for the Rwandan context is that external actors played a role in facilitating the genocide, both through



the forced and unsuccessful implementation of democracy, the Arusha Accords and in standing by when the signs of genocide were evident (Des Forges, 1999:23-4). The extension of democracy previously introduced in 1991 proved particularly problematic under the Arusha Accords. It represented a major threat not only to the neopatrimonialism of President Habyarimana and his circle of elites, but was all the more dangerous given the economic and political unrest. This had caused resentment among both the Hutu and Tutsi populations in the south because of the concentration of wealth and power in the north and thus the elite needed to drive a wedge between the two groups (Hintjens, 2013:247-8). The Hutu elite also had control of the military, which was as big a source of power government and the requirement under the Arusha Accords that they share power with the RPF was a major issue due to the fact that it would remove major sources of exclusive control. This led to major credible commitment problems, with the US Ambassador Joyce Leader writing back to the US Secretary of State warning that 'although both leaders of both sides have signed the peace accord, neither side trusts the intentions of the other' (Willard (eds.), 2014). Multiple attempts from January–March to install a broad-based transitional government failed, but Hutu in particular were convinced that they were not secure and so were more susceptible to the fear encouraged by the elites.

Finally, a brief comparison with Burundi demonstrates that not only do structural explanations not explain everything, but also helps highlight that the psychological mechanisms employed in Rwanda were the difference in causing genocide. Both Rwanda and Burundi were former colonies with exploitative dictatorships which favoured a small elite class going through institutional failure and possessed a strong culture of obedience (Ndikumana, 1998:30-1). This culture of obedience is often emphasised as a major source of the violence in both countries, yet the key difference was that in Burundi there was discrimination which led to civil war, whilst in Rwanda this went further with the additional presence of moral exclusion, causing social death and paving the way for genocide (Uvin, 1997:253). This process was started by the elite's use of the measures outlined by McDoom, leading to the Tutsi being viewed as outside the 'scope of justice' whereby the moral values that usually apply

to other people did not apply to them. (Bandura, 1999:194). Thus, whilst the culture of obedience certainly facilitated this ethnic fundamentalism, it cannot be said to be the major explanation. Instead, the ideas had to exist in the first place in order for people to follow and it was fear/insecurity that was instrumental in polarising them. Genocide followed in the culmination of what Littman and Paluck (2015:88-93) describe as the cycle of the individual's participation in collective violence, in which group identification motivated violent behaviour, increasing Hutu identification with the group and resulting in one of the bloodiest episodes in history.

To conclude, this paper has shown that far from the Rwandan genocide being a result of primordialism whereby the cause was simply ancient tribal animosities, the psychological mechanisms were significantly more important. This was orchestrated from the highest levels of the Hutu elite facing internal/regional dissent, but only made possible by a strong state and the fact that the Hutu population were largely willing to follow, acting on the belief of self-protection and fear given the recent political and economic instability. As the main perpetrators of genocide, they allowed themselves to believe that the Tutsi were an alien being, with social and regional conflict being transformed into ethnic violence. Many even came to believe that this enmity was ancient as justification for their actions, but this is as far as one can go in arguing that ancient tribal animosities were to blame. A comparison with Burundi demonstrates that the structural conditions were of secondary importance here, and external actors such as the United Nations played a marginal role. It is easy to argue that the Rwandan genocide was part of some inevitable process, but genocide is always preventable when the key actors involved want to avoid it. The harsh reality here is that they instead actively pursued it.

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# Co-opting the Masses: The Role of Performance-based Legitimacy in Autocratic Regime Survival

Emma McCarthy

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## Introduction

In modernisation theory, Lipset (1959) famously theorised that economic growth increases the likelihood of democratisation in autocratic regimes. The relationship that has since emerged between economic growth and the durability of autocratic regimes offers a much less optimistic perspective (Matfess, 2015). The Chinese growth story is but one standout example of an authoritarian regime that enjoys continued growth alongside regime stability, and that many developing economies look favourably on China's authoritarian model is a cause for concern (Halper, 2010).

The dictator's survival is a central problem for autocratic regimes: without electoral legitimacy, autocrats live in fear of being overthrown. The literature points to repression and co-optation as the two primary instruments at the dictator's disposal to maintain their hold on power, for example Franz and Taylor, 2014. It is overly simplistic, however, to consider the effectiveness of these tools independent of additional alternatives. This essay argues that economic growth is an indicator of regime performance that can promote stability in authoritarian rule, altering the dependence on mechanisms of repression and co-optation for survival. Where repression and co-optation are limited in their scope to ensure political stability, autocrats can also prevent unrest by meeting performance-oriented socio-economic demands (Magaloni and Wallace, 2008).

The following shall outline how economic performance can indirectly promote stability by strengthening citizen loyalty and the perception of legitimacy in authoritarian rule. It is not simply improved economic outcomes that benefit a regime, but the opportunity a mere narrative of economic growth and development provides for the

propagation of an authoritarian social contract. When the dictator grounds their legitimacy in a developmental mandate, they justify authoritarian rule and the use of repression as a necessary means to ward off threats to the national wellbeing. Such trends can be identified in countries such as Rwanda, Ethiopia and South Africa (Matifess, 2015; Beresford et al, 2018) Dictators such as Paul Kagame are praised for the economic ‘miracles’ they oversee, as a once-democratising regime remains rooted in authoritarianism and the repression associated with it. The instrumentalisation of economic growth for political ends warrants greater consideration as an alternative tool to ensure the survival of autocratic regimes.

The following shall begin by discussing the current literature on co-optation and repression, highlighting the limitations of these twin tools for stability. It will then present economic growth/ development as a new instrument for stability, commonly found in regimes suffering systemic vulnerability. It will conclude by offering the Rwandan case as an example of this mechanism at work, such that we can better understand how popular support and legitimation can work to a dictator’s advantage.

#### A Rusting Toolbox: on Repression

Regime performance bolstered by economic growth can be used to strengthen political stability, prolonging the dictator’s survival. The literature emphasises co-optation and repression as the two primary ‘tools’ at the dictator’s disposal, following the influential shift to this perspective influenced by Gedde’s (1999) work. To understand how performance-based legitimacy can interact with these mechanisms, it is useful to first clarify the terms in question.

If electoral legitimacy provides the backbone to democratic regimes, repression is the authoritarian equivalent. Defined as “the behavior applied by governments in an attempt to bring about political quiescence and facilitate the continuity of the regime through some form of restriction or violation of political and civil liberties” (Davenport, 2000) it can take violent or non-violent forms; as violations of civil rights or physical integrity. Repression aims to induce popular quiescence and prevent collective action against the regime, shaping citizen behaviour

directly or through fear. There is evidence to show that repression increases the likelihood of regime survival (Escribà-Folch, 2013) but its effect on stability proves a double-edged sword. In what Davenport (2007) refers to as the “punishment puzzle”, the Law of Coercive Responsiveness sees that a dictator will use force to stifle perceived threats to their rule, but the inverse effect of repression on stability is unclear. Physical repression appears to have a nonlinear effect on regime stability, but the difficulty in identifying the precise nature of the relationship is inhibited by the limitations to aggregate measures of repression, particularly when the type of threat it faces requires consideration also.

The coercive apparatus for most authoritarian regimes is the military. A moral hazard emerges whereby the stronger the military is, the greater its capacity to intervene in the political sphere (Feaver, 1999). Coups d'état are the primary means by which authoritarian rulers lose power (Svolik, 2009). Rulers are also vulnerable to the possibilities that the military fails to suppress dissent, or indeed refuses to do so. This became apparent during the Arab Spring where large-scale repression ignited further violence in Syria, leading to widespread conflict. The military reneged entirely on its orders to suppress mass uprising in Egypt and Tunisia. Repression is therefore prone to two significant limitations; that it is not always enough, and that its costly effect on legitimacy can prove equally destabilising for the regime.

### **On Co-optation**

The leaders of Egypt and Tunisia failed to secure militaristic loyalty. Co-optation is the mechanism tasked with achieving this and can be defined as “intentional extension of benefits to potential challengers to the regime in exchange for their loyalty” (Corntassel, 2007). Institutional co-optation has received significant attention as a means for dictators to incorporate potential rivals into the regime apparatus itself, often through legislatures and political parties, enabling the close monitoring of rivals as well as fostering a vested interest in the regime’s survival for its provision of benefits (Frantz and Taylor, 2014). The ‘selectorate’ theory of co-optation emphasises the need to bind critical member to the

ruler's winning coalition, as "even the most oppressive dictators cannot survive a loss in support among their core constituents" (de Mesquita et al., 2005, pg 28).

Co-optation cannot guarantee loyalty, and so repression serves to raise the expected costs of opposing the regime. However, elite preferences may be endogenous to other factors capable of shaping expectations, such as performance-based legitimacy. We may assume that ruling elites are self-interested and favour power on the evidence that most authoritarian regime are replaced by another authoritarian apparatus (Magaloni and Wallace, 2008). If a loss in legitimacy is perceived to threaten their position, this increases the cost of loyalty if collective opposition emerges. For those inherently opposed to the regime, a crisis in legitimacy can indicate an opening to challenge the incumbent. Returning to the Arab Spring, developmental strategies legitimised autocrat rule in return for economic growth and resource allocation. As economic crisis unfolded, the subsequent loss in legitimacy precipitated mass political unrest as it became clear that a developmental mandate was no longer credible (Albrecht and Schlumberger, 2004). The dictator can therefore benefit from a co-optation of the masses, inducing loyalty by extending the benefits of the regime to the wider population. This can alter a regime's dependence on repression or co-optation, combating their respective limitations with a new tool for survival. Economic growth and development can function accordingly.

### **Growth is Good for the Poor (and the Dictator)**

The dictator is vulnerable to changes in public perception when public knowledge of the shift provides an opportunity for collective mobilisation. Magaloni and Wallace (2008) challenge the assumption that authoritarian regimes face the greatest threats from within the ruling coalition, and find evidence for the destabilising effect of mass protests. Their findings offer further support for the claim that economic performance plays a significant role in shaping domestic support: namely that economic growth contributes to the survival of autocratic regimes; income per capita is positively correlated with autocratic survival, and poverty is associated with greater political instability (Magaloni and

Wallace, 2008). It is difficult to establish a direct relationship between economic performance and the longevity of authoritarian regimes, but Miller (2012) argues that the political stability related to higher income levels functions through the causal channels of development and democracy. This furthers the argument that economic outcomes indirectly relate to the durability of authoritarian regimes, though further evidence on the effects of income inequality would strengthen this explanation.

That economic performance promotes stability can be utilised in the dictator's favour. In addition to the 'selectorate', the dictator can benefit from large-scale co-optation, inducing loyalty by extending the benefits of the regime to the wider population. This conflicts with the assumption that dictators' policy preference is for private goods. Gandhi (2008) states that where dictators have shown to favour social spending, it is for ideological reasons. This perspective undermines the power that economic outcomes have when used to the dictator's advantage to add greater legitimacy to their rule. That ideology is the primary mechanism through which legitimacy operates is an argument associated with the now classical totalitarianism literature, where ideology and terror were touted as the twin tools for political survival, for example Arendt, 1973. Gandhi's reference to the ideological underpinning of economic progress in authoritarian regime assumes that their policies are driven by a certain economic philosophy, which is not necessarily the case.

Rather, economic development can be intentionally pursued to foster loyalty in a similar way to which selectorate theory applies to democratic regimes. In this model, the significantly larger winner coalition inherent in democracies favours public spending (Clark et al., 2017). In the same way that dictators often engage in patronage to earn support from those that could threaten their power, economic performance can serve the same aim when legitimacy is sought from the population at large. Repression offers another means to increasing the dictator's power, but that a political exchange can also produce similar outcomes may appear preferable given the high costs associated with the use of repression (Wintrobe, 1990).



## **‘Systemic vulnerability’ and the African Developmental State**

The framework that has been outlined of legitimacy as a tool for autocratic survival has a rationalist basis, relying on the dictator’s perception of the magnitude of the threat facing the regime in determining their choices. This explanation, however, can offer insight into why the authoritarian regimes that seem to prioritise socio-economic performance are often those suffering “systemic vulnerability” (Doner et al., 2015). One example is that of developmental states in Southeast Asia. When the ruling elite are constrained by factors such as limited resource endowment or extreme security threats, the incentive to improve economic growth and public goods provision is motivated by an attempt to retain their power (ibid). Where performance legitimacy appears to supersede electoral legitimacy, the aim of economic growth is better understood as a means to gain widespread support through a narrative of improved national welfare, rather than a sincere desire to achieve the same.

The literature on developmental authoritarianism offers significant insight into the validity of economic growth as an authoritarian tool and its manifestation in certain African countries. Where it was once thought that African regimes were marching collectively towards democratisation, the ‘Third Wave’ never quite came to shore. A hybrid regime classification is applied to many of these states as they escape the label of outright authoritarianism by creating a semblance of democracy through elections, albeit rarely free nor fair. As per Larry Diamond’s (2002) ‘hybrid’ theory of authoritarianism, the institutional variety in these states makes it difficult to categorise the regimes appropriately. Matfess (2015) criticises Diamond for overlooking the legitimacy these regimes foster through their developmental inclinations, but the suggested ‘developmental authoritarianism’ classification identifies the inner mechanics of the regime’s motives rather than the explicit institutional structures implied by other regime categorisations. Developmental authoritarianism is still useful, however, to identify regimes that actively use economic growth and development to their advantage to foster popular legitimacy.

The argument for economic growth as an instrument is strongly reinforced by recent literature in this area (see Miller, 2012; Matfess,

2015; Beresford et al., 2018) An important idea upon which these papers converge is that of the authoritarian social contract: a mandate with which the dictator can justify their hold on power as a duty on their part to complete socio-economic reforms in the journey towards liberalisation. The propagation of this idea allows us to see precisely how economic development can be manipulated according to the dictator's own interests, proving a valuable tool in their survival kit. The social contract benefits from an environment that has undergone severe instability such as mass conflict, as this legitimises the simultaneous need for repression whilst the "transformation" remains underway. Dictators can overcome the negative effects of repression on legitimacy when repression is deemed necessary to prevent threats to the nation from re-emerging (Beresford et al., 2018). This highlights the interdependence of tools conducive to political stability.

Rwanda offers but one example of an authoritarian regime manipulating economic performance to its political advantage as hopes for democratisation fall into the background. The Rwandan case can be understood through the "carrot and stick" analogy of political control. The regime actively uses the 'stick', ie. repression, to stifle dissent through restrictions on speech, press, and the persecution of opponents to the regime, all in the name of national recovery. The country's strong economic growth and public spending sector are the 'carrot', inducing loyalty to a regime that claims the sole responsibility of ensuring its continued recovery from the devastation of the 1994 Genocide. The authoritarian social contract propagated by the dictator Kagame offers justification for the significant socio-political influence wielded by the state. Rwanda is often praised as an exemplary instance of reform, with little acknowledgment of the role this legitimisation has in sustaining its position of hybridity in the name of a prolonged development project (Beresford et al., 2018) Although some argue that this growth miracle is not nearly as impressive as it seems, for example Himbara, 2016, this reinforces the fact that it is not merely economic outcomes that directly favour political stability, but the indirect effect it has on perceptions of legitimisation.

## Conclusion

In *The Prince*, Machiavelli famously advises that “.. since love and fear can hardly exist together, if we must choose between them, it is far safer to be feared than loved” (Machiavelli, n.d., pg 43). This essay has offered a counter-argument to this sentiment, arguing that the legitimacy accrued from economic development can be used to a ruler’s advantage, often in hand with repression. Though repression and co-optation remain important tools at the dictator’s disposal, domestic support is shown to matter for political stability. A dictator benefits from a co-optation of the masses, inducing loyalty by extending the benefits of the regime to the wider population. This trend can be seen in so-called developmental autocracies, where the narrative of an authoritarian social contract emphasises the dictator’s role in achieving socio-economic reform to legitimise their rule. This can have an adverse impact on repression when it is used in the name of national stability.

Where it was once thought that economic growth promoted democratisation, a contradictory trend has emerged. This essay shows how economic performance can be associated with the durability of authoritarian rule, emphasising the need for further research on the nature of this relationship as well as a widened perspective on the many instruments a dictator can use in a bid to ensure their survival.

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## Quality Work for Some, Precarious Work for Others

Amy McGourty

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### Introduction

Work: it provides us with a source of identity, social connection and pride in life, not to mention the needs it satisfies through financial reward. But the world of work is changing due to rapid technological change and the increasing spatial mobility and temporal unity of capital; and for an ever-increasing number of people, work is a source of stress, anxiety and insecurity (Beck, 2000). Many theorists have sought to categorize these new forms of work: how they relate to political-economic phenomena and their consequences for the individual and indeed for society. Although a 'new economy' has emerged, which requires flexibility, mobility and adaptability from workers, and a growing proportion of jobs can now be classified as non-standard, what remains unclear is whether 'precarious work' is a new incarnation, or merely the manifestation of uncertain work for a certain group in society (Fudge & Owens, 2006). While informal, casual, and precarious are often used interchangeably, this essay takes precarious work as being characterized by wage instability, poor representation, protection and benefits, and being differentiated from non-standard positions by its poor quality (Rodgers, 1989). Precarious work can also be understood in terms of its opposition to standard employment relationships (SERs) which offer long-term, continuous, good quality work (Vosko, 2010). I will draw on the work of Michel Foucault (1977) in defining 'modern societies' as those marked by the presence of capitalist markets, rationalisation, and democratisation, thus stretching beyond Europe and the USA.

The orthodox approach to precarious work sees the increase in this type of work as stemming from neoliberal globalisation and structural changes in post-industrial economies, making precarious work a relatively modern phenomenon (Standing, 2011; Beck, 2000). This essay contends, however, that while precarious work is indeed a feature of modern societies, it has affected countless others across time and space and therefore the current incarnation is simply a new manifestation of a

familiar concept. This essay will first consider the historical and political-economic developments from 1970 to present; secondly, the orthodox theoretical approach to precarious work will be outlined; and thirdly a critique of same will be offered. Ultimately, this essay will demonstrate that insecure work has always been a feature of capitalist societies, and that this incarnation is merely a threat to those who had benefited from the status quo of 'quality work for some, precarious work for others.'

### **Precarious work in context**

The current incarnation of precarious work is generally understood to have begun with the onset of political and economic shifts towards neoliberalism in the mid-1970s. The movement away from Keynesian economics and towards economic liberalisation, that is, deregulation, austerity, limited government involvement, free trade, and privatisation, represent a significant paradigm shift in orthodox economic thinking and one that is inextricably linked with low quality work. Neoliberalism asserts that factors of production are paid their marginal contribution to revenue, i.e. their worth, and that markets, if allowed to function free of interference, will not create inefficiencies (Palley, 2004). Furthermore, neoliberalism draws its power from the political and economic influence of those whose interests it represents—shareholders, financiers, industrialists—and in doing so severs the link between economic activity and social reality (Bourdieu, 1998). The justification for low-quality precarious work therefore stems from the shifting of power away from labour and towards capital, backed up by the rationalized stance that workers and capital are paid what they are worth.

Practically, institutional and legal frameworks which had once protected workers began to mediate the effects of neoliberal globalisation on employment relations (Gonos, 1997). Union density decreased, and labour market regulations were eroded, which allowed the balance of power to move away from the workforce and towards employers and shareholders. These changes were crystallized with the election of Reagan in 1980 and the beginning of Thatcher's term as Prime Minister, ushering in the ascendancy of business interests over workers' rights; the replacement of universal entitlements with conditional benefits; and the

privatisation and marketisation of resources and services. From a policy perspective, the shift away from collective responsibility and towards individualistic action can be represented by one phrase—“there is no such thing as society” (Thatcher, 1987). Meanwhile, the increased emphasis on free trade and the drawing up of multilateral agreements such as NAFTA and WTO rules allows corporations to take advantage of economies of scale, larger markets, and cheaper raw labour, which both consolidates the power of business and opens new opportunities for outsourcing and relocation of the workforce. Of course, advancements in communications and transport technology have facilitated this relocation of capital and convergence of markets (Beck, 2000).

It is this same technology that drives these forces together to bring about the modern ‘knowledge economy’. As economies develop from industry-oriented to service-oriented, the need for employees to be physically present on the ‘factory floor’ is drastically reduced, decomposing the traditional spatio-temporal working arrangement (Olsen & Primps, 1984). Growth and output in the knowledge economy as envisaged by Drucker (1969) depends on the ability of humans to access bodies of knowledge and technology to create high-value intangible assets such as software. This economic shift away from physical asset production has facilitated a decline in the fixity of work and workplace, as knowledge has no spatial boundaries (Felstead & Henseke, 2017). Consequently, new modalities of the ‘flexible firm’ have emerged, allowing businesses to take on or lay off workers as demand dictates, with knowledge workers moving rapidly from one organisation to another (Atkinson & Meagers, 1986). These new economic working arrangements are regarded by some as exciting developments which can enhance the creative and entrepreneurial abilities of knowledge workers, freed from the bounds of a linear career path or ‘job for life’ (Lichtenstein & Mendenhall, 2002). However, as will become apparent later in the essay, these flexible arrangements are most often harmful to workers.

### **Theoretical perspectives on precarious work**

The uniting feature of Beck’s (2000) and Standing’s (2011) conceptualisations of precarious work is the centrality of risk and



uncertainty to the concept. Beck (2000) conceptualises a 'risk regime' whereby work in the second, post-Fordist modernity is characterized by insecurity and uncertainty. In a broader context, Beck (1992) envisages a 'world risk society', whereby life in the postmodern era is defined by its interaction with risk. While the post-war Golden Age of Capitalism ushered in stability, security and prosperity, the so-called 'Brazilianisation of the West' brings about an increase in ambiguity, risk and insecurity in Europe and the USA, concepts which were previously reserved for developing countries. Jobs traditionally associated with permanency and security are now insecure, and Beck (1992) argues that through multifaceted and globally networked attributes of the risk regime, poverty has been dynamized and distributed across all sectors of society, not just to those on low incomes. Individualisation has mediated and enhanced these changes, facilitating a movement away from universalist, rights-based interactions with the state or employers, all of which exacerbates risk in life. Beck (1992) successfully maps this theorisation onto reality by developing on the theory in a well-structured and relatable way, and offers a framework of civic action to reverse the trend of uncertainty and risk.

Standing (2011) approaches the question of the postmodern job from a complementary perspective, echoing the language of Marxism and arguing that the precariat is a distinct social class defined firstly by its unique relations of production. Those involved in precarious work are forced to accept unstable, 'flexible' contracts, or to work as quasi self-employed project workers in roles traditionally associated with salaried work. This 'habituation to unstable work', rather than stable, waged work, is what distinguishes the precariat from the proletariat according to Standing's framework (Standing, 2014, p. 17). However, members of the precariat are so much more than their job insecurity. Their work offers no sense of occupational identity or community, they are expected to engage in much 'work-for-labour'; to be constantly seeking new contracts, retraining and rebranding, and to go over and above the rule of their contract for no extra pay. Secondly, the precariat has unique relations of distribution, whereby the group relies on uncertain wages with none of the ancillary entitlements associated with decent work such as pensions,

insurance and holiday pay. Furthermore, these workers enjoy no state benefits, which clearly relates to and interacts with the movement away from universalist, rights-based entitlements and towards workfare. Finally, the precariat experiences fraught relations with the state and occupy the position of 'denizen', rather than citizen, a role which was historically reserved for migrant workers. Standing (2011) argues that this mix of characteristics make the precariat a dangerous class, capable of affecting change politically. Although positive, Standing (2011) perhaps ignores the significant structural power that rests in the hands of business and finance, whose interests are diametrically opposed to those of a precarious worker, and as such, the path to radical change may not be clear cut.

### **An alternative approach**

Indeed, the theories occupying the sociological canon are reflected in the data. Although the informal nature of precarious work makes it difficult to measure, data from the CSO and QNHS demonstrate a definite increase in non-standard employment relations. In Q1 of 2017, over 20% of works in Ireland were employed part time, with a further 7% on temporary contracts (Bobek, Pembroke & Wickham, 2018). In 2016, 50% of over 70,000 part-time workers surveyed stated they were in temporary employment because they could not find permanent work, a 179% increase since 2008 (ICTU, 2017). When the figures are broken down by gender or ethnicity, the outlook is even worse, with women being at twice the risk of indecent work than men, and migrant workers and the Travelling Community facing myriad difficulties and discriminations in the labour market (Nugent, 2017). On the basis of these difficulties and discriminations I will begin my critique of Beck's (1992; 2000) and Standing's (2011) approach to precarious work.

This critique is best understood in the context of dual labour market theory. According to dual labour market hypothesis, jobs in the primary sector require a high skill and knowledge level, offer good remuneration and benefits and are generally stable and permanent in duration. Jobs in the secondary sector, in contrast, are characterized by their impermanence, informality, and insecurity (Beer & Barringer, 1970). While the theory was initially employed to explain differences in employment patterns in

the USA, it is now popular across the globe and often praised for its non-neoclassical, structuralist approach to inequalities, acknowledging that discrimination and inequality of resources and opportunities explains variations in labour market activities (Hacısalıhoğlu, 2015). Jobs in the secondary sector are generally filled by women and migrant workers, while roles in the primary sector are most easily accessed by male non-migrant workers (Castles, 2009). Beck (2000) and Standing (2011) essentially argue that the characteristics typically associated with roles in the secondary sector are beginning to appear in primary sector jobs and that this is a cause for alarm. While they argue that it is the widespread, normalized nature of this mode of work that distinguishes it from non-standard work of the part, I would argue that we are simply witnessing the normalisation of precarious work for a certain cohort: non-migrant, male workers in the Global North. While I would never seek to devalue, reduce or oversimplify the experiences of this group, the fact remains that homogenous analysis does a disservice to diversity. The neglect of an intersectional dialogue is striking, and as such I would like to offer a critique of this masculine- and Euro-centric approach to precarious work.

While Beck (1984) and Standing (2011) have made great strides in building a body of knowledge on a critical social issue, their work should not be permitted to pass without question or critique, and in my view the most fundamental critique of both pieces stems from their narrow spatial and geographic focus. Beck's (1992) 'risk society' thesis claims to stretch across the globe, however several anthropologists have argued that his approach draws mainly on experiences of Western, capitalist cultures such as Germany and the UK (Nugent, 2000; Mackey, 2000). Bujra (2000) argues that this narrow analysis advances a Eurocentric and evolutionist approach to development while ignoring culturally and locally nuanced understandings of work and other phenomena. Furthermore, his reference to Latin American economies and use of the term, 'Brazilianisation of the West' to describe the increasing uncertainty of labour relations is reductive, lazy terminology which relegates the complexities of Brazilian (and other non-Western) society to a unitary point in time rather than a dynamic entity capable of change.

Standing's (2011) conceptualisation of the precariat is similarly Eurocentric, ignoring the prevalence of uncertain, unsafe, and insecure work in the Global South and among migrant workers in the Global North, and failing to acknowledge the presence of 'modern' societies outside of Europe or the USA. In accordance with Foucault's (1997) definition of modernity outlined in my introduction, it seems clear to me that countless countries outside the core Western economies can be regarded as modern, having experienced industrialisation, the growth of capitalist markets, and democratic institutions. And yet, they are unworthy of examination in this context. While Standing acknowledges that insecurity has been a feature of work for centuries, he uses its normalisation to distinguish precarity in the current day. It must be noted, however, that precarious work has always been a 'normal' feature of life in the Global South and emerging economies, due in no small part to the dispossession, division, and discrimination associated with colonialism (Scully, 2016). Furthermore, the labour market experiences of countless migrant workers are shaped by these same forces, and yet neither Standing (2011) nor Beck (1992; 2000) see fit to address the issue.

Aside from the narrow geographical focus of the theories, both Beck (2000) and Standing (2011) fail to refer to the labour market opportunities of women, migrants, or minority ethnic populations such as the Travelling community, which bolsters my assertion that their theories are too narrow in focus. The barriers faced by women in entering the workforce are myriad and complex. Historically, institutional barriers such as marriage bars prevented women from retaining their positions, and thus were forced to engage in part-time, temporary, or informal work to supplement their income or utilize their skills, while in contemporary societies they often face inconspicuous discrimination and pressure to remain in the workforce without adequate support (Young, 2010). One must look no further than the countless women across Ireland engaging in childminding work, teaching piano lessons, and other similar activities on top of their unpaid caring work, to understand the gendered nature of precarious work. Furthermore, members of Ireland's Travelling Community have historically been engaged in precarious work, whether this was the trading of horses or sale of tin products, but as Lentin &

McVeigh (2002) argue, the gradual but purposeful erosion of their nomadic way of life has led to increasing unemployment, or precarious employment. Eighty percent of Irish Travellers are unemployed according to CSO data, a figure which mirrors the outlook for nomadic communities across Europe (CSO, 2017; FRA, 2014). These figures only scratch the surface of unequal access to the labour market, especially when the intersectionality of discrimination is considered. As such, those on the periphery of capitalism or with the least bargaining power have been subject to precarious employment relations long before the issue came to the attention of Standing (2011) or Beck (2000).

## **Conclusion**

The way we work has changed and will continue to change in line with social and economic developments in years to come. Assembly line work in a Ford factory is an intangible, textbook concept for many of my peers and I, and similarly, work in the 22nd Century may very well bear more resemblance to a sci-fi film than the typical workplace of today. What has remained constant throughout these developments, however, is the presence of varying levels of risk and uncertainty at work for certain cohorts, and I believe that that will remain if there is inequality in the world. In this essay, I have traced the development of contemporary work from the end of the Fordist era, down the path of neoliberalism and globalisation, and to the incarnations of work we witness today. I have drawn on the work of Beck (1992; 2000) and Standing (2011) to conceptualise the meaning of precarity, and finally I have critiqued the narrow, gendered, and Eurocentric focus of these theories, offering alternative ways to think about precarious work and demonstrating that precarious work is nothing new. It is vital that we—students, policymakers, academics, workers—do not consider decent work a finite resource that must be competed for, and instead question the global and interconnected motives, mechanisms, and agendas that bring about indecent, insecure, and precarious work.

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# **We're Doomed: An Optimist's Take on the Potential Downfall of Neoliberalism**

Juliana Maria Patelli

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## **Introduction**

In his post-midterm speech after the 2010 general election, President Barack Obama spoke of America's democracy, stating that "power rests not with those of us in elected office, but with the people we have the privilege to serve". He was incorrect. In the neoliberal economy, large corporations are the most powerful, not elected officials nor the people they serve. In the neoliberal economy, policymakers, under the influence of large corporations and policy advocacy groups, are seemingly unfazed by the growing economic inequality confirmed by economists (Reinicke, 2018) or the warnings of the catastrophic effects of climate change made by the scientific community. In the neoliberal economy, the affluent continue to watch their wealth grow, while 10% of the world's population still lives in extreme poverty (The World Bank, 2018). While all of these issues predate neoliberalism, the economic system coupled with a growing global population expedites and aggravates their consequences (Parr, 2013). The following essay will examine the dynamics between neoliberalism and the aforementioned issues, identify where the most power lies in the democratic context, and predict how these issues could potentially play a role in the fall of free market capitalism. It will do this by first outlining the historical background of neoliberalism, followed by an evaluation of the negative externalities incurred by outside parties as a result of the unregulated actions of the private sector. Finally, it will consider the limited capacity of a compromised political sphere.

Neoliberalism is an economic system characterised by the absence of regulation in markets (Kenton, 2019). This ideology, championed by Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, frees corporations from the constraints of government control in hopes that the inherent desire to maximise one's wealth and power would increase competition in the international marketplace, pushing the boundaries of prosperity and advancements in industries. In many ways, neoliberalism was successful.

Its two pillars, increased competition and a smaller state role in the economy opened up domestic markets to foreign competitors allowing for the transfer of knowledge and technology to developing countries. Millions have been saved from poverty and the privatisation of former state-run institutions has resulted in increased efficiency and a decrease in the financial responsibilities of governments (Ostry, Lougani, & Furceri, 2016). The effectiveness of neoliberalism in stimulating economic growth is a highly contested topic. Many countries who adopted neoliberal policy, such as Chile, reported long periods of growth (Paus, 1994). Additionally, the modern global market we live in today would not exist if it were not for a reduction in barriers to trade. That being said, the time has come at which neoliberal policy does more harm than good.

### **The Origins of Neoliberalism**

After the Cold War, Western ideology declared victory, denouncing the restrictions placed on individual liberties by communism and fascism. The West's main players, the United States and European nations, led the world economically through government deregulation designed to promote competition between the involved markets. These economic powers pushed each other to pass legislation restricting state involvement in the private sector. Each legislative act passed was a response to actions taken by competitors. Companies in the United States, also fearing the power of foreign markets, worked with the government to loosen antitrust laws, allowing for the inundation of mergers and acquisitions, creating immense multinational corporations, and in some cases, monopolies, from what once were solely American establishments (Jacobs, 2017). These massive conglomerates evade state control, delegitimising democratic means of governance through their use of money and power. Combined, the corporations of today form the world's most influential economic institution. Neoliberalism's origin story is ironic in that through their attempt to promote democracy and fight authoritarianism through economic freedoms, world leaders and economists have instead created a system ruled by the will of the few economic elites, causing just as much, though less overt, harm to political freedom.

## **Corporate Exploitation of Deregulation**

One example of such command of the state's limited power is corporate tax avoidance. Large corporations are attractive to governments for two reasons: the jobs they provide and the taxes they pay to their host nations. Yet in 2012, 70% of all active American companies paid no corporate taxes (Lucas-Judy et al., 2012). Starbucks, which made 1.2 billion pounds in UK sales from 2009 to 2012, did not pay any corporate income tax to the British government (Bergin, 2012). Companies achieve this through many different practices. Some record their assets—including investments and profits made—overseas in low or zero tax countries such as Ireland, Bermuda, and Switzerland. Many have even gone so far as to report negative taxes through the use of such tax loopholes, cashing in tax rebate checks. In a review of corporate tax collections in the years 2008 to 2015, it was found that 100 American companies paid no federal income taxes, dodging the \$118 billion they should have paid to the United States government, instead receiving \$32.1 billion from the U.S. Treasury in tax rebates (ITEP, 2017). Governments remain competitive by lowering their corporate taxes to entice investments made by multinational corporations in their economies. To keep business in their borders they excuse seemingly illegal tax practices. Power thus lies with corporations, not the state nor its citizens.

In evading their taxes, corporations, well aware that the state will not seek to collect these taxes, are consciously pushing the financial burden away from the private sector to the general public. While corporations have the leverage to avoid these taxes, ordinary citizens do not. They are then expected to pay more in tax or receive less in public services. Smaller companies, who lack the necessary resources required for excusable tax avoidance also bear the burden. In the United States, only 10% of all federal tax dollars collected are covered by corporate income tax, leaving the remaining 90% to be paid for by the people (Porter, 2013). It is this prioritisation of the private sector's agenda over the well-being of the general public that is at the heart of many inequalities in Western economies. Neoliberal economists view democracy as a barrier for the rich. Many disguise this stance with what appear to be logical arguments such as Reagan's "trickle down economics". Others are much more overt,

calling democracy an impediment to an economy's potential and the freedoms of the rich. Austrian economist and philosopher Friedrich Hayek went as far to defend Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet, saying in an interview in Chile that he'd "prefer a liberal dictator to a democratic government lacking liberalism" (Caldwell & Montes, 2015).

### **The Trade-Off Between Corporate Wealth and Human Health**

In this system, many externalities are intentionally overlooked as the economic sphere does as much as it can to maximise output, and in many cases, increase the wealth of a select few. In the United States, health, education, and other factors of inequality are inadequately protected by the state, influenced or controlled by companies and institutions looking to expand their profits at every turn. The average CEO of an American health care company earns a salary of \$20 million (Herman, 2017), choosing to accumulate their wealth, rather than invest in an effort to lower the costs of potentially lifesaving health services for their customers. In this neoliberal environment, greed is at the wheel; the fragility and perhaps singularity of human life is dismissed and downplayed in favour of the unrestricted accumulation of wealth. This greed has gone as far as to put a literal price on human life. In 1970, Ford released the new Ford Pinto. Sadly, due to the expedition of production to remain competitive in the market, many errors were made in the design of the car, resulting in a potential for the car to explode if a rear collision punctured the fuel tank. The legal team at Ford, upon realising this error, conducted a cost-benefit analysis and decided to pay \$200,000 (a value they placed on human life) per fatality in the case that someone was killed due to their negligence, instead of the \$11 per car to fix the error (Danley, 2005). Ford budgeted that 180 deaths and 180 injuries would occur due to their actions, and they accepted this consequence in favour of the financial benefits.

Gun violence in America is an overwhelming issue that demands attention from legislators. However, nothing substantial has been done at the federal level by policymakers to cure this "epidemic", as those in power are under the supervision and funding of the National Rifle Association (NRA), a non-profit organisation sponsored by major gun manufacturers. The NRA spent \$31 million in the 2016 presidential election to ensure

that Donald Trump was elected (Morris, 2018), and nearly \$43 million supporting 10 conservative Senators in their campaigns (Leonhardt, Philbrick, & Thompson, 2017). The U.S. prison system even seeks to make a profit. Many prisons are private, run by large corporations who benefit from the incarceration of individuals. This makes any legislative efforts to reduce the number of Americans in prison or decriminalise non-violent offences very difficult. The United States is in desperate need of a prison reform overhaul. Serving a prison sentence can cause irreversible damage to the inmate and their families who are more likely to suffer from psychological distress and financial difficulties as a result of their incarceration (Brown & Patterson, 2016). It's not likely that such a change will happen soon. Trump's 2016 presidential campaign accepted over \$1 million in donations from the two largest operators of prisons in the U.S. Now as president, he is using their services to contain immigrants at the southern border (Gidda, 2017).

When it comes to migration, neoliberals use the health of the economy and the safety of jobs in their argument opposing the free flow of migration, often with racial undertones. This rhetoric has become popular in the United States and Europe, as conflicts abroad have resulted in an influx of those seeking asylum. Unrefined, humans are instinctively ethical, caring beings. This economic system, however, deconstructs and corrupts these ethics, standing in the way of collective calls for equality and trade unions, which unite employees of these corporations who seek fair treatment or compensation through democratic means.

### **A Brief Economic History**

Corporate dominance over the state and its citizens is not a recent revelation. Suspicious of the private sector's intentions, despite their confidence in their ability to self-regulate, President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the New Deal in 1934, a set of financial reforms and regulations designed to control the growing power of corporations and their leaders (Bakan, 2005). These controls were successful for fifty years until corporations used the threat of economic globalisation to convince legislators that the state's management of corporations deserved to be reviewed and amended if the United States wanted to remain competitive.

A period of deregulation followed, culminating in the international financial crisis of 2008. Massive financial service corporations convinced the United States government to remove the divide between commercial and investment banking, which protected the American domestic banking system since the 1930s (Jacobs, 2017). This financialisation phase saw already large banks increase in size as they benefited from this deregulation and decrease in oversight. Their manipulation of the housing market resulted in unacceptable levels of financial loss to everyday citizens, who found themselves paying the price for the sins of the government and the financial industry.

Those in the lower classes suffered the most in the years after the crisis. In addition to the lasting socio-economic impact, austerity measures taken by governments in recovery mode in the years after the crisis hurt the lower and middle classes the most. The American unemployment rate doubled from January 2008 to October 2009 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018). The average unemployment rate of the European Union shot up from 7% in 2008 to 11% in 2013, with the worst post-recession high of 27.7% seen in Greece (Krogstad & Flores, 2018). Retirement savings were lost, and an estimated 10 million Americans were forced to give up their homes to foreclosure in the wake of the crisis (Picchi, 2018). Millennials, or people born after 1980, have experienced wealth accumulation 34% lower than previous generations, due to their debt to income ratio. The responsible parties and those who benefited most from the actions that led to the crisis, however, continued to live comfortably as their financial losses were only a small portion of their overall wealth. The gap between rich and poor has since widened.

### **Climate Change Mitigation**

Corporations use their power to set the legislative agenda by buying politicians, giving them the right to dictate their stance on many socio-economic issues. By dominating the narrative, policy advocacy groups such as the Koch brothers (of the multinational manufacturing conglomerate) funded FreedomWorks and Americans for Prosperity who work to discourage political actors from enacting climate change mitigation policies (Dryzek, Norgaard & Schlosberg, 2011). The unfortunate truth is

that we are significantly behind on climate change action. Much of the damage that has been done is mostly irreversible (Borenstein & Larson, 2019) and legislators show no signs of enacting meaningful regulations on industries which worsen the health of the Earth. The future of the planet requires a reduction in the use of non-renewable resources, which would go against the current trend of economic expansion. It is possible that the human race, unable to feed ourselves, will die off from starvation. Soil for farming isn't expected to last more than 60 harvests, due to the use of chemicals in farming practices, deforestation, and global warming (FAO, 2015). Extreme weather will worsen, sea levels will rise at least two feet in the next 100 years displacing four million people (Kramer, 2016), and the average temperature of the planet will continue to increase. Corporations are so influential that climate change remains a marginal or fringe political issue that doesn't feature often on the agenda.

Fortunately, many companies, triggered by the mass of their carbon footprint have taken measures of their own by supporting those in the field of science who have proven time and time again the effects of humanity on global warming, disavowing the harmful actions of their competitors and the stagnation of governments. The transnational consumer goods company Unilever, has voluntarily installed an internal carbon tax, using money raised from this tax to fund clean technology projects and innovations (Unilever, 2018).

All things considered, to say that these factors would lead to the downfall of neoliberalism would be a mistake. While it may appear that the negatives of neoliberalism are enough to convince those in power to change things up, sadly its expiration does not appear to be imminent. The demise of planet Earth might come before restrictions on the neoliberal system are passed, especially in the United States where party lines are stronger than ever. The harm free market capitalism causes to the environment and equality has been known for some time, yet very little has been done to address these crises. Red flags have been waving for years now, but the "give and take" dynamic between governments and corporations does not allow for any meaningful change to be made. Corporate power is too strong to be overcome, the system is currently



rigged in their favour and against the will of the people. That being said, if this trend of self-regulation aimed at reducing inequalities (such as Amazon's new \$15 minimum wage) and climate change mitigation (such as Unilever's carbon tax) continues, a new edition of socially conscious neoliberalism could emerge and save the idea as a whole.

## **Conclusion**

Corporations control the narrative in the neoliberal economy. Greek economist and academic Yanis Varoufakis (2015) says that we have borne witness to the "economic sphere colonising the political sphere, eating into its power". The more the economic sphere takes the "demos" out of democracy, the taller the "mountain of debt and idle cash in financial institutions" and "the greater the waste of human resource and humanity's wealth". Issues such as climate change, income inequality, and gun and prison reform in the United States amongst others should be massive issues that appear on the desks of government officials. Neoliberalism gives corporations the power to control the priority of issues. Has neoliberalism done more harm than good? It's difficult to answer. While many in the lower classes and underdeveloped economies benefited when it was first introduced, the long-term costs of this economic model outweigh the benefits. There is a growing awareness of the uncontrolled power of the private sector, especially amongst younger generations, thanks to the efforts of politicians fighting corporate funding (such as presidential candidate Bernie Sanders and Senate candidate Beto O'Rourke) in favour of smaller individual donations.

When threatened, those in favour of a strong, unregulated private sector label these efforts as 'socialist' inciting fear and thus a rejection of their ideas. The mutual dependency of large corporations and governments practising democracy have many of the characteristics of a toxic relationship. While some would prefer that the democratic and the economic spheres redefine their relationship, the bed has been made, the (astonishingly deep) grave has been dug. It would be very difficult at this point for governments and people to reign in the power of well-funded corporations.



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# **Understanding EU Lobby Rules by way of its Unique Relationship with Lobbyists**

Daniela Weerasinghe

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## **Introduction**

The beginning of the twenty-first century witnessed a rapid rise of European countries introducing lobby legislation. There are currently nine countries in Europe that have lobby regulations in place (Cooper, 2017). Indeed, the European Union (EU) also expanded its lobbying rules and initiated the Joint Transparency Register (JTR), in 2011 (European Parliament, 2016). Internationally, only Australia, Taiwan, Israel and Mexico followed suit (Venice Commission, 2013, p. 16; Chari et al., 2017, p. 6). This is in stark contrast to the previous century, wherein only Germany, the European Parliament, Canada, and the US adopted lobby regulations (Chari et al., 2010, p. 17).

Before reflecting further, some preliminary definitions need to be made. Lobbying is defined as the activity carried out by ‘extra-institutional actors’ (Venice Commission, 2013, p. 4-5), with shared ‘economic, professional or public interests’ (Chari and Kritzinger, 2016, p. 30), who aim to ‘influence the policy-making process [so that] their interests are reflected in public policy outcomes’ (Chari & Kritzinger, 2016, p. 30). Lobby regulation refers to a ‘state-made legal framework of codified, formal rules’ (Venice Commission, 2013, p. 13), and is typically introduced to ensure ‘transparency and accountability’ (Chari et al., 2011, p. 115) of the lobbying process. With robustness, the ‘strictness of regulation’ in terms of fulfilling these two objectives is meant and can be ascertained via different measurement methods (Venice Commission, 2013, p. 5-6).

This essay is divided into three parts: Firstly, the evolution of EU lobby regulation will be laid out and the 2011 Joint Transparency Registry (JTR) will be analysed. Secondly, there is a brief introduction to two different measurement methods of lobby rules, which establish that the JTR is “semi-robust” in comparison with the nine European countries

that currently have lobby rules in force. Thirdly, the relative robustness of EU lobbying rules will be explained by reason of the unique nature of lobbying in the EU, that is the EU institutions' symbiotic relationship with lobbying groups (Chari et al., 2012, p. 113-114). This paper concludes with the recommendation that stricter lobby rules, (whilst unlikely in light of both the EU's institutionalised dependence on lobbyists' input and Europeans' disapproval of lobbying) would be crucial to invalidate Eurosceptics' claim that the EU suffers from a democratic deficit.

### **The Evolution of EU Lobby Regulation**

In 1996, the European Parliament (EP) implemented a compulsory lobbying registry, in response to criticism of its opaque practices (Chari et al., 2012, p. 51). However, the EP definition of lobbying is broad and naïve, for lobbying is described as 'supplying information' to parliament members (Chari et al., 2012, p. 52). Critically, passes that permit lobbyists access to the EP for one year require little information, and since lobbying off-site is allowed without registration, significant incentives for lobbyists to register are absent (Chari et al., 2012, p. 53). Breach of the already vague code of conduct for lobbyists only results in the withdrawal of the pass, and as Bouwen's data has shown, passes have almost never been withdrawn (Chari et al., 2012, p. 54). In a similar vein, the European Commission (EC) adopted a voluntary registry in 2008, reflecting its historical view that 'self-regulation' suffices (Chari et al., 2012, p. 51, 58). It offers 'automatic alerts of pending official actions on legislation' (Holman & Luneburg, 2012, p. 92) in return for registration, which, however, only '15% of EU lobbyists' (Direnc, 2012, p. 520) perceive as good incentive. This dearth of incentives also manifests itself in the low number of registrations, as only around 4,000 (Crepaz & Chari, 2014, p. 74) of an estimated total of 15,000 EU lobbyists (Chari et al., 2010, p. 44) have signed up by 2011.

Crucially, the necessary momentum for the EC and EP to merge their 'instruments into a Joint Transparency Register in 2011' (European Parliament, 2016) was provided by the 'cash-for-amendments' lobbying scandal (Holman & Luneburg, 2012, p. 92-93), where four members of the EP accepted bribes in exchange for official favours. On the one hand, this new EU registry remains voluntary in nature and is still

devoid of ‘strong, enforceable provisions’, for breach of rules of conduct does not entail any fines or imprisonment but “only” the suspension of an organisation (Crepaz & Chari, 2014, p. 90). Certainly, ‘naming and shaming’ organisations that do not register or supply correct information, can be a powerful tool (Crepaz & Chari, 2014, p. 85). However, this tool remains of rather limited value by reason of scarce media attention, and due to the fact that only four EU staff members oversee registration, which occurs on a ‘random selection’ (Crepaz & Chari, 2014, p. 90).

On the other hand, the JTR is said to represent an improvement, since ‘cooling off periods of 18 months for former Commissioners’ are in place, and there is ‘electronic filing and access’ (Crepaz & Chari, 2014, p. 89). Crepaz & Chari’s (2014) research of the automobile, airline and electricity sectors showed improved willingness of companies to register and to provide accurate information (p. 89). This may also be traced back to the EC’s “not on the Register, no meetings” rule, which was adopted in 2014 (Katzemich, 2017; Margarida, 2017). Nonetheless, this rule applies only to the top-ranking members, hence covering ‘merely 10 per cent of the entire Commission staff body’, while the EP generally treats it as ‘non-binding’ (Katzemich, 2017; Margarida, 2017). Therefore, it would be inadequate to equate the JTR with a mandatory registry, as some commentators do. As of August 2017, ‘11,366 lobby groups’ registered for the JTR, whether this registration figure is satisfactory, remains a matter of perspective (Cooper, 2017).

### **The Comparative “Robustness” of the JTR**

With this in mind, the results of two different robustness measurements will be analysed, namely the Centre for Public Integrity (CPI) and Holman and Luneburg (HL) index. The CPI index ‘results from a coding procedure based on 48 items and eight key elements of the regulations’, which are:

The definition of lobbyists, individual registration requirements, individual disclosure of financial information, employer spending disclosure, electronic filing, public access to a registry of lobbyists, enforcement and revolving door provisions (Crepaz & Chari, 2017, p. 7-8).

The CPI framework was originally used to assess 'lobby regulation across the 50 American states', and was used by Chari et al. for global comparison (Chari et al., 2010, p. 101). Holman & Luneburg were the first to measure the relative robustness of lobbying rules within European political systems (Crepaz & Chari, 2017, p. 8). Their index, therefore, is said to have the 'advantage of including features that are based on European lobbying regulations' (Crepaz & Chari, 2017, p. 8). However, since HL is only based on 21 questions, it is doubtful whether the strictness of the lobby regulation has been fully captured, raising the likelihood of higher scores, as will become evident (Crepaz & Chari, 2017, p. 8). Simultaneously, Crepaz & Chari (2017) underscore that the CPI's comprehensiveness is more vulnerable to 'less consistent answers' by different coders (p. 26-27). Therefore, whilst the CPI may be the most 'valid' one, HL index has proven to be the most 'reproducible' one, encompassing my decision to focus on these two measurements in particular (Crepaz & Chari, 2017, p. 27).

Table 1 displays the normalised scores of Chari et al.'s and HL's results of the ten European political systems with lobby regulations, where 0 means least robust and 1 most robust (Crepaz & Chari, 2017, p. 9). Georgia and Macedonia are not included in this analysis as their lobby laws have not been implemented by the government and enforced respectively (Holman & Luneburg, 2012, p. 90). Nor is Italy included, which has lobby regulations only in two regions (Venice Commission, 2013, p. 16). Hungary repealed its voluntary lobby registry in 2011, only four years after its introduction, and is, hence, also excluded (Holman & Luneburg, 2012, p. 89-90).

Although Crepaz & Chari (2017) found 'the American and European traditions of coding lobbying laws' not to be a 'dividing principle', they may be partly blamed for the divergence in results (2017, p. 11). Regardless of the precise scores, the two measurements seem to agree that EU lobby rules are more robust than regulations found in five European countries, namely France, the UK, Poland, the Netherlands and Germany (Crepaz & Chari, 2017, p. 11).

However, since the scores displayed in Table 1 date back to

2014, several law reforms that were undertaken in the interim have not been taken into account. As of July 2017, France has heavily revised its lobby regulations, now including a ‘fine of up to €15,000 or a year of imprisonment for failure to comply with lobbying rules’ (Simral, 2017, p. 3-4). The recent Irish Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 is viewed as the tightest lobbying regulation in Europe, in terms of reproducing the ‘gold standard’ as set by the OECD and the Council of Europe (Cooper, 2017; Venice Commission, 2013, p. 13). Ireland obliges lobbyists to file information about their organisation, the subject matter and even targets of their activity on a three-month basis (Cooper, 2017). It also provides for a ‘fine of up to €2,500 and a two-year prison sentence’ (Cooper, 2017; Simral, 2017, p. 4). Consequently, Irish and French lobbying legislation are the only ones that include imprisonment alongside fines or lobby bans, and should be placed at the top of the rankings in terms of robustness levels in Europe.

Table 1 (Sources: Crepaz and Chari, 2017: 10; Transparency International, 2017.)

	<b>Country &amp; Year when lobbying regulation was first introduced</b>	<b>Chari et al.</b>	<b>Holman and Luneburg</b>	<b><i>Corruption Perceptions Index 2016</i></b>
1.	Ireland (2015)	--	--	73
2.	France (2009, 2016)	0.30	0.62	69
3.	Slovenia (2010)	0.45	0.67	61
4.	Austria (2012)	0.32	0.81	75
<b>5.</b>	<b>The EU (JTR, 2011)</b>	<b>0.31</b>	<b>0.67</b>	--
6.	Lithuania (2001)	0.44	0.62	59
7.	United Kingdom (UK) (2014)	0.27	0.38	81
8.	Poland (2006)	0.27	0.52	62
9.	The Netherlands (2012)	0.24	0.57	83
10.	Germany (1951)	0.17	0.24	81



As regards Lithuania, its lobbying law defines lobbying very vaguely, and only establishes a lobbying ban for breach of it (Simral, 2017, p. 4). De Fouloy (2015) found that few lobbyists are registered, because of negative public perceptions along with the ‘troublesome registration process’ including expensive registration fees, and lack of enforcement. Therefore, the HL score placing Lithuania below the EU seems more convincing than Chari et al.’s. As a result, it can be contended that the EU has more robust lobby regulations than five European countries, but less robust ones than Ireland, France, Slovenia, and Austria (see Table 1). However, whether the label “robust” truly deserves to be attached to any lobby regulation of the ten examined European political systems remains debatable, especially when viewed from a global perspective.

### **The Importance of the EU’s Unique Relationship with Lobbyists**

This brings us to the question of why there is such a divergence in approach to regulate lobbying in Europe. Interestingly, Eastern European countries were among the first that adopted lobby regulations, with the ‘more advanced industrial democracies of Western Europe’ only recently joining this trend (Holman & Luneburg, 2012, p. 75). Holman & Luneburg (2012) maintain that the earliest efforts to regulate lobbying (including Germany) were chiefly motivated by supplying ‘business interests with access to lawmakers as a means to bolster fledgling economies’ (p. 75). It is the wealthier European countries embedded in recent scandals, that seek to regain the public’s approval ‘through renewed transparency in the policymaking process’, and thus have more robust regulations in place (Holman & Luneburg, 2012, p. 77). For instance, Ireland’s strict lobby legislation has its ‘origins in the 2008 financial crisis’ (Cooper, 2017), while Austria’s lobby rules and the JTR originate in the ‘cash-for-amendments scandal’ in 2011 (Holman & Luneburg, 2012, pp. 92-93).

Nevertheless, Holman & Luneburg (2012) leave unexplained why some Western European countries adopt more stringent lobby laws than others, and why the majority of European countries have chosen not to regulate lobbying at all. As seen in Table 1, the ‘Corruption Perceptions Index 2016’ (Transparency International, 2017; Abel, 2017) establishes no coherent relationship between corruption perceptions and the types of

regulatory systems (Chari et al., 2010, p. 110). Surely, lobbying laws are only one of several ‘tools of the anti-corruption policy agenda’ and hence may explain for the variance in approach (Simral, 2017, p. 19).

In comparison with the US and Canada, the ten analysed European political systems have weak lobby regulations in place (Venice Commission, 2013, p. 19). Although civil society in Brussels is ‘more developed than in any national European capital’, and closely resembles Washington State, the JTR is three times less robust than the lobby regulation of its American counterpart, according to CPI scores (Hix & Hoyland, 2011; Chari et al, 2010, p. 104). This discrepancy may be rooted in the distinct political culture within Europe, where lobbying is still frowned upon, as well as the comparatively short ‘historical importance of interest groups’ (Chari et al, 2010, p. 112, 133-134).

More crucially, a distinct dynamic is at play: the EU aims to facilitate rather than hinder lobby access. Since the EC and EP are under-resourced compared to national governments (Hix & Hoyland, 2011), they heavily rely on expertise supplied by lobbyists, resulting in a ‘symbiotic relationship’ (Chari et al., 2010, p. 113-114). Hix & Hoyland (2011) emphasise the ‘institutional competition between the EU institutions’ that further incentivises them to permit access and even provide funding to underrepresented lobby groups. It is also held that the EC and EP regard lobby groups as a means to advance their influence in the EU legislative process, as for instance, national governments will be reticent to object if they can show that key national interest groups endorse the suggested initiative (Hix & Hoyland, 2011). Having said that, it is unsurprising that the EC and EP only opted for a voluntary registry as opposed to a mandatory one. They fear that more robust legislation would constitute a costly and ‘cumbersome bureaucracy’ as well as a barrier to access, crippling the lobby industry, the EC and EP so heavily relies on (Cooper, 2017).

However, owing to ‘fierce criticism of the EU’s lack of transparency’ (Transparency International, 2015) and the EU’s ‘democratic deficit’ (Chari et al., 2007, p. 423), the EC and EP felt pressured to respond

by introducing the JTR. In light of continuing calls for stricter lobby regulations and the recent rise of European countries adopting lobby laws, the EU institutions are currently holding meetings in Brussels to “advance” the existing voluntary registry (Cooper, 2017). Yet, the prospect of a mandatory registry with strong enforcement is highly unlikely, as evidenced in the EC’s weak proposal of an ‘interinstitutional agreement’, which would bind the EC, EP and the Council (but not lobbyists) to meet only with registered lobbyists (Margarida, 2017).

More precisely, Chari et al. (2010) noted that Europeans tend to have pejorative associations with “lobbying”, which is in stark contrast with Americans, who regard lobbying as ‘legitimate’ and ‘central to the democratic process’ (p. 112). The fact that the US has the most robust lobby legislation in the world, as per CPI scores, can be argued to be at least a partial corollary of Americans’ positive connection and long history with lobbying (Chari et al., 2010, p. 112). Therefore, it is compelling to argue that, in an effort to avoid further public condemnation, the EU is all the more pre-disposed to leave concealed the enormously institutionalised influence of lobbyists on the EU policy-making process. This *inter alia* lends credence to the view that the EU merely engaged in ‘symbolic politics’ in the field of lobby regulation, whereby following episodes of scandals, they ‘appear to do something while changing little’ (Veklser, 2015, p. 53). Whether this ‘sheer rhetoric’ of the EU’s commitment to certain public values (i.e., transparency and democracy), will regain the EU citizens’ confidence is questionable, to say the least (Matten, 2003, p. 216).

If anything, weak EU lobby rules have been exacerbating public distrust and have hence been contributing to the current rise in Euroscepticism across Europe. After all, the key to winning European citizens’ trust in the EU institutions lies in making its decision-making process both as open and transparent as possible. While it is open to lobbyists, which is as the Venice Commission put it, ‘central to the democratic process’ (Venice Commission, 2013, p. 5-6), the EU’s lack of transparency gives rise to unregulated and thus unbalanced and disproportionate access to lobbyists. This in turn fosters an environment

wherein “lobbying” turns into unduly influencing a decision-making process, and neither lobbyists nor Eurocrats that accept their input can be properly held accountable to their decisions by the public. The cash-for-amendments scandal is an excellent illustration of this. That being said, it is desirable for the EU to both educate the public about the democratic value of lobbying and to make the EC and EP more accountable for their reliance on the input of lobbyists, to both create a level playing field for lobbying and to make decision-making in Brussels (more) transparent.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this paper submits that, on the basis of the CPI and HL measurements, the JTR is “semi-robust” in comparison to the nine discussed European countries. However, this finding is only in correlation to the above mentioned countries and does not apply in the international context, where it would be characterised as just slightly more than a ‘low-regulation system’ (Chari et al., 2010, p. 100). It should further be remembered that the used measurements only focus on what the laws state, omitting how and whether the law is enforced in practice, possibly leaving the reader with a distorted picture (Veksler, 2015, p. 53).

The reason why the EU has adopted less robust lobby rules than Ireland, France, Slovenia, and Austria, is because of its fear of hampering its ‘symbiotic relationship’ with lobbyists and of attracting more criticism if the true lobbying impact on EU policy-making was to be disclosed (Chari et al., 2010, p. 113-114). In light thereof, it would be more helpful if critics (and the EU) strived towards educating the European public on the democratic value of lobbying, instead of pointing their fingers at the EU which has, arguably, done much to promote a ‘complex [lobbying] system which combines elements of pluralism, corporatism and neo-pluralism’ (Hix & Hoyland, 2011).

Ultimately, Chari et al. (2010) may have correctly predicted the ‘snow-ball effect’ that, the more countries adopt lobby regulations, the more will follow suit (p. 160). However, whether this ‘21st century democratic phenomenon’ (Chari et al., 2010, p. 160) is more than sheer ‘symbolic politics’ (Matten, 2003, p. 216) remains to be proven by time and

further empirical research of lobby law enforcement in the ten mentioned European political systems.

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